

Covenant Renewal and Celebration

Call to Worship in the Holy Spirit:

How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, purify our consciences from works of death, so that we may serve the living God! Therefore Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, now that He has died to redeem them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

Covenant Prayer of Confession and Communion of the Called:

Our Father in heaven, on this Covenant renewal day we come before you wanting a clearer and deeper understanding of what you have done to make us clean and innocent again and how you want to work in our souls to make your promises our daily experience.

Thank you for bringing us into yourself in this covenant in Christ's blood. For making peace for yourself and for us. For creating this body called the church – unheard of amongst the nations. Church founded on your holy love through the death and resurrection and ascension and the ongoing session of the Son of God. Stretching around the globe and embracing the spirits of the just from the four corners of heaven. A holy nation governed from the throne of heaven, led by the Holy Spirit.

With laws no earthly legislators have ever enacted. Your people are enabled to live out your holy love, who live in your love. For this amazing communion, we thank you, our Father, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn: Covenant Song by Aaron Senseman

We belong to the Lion of Judah, we are Abraham's seed
We belong to the God and Creator of everything

Let us raise up a covenant chorus
Let us bring forth our lives
To the One whose host gathers among us and fills the skies, and

*Raise up His name on high, raise up you people of His pride
Raise up and bare the fire that's in our eyes
And in our lives and shows that we are not afraid.*

In His light we can never be hidden in His love we are here
We will shine through the night like a city upon a hill, so *(chorus)*

He delivers His people from bondage, sets the prisoner free
He has given us love and salvation, His eternal legacy

He will spare us the sword of His anger, He prepares us a home
Where we'll worship and glory forever before his throne, so *(chorus)*

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Scriptures:

- Matthew 26.26-30
- Hebrews 9.11-15

Encouragement: Why is Covenant so important?

The Bible is divided into two main sections and they are called Covenants or Testaments. Same word.

Why? Many refer to the Bible as God's love letters to us. Why isn't the Bible called the Old Love and the New Love?

The answer is that the word Covenant covers everything. It is the policy, the organisation, and the relationship that Yahweh has set up to recreate humanity and indeed the whole earth after the mess that has been made when humans believed Satan lies and despoiled the whole earth. It is the Constitution governing both God and His subjects. It is the Constitution of salvation, of heaven, of the New Creation. Every question we might raise is answered within this arrangement.

Both the Old and the New Covenants have been planned and instituted by Yahweh to bring sacred blessings to the prize of His creation – human beings. And to do it in a way that is in accord with what He can (and can't) do consistent with His character. His established laws and His great desire to bestow everything good on his created prize, His people.

There is so much to say about Covenant, in fact, there are 66 Books of the Covenants (Testaments) describing, repeating, and reinforcing its beauty and functioning.

There is one wonderful illustration of the Covenant that Yahweh created to show what He means. It's Marriage between two lovers, a man and a woman. A whole book is given to the illustration – Song of Songs. Apostle Paul also takes it up. So do parts of Hosea and Ezekiel.

The husband instigates the covenant of marriage to be one of pure delight and protective passion for his beloved. His beloved secrets herself in his care and honours Him with all she has.

So unlike all other contracts, treaties, and covenants this Covenant is founded in all surpassing love, not personal gain or self-protection. Covenant is communion in love. So indescribable is this Covenant of eternal wonder that the Apostle calls it a "*mysterion*", a mystery. "*For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*" *This mystery is profound, but I am speaking about Christ and the church*".ⁱ

What a sacred honour to be invited into such a Covenant. The Lord God Himself promises to forgive the sins we have committed; the habitual ones, those we committed from external pressure and those sins we wilfully committed and thus plunged ourselves into helpless guilt. 'That Christ has regarded my helpless estate, And hath shed His own blood for my soul.'

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And then to work in us from the centre of our beings and begin the great process of transformation that brings us into the company with angels, qualifies us to receive a resurrection body patterned on Christ who stilled the waves, broke the loaves and fed the multitude, spoke with authority, and commanded heaven's armies.

That is His commitment. So what of ours? Taking the marriage illustration, we are to give ourselves to Him and honour Him. Belonging to Him as the beloved. No other alliances distract us. No other love inflames us, no other eyes trouble us. His in thought words and deed.

