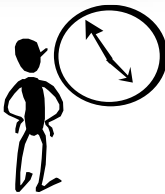


Inside this issue:

<i>Is Change Always Right?</i>	1
<i>Back to Basics: Covenants</i>	3
<i>A.M. Sermon Outline: Lessons from Molly Pitcher</i>	6
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(every other week)

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

Is Change Always Right?

By Glen Young

Change is difficult. We all have experienced this truth. How many New Year resolutions have fallen by the wayside after a few weeks? There is no doubt that changing bad behavior is a necessity even though it is difficult.

It is not my intention to discuss the need to change bad behavior. However, it is my intention to discuss the question; is change always right? As we investigate this question let us do so with an open mind. Could it be that the difficulty to change is not necessarily a bad thing? Please give consideration to the thoughts contained in this article.

How many times have we heard, "that is so old-fashioned?" Or, "We need to move into the twenty-first century with our message?" While we accept that the only constant in life is change, history is filled with examples where change was detrimental to the welfare of a society of people. No where is this more obvious than when societies leave the righteous mores of their ancestors. History tells us that a society that deteriorates into immorality is doomed to destruction.

"Thus says the LORD: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, 'We will not pay attention.' Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what will happen to them. Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it" (Jeremiah 6:16-19).

God instructed Jeremiah to speak to Israel this metaphor as an explanation about the great calamity that was coming upon them. As the traveler of an unfamiliar road who

comes to diverging roads must inquire of others which direction to take, so is Israel commanded to seek from others the “ancient paths.” The path they are to seek is the one which their fathers had walked at the direction of God by His word: signifying that there is no true way, but that which God prescribes.

The change Israel had made as a people was destroying them. Their departure from God’s way was causing God to rain upon them His wrath. We know from history that this caused the removal from their ‘promised land’ and dissolution of Israel as a nation. Who, then, will say that the change from the ancient paths of their fathers to the modern way of godlessness and sin was good for Israel?

The example of Israel is a warning for all people for all time. People can rebel against the moral standard set by God in which their fathers walked. We can do so in the name of Change. We can do it to fit in with modern society. We can plead our case that it will be a better and more prosperous way. However, in the end we must ask if such change is in accord with the will of our God.

I do not believe anyone who reads this article will disagree with the observation that the world, people in general, and our society in particular, have changed and are changing for the worse. In our own America the beautiful, we see moral decay. Sex education in public schools is touted as a necessity. What we have gotten is a society where children are being sexualized at a younger and younger age. A society where children are made to think it is OK to have sexual intercourse so long as you use contraceptives. But if you get pregnant, that is OK too, you can get an abortion. Millions of babies are murdered in their mother’s womb because mommy does not want them.

We have become a society where drug and alcohol addictions are rampant. A society that glamorizes certain ones who fall prey to this destructive life style just because they have a talent which brings them notoriety.

We have become a society filled with laziness. Those who expect to live off the labors of others. Was this the attitude of those who came here and carved a nation out of a wilderness? The desire to be independent and free has been coddled out of too many in our society today.

Christians are not immune to these changes that have occurred. When Christian men and women see nothing wrong with ‘living together’ without marriage or same sex marriage, they are not walking by the ancient paths. Along the same line, when Christians take the position they can change marriages as often as they want with impunity, they are not walking in the ancient paths. When local churches are dying because no one wants to support the work of evangelism, be personally involved in the work of the local church, or take the initiative to lead where they are qualified to do so, they are not walking by the ancient paths. When Christians have their priorities in the wrong things, they are not walking by the ancient paths.

While change is not sinful within and of itself, we must not change from the an-

cient paths lest we be judged as was Israel.

Christians must never forget who they are and what they are required to do. Paul understood this and affirmed that he lived his life with a clear understanding of his responsibilities. "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

Back To Basics: Covenants

By Frank Jamerson

When brethren make such statements as: "Jesus did not come to establish a covenant which was different from any previous arrangements," and "Jesus is the covenant victim, not a covenant maker or law-maker," it indicates a dire need to get back to basics. When men are confused about the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant and affirm that God has only one covenant, it is time to get out the Bible dictionary and concordance and study God's word instead of listening to men.

Though a dictionary definition is not to be accepted as inspired by God, it often helps to understand a subject. Thayer defines "*diatheke*" (covenant) as: "a disposition, arrangement, of any sort, which one wishes to be valid ... a testament or will ... a compact, covenant ... we find in the New Testament two distinct covenants spoken of (Galatians 4:24), viz. the Mosaic and the Christian ... This new covenant Christ set up and ratified by undergoing death ... by metonymy ... *diatheke* is used in II Corinthians 3:14, of the sacred books of the Old Testament because in them the conditions and principles of the older covenant were recorded" (pg. 136,137). He defined "*nomos*" (law) as "anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, usage, law ... a law or rule producing a state approved by God" (p. 427). When we examine the uses of these words in the Bible, we can see that Thayer has basically described what we read in God's word.

