

Chapter 12

The Covenant Lawyer

Historical Perspective

When the kings of countries entered into Blood Covenant the lesser king and his people had to accept the laws of the Great King as their law. These laws were discussed and understood long before the ceremony took place. They were proclaimed and affirmed publicly during the ceremony. The Vassal king had a vested interest in understanding these laws, because his continued role as a king, and his life, and the life of his family depended on his total acceptance of the new laws.

As already stated, the new laws applied not just to the king but to his people as well. Here a difficulty could arise. While the kings had a clear understanding of the new laws, often the people did not. Like us, they relied on memory, familiarity and common sense and just as it is for us, this was not always reliable. People forgot, they made mistakes, sometimes they did not understand the consequences of their actions or people broke the law out of sheer ignorance. But ignorance of the law is no excuse and in many cases people would break covenant law, at the cost of their life. Occasionally this would strain the relationship between the two kingdoms which could bring them close to war.

To resolve this situation people were appointed to become “expert” in Covenant Law. They were known as “Covenant Lawyers.” It was their job to make sure that each of the Covenant partners knew of and understood their rights and responsibilities.

The laws were many and it was difficult to remember everything, especially if the Vassal was conquered by a significantly greater king. The new laws and ceremonial differences could be substantial and complicated. The process of educating the Vassal and his people to the new laws could be long and difficult. The new legal rights and responsibilities may be many and varied depending on the status of the Covenant Heads, the reason that they had entered the Covenant, and the culture they came from.

Differences in cultural values could easily complicate relationships between peoples. Unfamiliarity with the cultural differences could lead to a clash as easily then as it can today, for what is socially acceptable in one culture may be deeply offensive in another culture. Without realising it one could violate the Covenant, especially if the Vassal had to accept a new set of covenant standards.

Even after the public reading of the law, the Vassal or his leaders could be ignorant, or forgetful of their rights, or their benefits and responsibilities. This lack of knowledge could lead to unnecessary suffering or difficulty for the Vassal and/or his people.

Lack of knowledge could easily cause a violation of the Covenant simply out of ignorance. Such a violation could demand the life of the Covenant breaker. The Covenant Lawyer was in the best position to step in to prevent these misunderstandings and difficulties.

The Covenant Lawyer would move from partner to partner, explaining his rights and responsibilities and would be available to clear up any misunderstandings in the Covenant contract.

When the covenant incorporated two nations rather than tribes or families the covenant lawyer would take the dual role of both advising the king while also moving from town to town, explaining the law and passing judgement as appropriate among the people.

Old Testament

God provided a Covenant Lawyer in the Old Testament days. A man was appointed to move from place to place as required by covenant law, reminding the people of their responsibilities, cautioning them of the consequences of their failures if they chose not to follow God's ways, and advising them of the benefits available to them as the people choosing to live in harmony with God's law.

The Old Testament prophet filled this role. He moved from town to town, village to village exhorting and warning the kings, priests and people to take heed of the word of God and to their own lives. He would often issue fresh warnings and remind the people of the promises of God.

The messages of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Micah, indeed all of the Old Testament Prophets were messages to bring the Jews, the people of God to repentance and or blessing, reminding them of their standing with God and of their Covenant relationship.

"You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, And You gave them water for their thirst. Nehemiah 9:20.

"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. Ezekiel 36:27

for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. 2 Peter 1:21

Most of the Old Testament was written by these Covenant Lawyers. Most of their national prophesying had to do with the law and revealing the truths and consequences of the law.

New Testament

As partners of the New Covenant we need a Covenant Lawyer. Perhaps as 21st century Christians we need one even more so than the Old Testament saints did. As with so many covenant partners in the past we are all too often quite unaware of all God has given to us.

Over the last 100 years so much change has occurred in our lives. Knowledge has increased exponentially. To think that until the end of the 19th Century travel, communication, Transport and technology had changed little since the time of Jesus. In less than a century we have placed a man on the moon, sent satellites to distant planets and galaxies, found cures for diseases, increased longevity for many, and taught more to the average schoolchild than our forebears learned in a lifetime. Technological advances exceed our wildest expectations in computerisation, robotics, communications, medicines and so on, but the process has had a devastating effect.