That is our commitment, our response of love. And there are details to discover as we walk in faith joyously and he walks in grace with us.

The Covenant service which the early Methodists followed expressed these certain truths and made responses likewise.

The Covenant defines the only way God answers both His longings and our needs.

Some say 'why doesn't God remove all pain and suffering now?' Well, he is doing it in His time, that day will come. But the only way he can guarantee our eternal benefit is by this Covenant. Our eternal safety is guaranteed by this Covenant because it is powered by the shed blood of Jesus who exercises an eternal priesthood for us.

In this Covenant sealed in the Son of God's blood, God has done the ultimate to justly win this world back to Himself. Yahweh God has spent heaven on this Covenant. There is nothing left. There is no 'plan B'. We should realise there is nothing God can do to help us outside His Covenant. There is only darkness, deception and death outside of this Covenant. There is no other plan for dealing with sin and violence. This is it. If this doesn't work the Destroyer will take overⁱⁱ

Yahweh Himself has no legitimacy according to his righteous nature to do anything other than what is in this total eternal Covenant package.ⁱⁱⁱ To save from His declared wrath of judgment, change the sin warp in human nature and achieve friendship with those who hated him, including them in His eternal life is His greatest problem. His solution is this blood Covenant^{iv}.

God has played His hand. He has spent all His resources. His own beloved Son has come and fulfilled the eternal will of the Father. There is nothing left. Reject this covenant of grace and there is no help in the universe. Come to Jesus now. Respond to Jesus and accept His plan today. Amen.

Prayer:

Father thank you for your invitation to be embraced into you glorious Covenant formed and sealed in the blood of your Son. I trust my soul and all my living moments to Jesus my Saviour and Lord. I confess that He is risen from the dead, has truly put away my sin in his judgment bearing death and has brought me into His royal inheritance of life everlasting. I gladly take these elements of bread and wine And proclaim Christ's death where my judgment is born and finished and will await His return bringing my inheritance.

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Covenant hymn; by John Wesley

1. Lord, I am not mine, but yours alone.
Let your will be done and not my own.
Put me where you will, and let me serve;
in everything I do, let me endure.

*This is my prayer, Lord, to you.
My promise and my vow, strong and true.
And the covenant I make on earth,
let it be fulfilled in heaven. Amen.*

2. Father, Son, and Spirit hear my cry,
forever I am yours and you are mine.
Father, son and Spirit hear my cry,
forever I am yours and you are mine. *[Refrain]*

Let me be employed for you, laid aside for you,
lifted high for you or brought low.
Let me be full, let me empty. Let me have all things or nothing.

3. Lord, I am not mine, but yours alone.
Let your will be done and not my own.
Put me where you will and let me serve;
in everything I do, let me endure. *[Refrain]*

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The Table of Holy Communion:

(You may have elements of bread and wine prepared for this service together).

Communion prayer of confession and thanksgiving.

Our Father in Heaven, please forgive and heal us from doubting your holy counsel, your word. You have told us always to rejoice, to live in gospel joy. We have sometimes doubted the possibility of that. We easily shrink back from wholeheartedly seizing your gifts.

We want our ways day by day to show off your wonderful change in our lives. But we have hidden this light in fear and stayed in dark places too much. This should never be, and we ask you to lead us on into your 'more than conquering' victories this year.

We want to run and finish proud of your calling. We are pilgrims, transients, and refugees journeying to our true home. You have told us that the world delivers affliction and that you are our true peace. But we are kingdom people and will live with regal confidence and royal obedience in your glorious domain Lord Jesus. By your grace we ask and to your glory, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

The Administration:

What Jesus accomplished and what we proclaim; The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same

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way, after supper He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

After partaken, Prayer:

Thank you Father for nourishing us for eternal life with the body and blood of your beloved Son. Grant that we may evermore live in Him and His Word in us. For His sake we ask, Amen.

Benediction:

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with every good thing to do His will. And may He accomplish in us what is pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen.

This service was prepared by Rev Ian Clarkson for HopeNet SA

ⁱ Ephesians 5.31

ⁱⁱ John 10.10

ⁱⁱⁱ Ponder this Scripture with its vast dimensions; Revelation 5.1-5 and outcome in following verses.

^{iv} Hebrews 9.14,26-28; 10.10,14,26;