

THE LION-LAMB'S COVENANT BOOK

Why do you need to know that Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father as King with Him? That's a good question. The answer is simple. Because the Father loves you so much that He wants you to know, without a doubt, that He accepts the Son's sacrifice for sin on your behalf and you are adopted into the heavenly family. You sit with Christ in heavenly places. "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Eph. 2:6.

The world considers the cross of Jesus as foolishness. There's no wisdom there. And what they do know about the cross of Jesus from the movies is that it was one big horror story or blood, guts and gore. Mel Gibson has seen to that in "The Passion." The deeper meaning of the cross of eluded them even those who wear the cross on a chain around their neck or put the cross on their mantel or on the front of their churches, do not understand the cross of Jesus.

When the Jews saw that He was crucified and nailed to a tree, oh those scribes and Pharisees were so happy. I guess they slapped each other on the back and they said, Oh isn't it wonderful. Now we know this man cannot be the Messiah because He told us ever so clearly that anybody who is nailed to a tree cannot be blessed of God. He is cursed of God! A terrible misunderstanding those Jewish leaders had. Indeed, the cross is still misunderstood today.

But God has lifted up His Son and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places. That's what God thinks of Jesus' death on the cross. And by faith we sit right there with Jesus in heavenly places.

At the time of the fall of ancient Babylon Belshazzar, the son of Nabonides, was co-regent with his father on the throne. Nabonides cared not for the responsibility and headaches of kingship, preferring rather to retire to his summer retreat down south and leave the reins of leadership to his son Belshazzar in Babylon. It was a fateful decision in that Belshazzar partied away the kingdom on the night that Cyrus invaded and conquered Babylon. The co-regency of Nabonides and Belshazzar ended in the overthrow of the Babylonian government and anarchy.

King David raised his son Solomon to the level of co-regent before his death. Solomon was coroneted king at the initiative of Jehovah and King David. 1 Kings 1.

God the Father and the Son of God are now seated together as co-regents. Jesus tells us this in His remarks to the Laodicean church. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Revelation 3:21. God's throne is more like a couch on which more than one can sit on it. Christ sits with His Father upon His throne. It is the highest honor to sit at the right hand of the King.

When Jesus ascended from earth to heaven following His resurrection, the writer of Hebrews tells us, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Hebrews 1:3. John the Revelator now informs us as to how this co-regency of Father and the Son came about.

"And I saw in the right hand of Him [God] that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals." Revelation 5:1.

Lying on God's throne to His right hand is a sealed mystery book which has something to do with Christ's sitting with His Father on the throne. Moses was instructed of the Lord regarding the king's responsibilities toward God's covenant. "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom [at his coronation as king], that he shall write him a copy of this law [God's covenant] in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law [God's covenant] and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel." Deuteronomy 17:18-20.

God's ten commandments, "the words of this law," are the ten promises of His everlasting covenant. The old covenant is, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Exodus 19:8. The old covenant is the people's promise to obey the law and they immediately fell into idolatry and hence there could be no salvation in their promises. However God's everlasting covenant are ten wonderful promises that He will fulfill His commandments in the heart and mind of the believer who says, Amen,—so be it,—in Jesus Christ.

Now the king who was "after the Lord's heart," understood that God was the King of Israel and the king was His coregent. As such when the king of Israel sat down upon the throne he was to take up the

book of the covenant and read it regularly and instruct the people in it. He was to lead by personal example and by proactive teaching.

God had promised Abraham, “And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” Genesis 17:7. God promised that Abraham’s seed, who was Christ (Gal. 3:16), would bring everlasting salvation. God’s covenant is His plan to bring sinners back into harmony with Himself through the forgiveness of their sins, which is justification of life and the power of the gospel to cleanse of sin, which is justification by faith. The king was to instruct the people regarding the plan of salvation. At the beginning of his reign this was his commission.

Now a mighty angel asked a crucial question at the time of Christ’s sitting down with His Father, regarding the sealed book of the covenant. “And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” And immediately there was a response. “And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.” Revelation 5:2, 3.

The book of the everlasting covenant contains the lives and the destinies of every living soul on earth. It is the recorded history of the plan of salvation.¹ Since it contains your salvation and destiny it is of utmost importance and interest to you that someone worthy be found to open its seals and read the book, but this is left to only One who is worthy.