Rather than gaining better understanding, the choices offered seem to bring greater confusion. Our values are less clear, our boundaries are no longer well defined, thus making the need of the lawyer greater today than in the past. Our inclination to question authority permeates into the church and we find more excuses to evade responsibility.

Our need is indeed greater; God knew this and gave us a greater Covenant Lawyer, the Holy Spirit. Of course, He has always been the Covenant Lawyer; for it was the Holy Spirit who spoke through the Old Testament prophet; He used men then even as He uses men now.

for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. 2 Peter 1:21

The difference is that now He is our personal Covenant Lawyer rather than a “national” covenant lawyer.

Jesus could not have made the point clearer to us than He did in His major discourse on the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives in the Gospel of John chapters 14-16. It is especially helpful to note the use of the Greek word “paraclete “ and the way it is translated into English.

The most correct is the term Advocate, more commonly used in legal terms as a lawyer. Jesus explained to the disciples that one of the roles of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers after His crucifixion was to be that of an “Advocate” .

It was the Holy Spirit who would be leading, guiding and teaching the apostles and indeed all Christians down through the church age.

“Yet it is the truth that I am telling you--it is to your advantage that I go away. For unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but

if I go, I will send Him to you. John 16:7 1912 Weymouth New Testament

But I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when that One comes, He will convict the world concerning sin, and concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment. Concerning sin, because they do not believe on Me; concerning righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He hears, He shall speak. And He will announce to you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will announce it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and will announce it to you. (John 16:7-15)

The major difference between the role of the Holy Spirit as the covenant lawyer in the Old Testament and the New Testament is that in the Old Testament His role was primarily to the nations rather than a personal ministry. In the New Testament His role is primarily to individuals, an intensely personal ministry.

The Holy Spirit has intimate knowledge of the saints even as Jesus had such a relationship and knowledge of His disciples.

This role of the Holy Spirit, as the adviser and guide, is to ensure that we are aware of our rights and privileges, to see that we accept our responsibilities and to keep us aware of our relationship, with Jesus and each other.

This is further emphasised in the following scriptures.

for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” Luke 12:12

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. John 14:26

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, John 15:26

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. John 16:13

*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,
Romans 8:16*

*which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom,
but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with
spiritual words. 1 Corinthians 2:13*

*As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you,
and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing
teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it
has taught you, you abide in Him. 1 John 2:27*

The Holy Spirit plays a major role in our life. However these verses, often taken in isolation, come together under the banner of the Covenant in a new dimension, presenting the Holy Spirit as our Blood Covenant Lawyer. This is clear to us from the scriptures from both the Old and the New Testaments.

It is true that the Holy Spirit is our teacher who leads us into all truth, and He does so both individually and corporately, for He never teaches the individual at the expense of the ministry gifts (as outlined in Ephesians 4:11-13). The roles of the pastor, teacher, evangelist, prophet and apostle are enabled through the Holy Spirit. This is further reinforced in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, and in Romans 12:3-8 where the various ministries of the Spirit are presented and explained. Certainly, the primary place for the exercise of the ministry gifts is through the church, yet we must never limit the use of these gifts to church meetings. The apostles were free to exercise the gifts in public, we should be free to do so also.

This role as Covenant Lawyer brings added dimension of His work to us and helps to explain why He is so involved with our daily life, and not just our church life. This role explains why it is that He is always present to teach us both simple and deep truths at any moment that we are prepared to receive it. It is His ministry to make sure that we understand our relationship with God to the best possible advantage for all concerned.

Our God wants us to understand his Covenant and our responsibilities to it and our benefits from it and the only person conversant enough with all the details of the Covenant is God Himself. Therefore, it must fall to Him to make sure that we do understand.

The Holy Spirit therefore will come and “teach us all things” that Jesus wants us to know.

John 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

1 John 2:27 As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him.

Our God wants us to understand the Covenant so that we will not violate the laws of the Covenant. The better we understand the covenant the less risk that we will shirk our responsibility to it, and therefore we will not incur His displeasure. If ultimately we do not respond to Him, we may find ourselves on the wrong end of His discipline. Indeed we will find ourselves walking in His blessing more and more as we are able to walk in understanding of the covenant.