The first time the word "covenant" appears (though not necessarily the first covenant) is God's promise to Noah, "*But I will establish My covenant with you ...*" (Genesis 6:18). Later, God said, "*Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth,*" and the "*sign of the covenant*" was the rainbow (Genesis 9:12-13). The next covenant is the threefold promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). The Land promise is specifically called "*a covenant*" (Genesis 15:18), and an "*everlasting possession*" (Genesis 17:8). God kept His covenant with Israel (Joshua 21:43-45). The Nation promise also is called an everlasting covenant. "*And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you*" (Genesis 17:7). They

became a "*nation, great, mighty, and populous*" while they were in Egypt (Deuteronomy 26:5). As a "sign of the covenant" God commanded that descendants of Abraham be circumcised (Genesis 17:10-11). Later, circumcision (Leviticus 12:3) and the sabbath (Exodus 31:16-17) were given as a sign of the special relationship between God and Israel. In one sense both these things were covenants and in another, they were signs of a special covenant with Israel. The Seed promise is called a covenant in Galatians 3:16-17. This covenant was fulfilled in Christ and included all nations (Genesis 22:18). That was not true of the nation and land covenants with Abraham.

The Old Covenant

There are many other "covenants" mentioned in the Old Testament, in fact, there are half a dozen that are called "everlasting" (Genesis 9:16; 17:8,19; 48:4; Exodus 40:15; Leviticus 16:34; Numbers 25:13; II Samuel 23:5; I Chronicles 16:17). These, and more, are included in what is called the Old Covenant which God gave to the nation of Israel. The covenant given on Mt. Sinai was ratified by the blood of animals. Moses "*took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.' And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold, the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words'*" (Exodus 24:7,8). This is also called the Law of Moses, the Law of God, or simply the Law (Nehemiah 8:1,8,13). When Hilkiah found "*the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord,*" (II Kings 22:8), Josiah learned about it and "*read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord*" (II Kings 23:2). Obviously, not every "covenant" is a law (in the sense of being a rule to be followed by men). The covenant God made with Noah (Genesis 9:12-13) did not demand any action on the part of man, but the covenant of circumcision (Genesis 17:13-14) was a law (Galatians 5:2-3), and to deny that the "Book of the Covenant" was also the "Book of the Law" is to deny plain Bible statements in order to maintain a false theory.

The New Covenant

The Messianic prophet said that "in the latter days" the law would go forth from Zion (Isaiah 2:2-3). In the forty-second chapter, God said: "*Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles ... He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlines (Gentiles) shall wait for His law*" (Isaiah 2:1,4). The law that went forth from Zion was the law of "My Servant, My Elect One!" (To deny that Jesus was a law-maker is to argue with Isaiah!) It is called a better covenant, which was established on better promises (Hebrews 8:6), the second covenant (Hebrews 8:7), a new covenant (of which Jesus is the Mediator, Hebrews 12:24), and the everlasting covenant (Hebrews 13:20). It is also called "the faith" which was revealed after the law had accomplished its purpose (Galatians 3:23-25). It is "*the new*

covenant ... *the ministry of the Spirit ... the ministry of righteousness*" and those who do not see a difference between this and "*the Old Testament (or Covenant)*" have "*minds that are hardened*" (II Corinthians 3:6-14). It is "*the law of liberty*" by which we are blessed, and by which we will be judged (James 1:25; 2:12). It was ratified by the "*blood of the new covenant*" (Matthew 26:28). The fruit of the vine was "*the new covenant in My blood*" (not the old covenant, Luke 22:20; I Corinthians 11:25). The Old Covenant was ratified by the blood of animals, but "*the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these*" (Hebrews 9:19-23). In His sacrifice, Christ took away "*the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all!*" (Hebrews 10:9-10). (Those who say the only thing taken away at the cross was sin must be saying that He took away the first sin to establish the second sin! Those who say He took away the first priesthood to establish the second, have not helped their cause, because the change of priesthood demands a change also in the law, Hebrews 7:12). When this covenant went into effect, sins were genuinely forgiven (in contrast to the first covenant, Hebrews 10:3-4), and "*there is no longer any offering for sin*" (Hebrews 10:16-18).

The fact that there are many similarities between the two covenants does not prove that we live under the old covenant. (There are many similarities between my right hand and my left, but they are two different hands!) Have we forgotten: "*God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds*" (Hebrews 1:1-2)? If it is not in the New Covenant, we cannot do it and please God.