When David was king, He was a man after God’s own heart. The Lord promised David, “Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep [*shamar*, cherish] My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon

¹ “The destiny of every nation was contained in that book.” Ellen White, *12MR*, pp. 196, 197. “Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 294. “There in His open hand lay the book, the roll of the history of God’s providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth’s history to its close.” *9MR*, p. 7.

thy throne for evermore.” Psalm 132:11, 12. To cherish God’s covenant meant to believe His promise. In so doing, Israel would never lack a descendant of David from sitting upon the throne.

The future kings of Israel and Judah, for the most part, did evil in the sight of the Lord. There were the likes of Ahaz, Manasseh, Amnon, and Jehoiakim who were all unworthy; until finally, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were taken from them. Following their exile to Babylon, the Davidic monarchy was never re-established.

At that time the prophet Isaiah spoke these words: “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.” Isaiah 8:16. The unloyalty of the Hebrew kings and their unwillingness to pay heed to the instructions and the gospel of the Covenant Book precipitated its sealing. The termination of the Israelite kingship prompted the Divine action of storing the Covenant Book for an appointed period of time.

Isaiah explained, “And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.” Isaiah 29:11-13. No one was found worthy to read the sealed book and thus instruct the people in the plan of salvation. The continued, persistent unbelief of God’s covenant prompted its sealing for a period of time until one was found worthy to read it.

The Book of Revelation was written with the tears of the Apostle John and it cannot be understood without tears. “And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.” Revelation 5:4. The key question was, Who is worthy? Who is qualified to sit on the throne and take the book of the covenant and execute what is written therein? The heavenly council faces the rebellion of Satan which has spread to the earth and no one, no earthly king, is found who is worthy.

God’s government faces a constitutional crisis. Someone must be found who is worthy to reign. There must be someone who upholds the law of God, the foundation of God’s government. Anyone who sins is in rebellion against God’s government. It must also be someone who can demonstrate mercy and forgiveness to sinners.

In Revelation 4:11 we read, "Thou art worthy, O Lord." On the basis of His creatorship He is worthy to receive glory, honor and power. Now one of the twenty-four elders, one of our delegates from earth who has been redeemed from our midst and is in heaven assisting our High Priest with his priestly duties, informs John that there One who has been found, uniquely qualified to open the covenant book.

"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." Revelation 5:5. The termination of the Israelite kingship did not annul God's covenant promise to David that he "shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel" (Jer. 33:17). God was faithful to his covenant promise to David.

Have you ever heard a real, live lion roar? When I was a youngster my cousin who was a fireman, used to take me to the zoo to see the lions. I would ride upon his big, broad shoulders. When we went past the lions in their cages, they would let out an awful roar which caused everything to vibrate. It sent chills up and down my spine.

The lion is the king of the forest and is a fit symbol of the tribe of Judah from which David and the Son of David arose. It is His commanding presence and awesome respect that will bring the nations in their final hour to their knees in homage.

Jeremiah pointed to God who "will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which He will be called: The Lord is our righteousness." Jer. 23:5, 6. The family tree of David was cut down, but out of its sawn off trunk emerged the Sprout of the Son of David. He alone could open the seven-sealed book of the covenant. He alone could read it. He alone could execute it.

John turned expecting to see a roaring lion, but instead he saw a torn and bleeding Lamb. How can a lion be a lamb? Lions eat lambs. "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Revelation 5:6.

A lion could only command my fear, but a bleeding, slain lamb claims my heart by love. The constitutional crisis that faces God's government is not resolved by force. That is the principle of Satan's

government. By fear he intimidates his enslaved victims and drives them by force.

Are you afraid of walking up to a lion? Are you afraid of walking up to a sheep? I was in an open pen of sheep that were as big as me and I was not afraid whatsoever. With the slain Lamb with seven horns, indicating perfection of power, his compelling attraction is the love that you see in His eyes for you and me. It is by the eyes of His Spirit that He draws us to Himself.