It is not simply a matter of meeting a set of rules and regulations just to keep a “God somewhere up there” happy. When we allow ourselves to become sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives we will become increasingly more sensitive to the will of God and our own relationship with Him as our Covenant Head. We will become much better equipped to fulfil the work that He has set out for us, which is our life’s calling.

Consequently the blessing of God upon us will be richer and fuller. We should realise that it is in our best interest to see that we do not, in any way, violate the Covenant. The Holy Spirit wants us to receive the maximum possible blessing from God, as well as to be the best possible blessing to Him that we can be.

It is indeed a matter of learning to live our lives as Jesus would live it.

and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. Romans 15:29

An Application

Too often we miss the point that our God is involved with every area of our lives and relationships. He has advice on everything from our conduct at work, to our treatment of our families. From the way husbands and wives treat each other to our relationship with people both within the church and outside the church. There is no area of legitimate human endeavour where God does not have advice, either directly, indirectly or in principle. As for illegitimate human endeavour He simply says, “Don’t.”

We cannot remember all of the issues of Blood Covenant, even though it has been written on our heart, nor indeed are we expected to. Instead, we find ourselves confronted, challenged, blessed, and surprised at every turn as our Blood Covenant Lawyer whispers to our heart the things we need to know, sometimes even the deep things of God.

I am reminded of a friend of mine, I will call him George, who once worked as an auctioneer. At the time of this incident he was a young Christian. Not so much a

young man, but a young Christian, naive in the word and ways of God with little more Biblical knowledge than the most basic understanding of the 10 commandments and his personal moral code.

Called upon, as he often was, to list and value the contents of an estate George found himself in the work-shed of the house he was evaluating and being challenged to secret away a drill-bit. The drill-bit was of little value to him, it was not something he really needed, it was not even valuable, worth only a few cents, but this was one of those momentary situations where temptation took over and without even thinking he slipped the object into his pocket and continued to work.

Quietly the Holy Spirit spoke to him in the only version of the Word of God that he knew “Thou Shalt Not Steal”. George continued to value and list the articles. Some of great value. Some small enough to secret away, of far greater value than the drill-bit. “Thou Shalt Not Steal”. Echoed the voice. Moment after moment, time after time the echo came, “Thou Shalt Not Steal”.

Finally, in frustration he threw down the drill-bit, listed the item, and declared aloud OK, I get it, I am sorry. George told me a great peace came upon Him, not just the peace of a silenced voice probing his conscience, but the peace that comes from knowing you have done what is right and your Heavenly Father is pleased.

So many times the Holy Spirit has spoken to me in quietness, through the TV or in a movie. Sometimes while listening to a sermon or a song or listening to a conversation, but He speaks. Sometimes in revelation, sometimes in conviction, sometimes quietly and unexpectedly sometimes very loudly, He speaks. Always for my good, He speaks.

The word of God declares to us that He will never leave us or forsake us Hebrews 13:5 and He does not. He is always there to speak and to share.

I am so often amazed as I read the word of God. I am suddenly aware of the truths of scripture that have been hidden to me before. We call it “inspiration” or “revelation” and indeed it is. It is also the blood Covenant Lawyer speaking to me.

I am sometimes astounded at a sudden knowledge of a principle of the word of God being opened to me as this Lawyer speaks to me, opening truth even before I have read it, only to find a few days or weeks later the scriptures open the same truths, reinforcing the principles I had been shown a little while before.

I am sure you too have found the same experience as your Covenant Lawyer opens truth to you. Sometimes He is warning against danger, sometimes encouraging towards an unrealised blessing, but always bringing me closer to Jesus. When I hear Him speaking to me it is to change my life, to open a door of

opportunity, to provide an entrance into a blessing, or to re-direct me from an impending personal disaster.

My heart, like yours, if left unguarded or to its own devices, will prove to be “exceedingly wicked” and yet my heavenly Father is so totally accepting of me. He will take personal interest in protecting me from myself by sending the Covenant Lawyer to deal with me, as much as He can, before the event.