It is the cross of Christ that uniquely qualifies Him to take the book of the covenant and reign as the priest-king. The cross was Sinai at Calvary. He died to uphold the law of God, the basis of God's government. The law could not be swept aside to forgive sinners. So God found a worthy substitute for sinners in Christ. One who never sinned although He took human flesh and was tempted in every way. The cross revealed the great love of God for sinners and His willingness to die for them. Mercy and truth met at the cross. It was His blood of the new testament that was shed for many.

The Son of David took the book of the covenant. "And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne." Revelation 5:7.

Christ approached the throne of God and took the book as the token of kingship. In this formal ceremonial act Christ was invested with the office of lordship over the world and supreme ruler of the universe and Co-ruler with the Father.

The Apostle Peter said of this on the day of Pentecost: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but He saith Himself, The Lord said unto My Lord, Sit thou on My right hand, Until I make Thy foes Thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 2:32-36. The enthronement of Christ occurred at Pentecost.²

² "Christ's ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. For this they were to wait before they entered upon their work. When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The

“And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.” Revelation 5:8.

At the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in Westminster Abbey, the words were spoken: “O God the Crown of the faithful: Bless we beseech thee this Crown, and so sanctify thy servant Elizabeth upon whose head this day thou dost place it for a sign of royal majesty.” The Queen sitting in King Edward’s Chair, the Archbishop reverently placed the crown upon her head in the sight of the people. With loud and repeated shouts, they cried, “God Save the Queen!”

Angels and earthly representatives alike acclaimed the Lamb with a new song. This song was written for this unique occasion. All had witnessed the death of the Lamb. Satan would go to such lengths as to inspire the murder of the innocent, only begotten Son of God.

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:9, 10.

The book of the covenant contains the destiny of all the redeemed from every kindred, tongue, people and nation. It is your story and it is mine. It is the history of God’s people from age to age. Jesus and the Holy Spirit prosecute the advancement of the Gospel to the furthest ends of the globe. His is a priest-king. As priest He mediates the benefits of His shed blood on behalf of sinners. The new covenant promise is that all who receive of this blood become priest-kings with Him. Eden will be restored on the earth made new and the dominion will be restored as promised to the saints.

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” Revelation 5:11, 12.

Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven’s communication that the Redeemer’s inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people.” Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 38, 39.

This throne room was a big place. It accommodated many millions of angels who burst forth in song. The choir was inspired to sing because the Lamb “was slain.” If the cross inspired angels to sing, what should it do for us? The angels are hungry to understand the meaning of the cross. What about us?

I received an invitation to the wedding of my cousin David Penno’s son. He was engaged to be married to one Melody Music. That’s such a delightful name. One can hardly imagine exchanging the last name “Music” for the name “Penno.”

The world has sometimes heard lovely music, but none so glorious as that song of praise to the Lamb who had been slain. His love went to the farthest boundary of hell itself to search for human souls that were lost. That love has conquered. The lost has been found.

Not one of the countless multitudes who sing this chorus sings from fear; every heart is bursting with wonder and praise, genuine adoration to Him who emptied Himself in a sacrifice so complete that it has unveiled to the gaze of all created intelligences for all eternity the depths of the infinite love of God. We can sense in our hearts that beginning pulse of eternal life if we long to join in that song.

That which inspired this glorious song, we can even today begin to study—the cross of Christ. In Christ glorified, the redeemed will ever behold Christ crucified. If you have had a happy song upon your lips it is because Christ bore the chastisement of our peace. For every happy hour you have had He has had an unhappy hour of sorrow on the cross so that you could enjoy life with a smile.

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” Revelation 5:13.

What began as a constitutional crisis over the government of God now ends in the universal acclamation of the One who sits upon the throne and the Lamb. Every created being in heaven, on earth and under the earth proclaims them co-rulers of the Universe. This can take place only at the end of time.

I wonder who that one elder was who started the ball rolling? It was one elder, resurrected from this earth at the time of Christ’s crucifixion, who proclaimed the worthiness of the Lamb to be coroneted and take the book of the covenant. Then the twenty-four elders and the four living angels joined in the vindication of God and

the Lamb. Then all the heavenly hosts, eventually including every created being on earth, joyfully acknowledged the worthiness of the Lamb and God to be co-regents.

“And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever.”

Shall we not join with our heavenly delegates and acclaim Him Priest and King of our lives?