

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXIII

August 4, 2013

No. 31

## The Covenant Of Marriage

(Jerry Fite)

**W**hat is the difference between a contract and a covenant? Referring to our dictionaries, we might conclude they are similar or even synonyms. A contract “draws or pulls together”, where a covenant is an “agreement entered into by two or more parties” thus forming a “compact”. Contract, compact, pretty much the same isn’t it?

One of the definitions for the word “contract” is: “a betrothal or marriage”. While the concept in a contract is to “reduce in size” by bringing interested parties exclusively together, marriage is not so reduced in size that God, who has instituted marriage, is left out. Neither is marriage just an agreement governed by the laws of the land, it is a covenant sealed with an oath before God and governed by His Word

When the Israelite men married “foreign” or “idolatrous” women, Malachi addressed them as “profaning the covenant of our fathers” (Malachi 2:10). While they were practicing other sins contrary to God’s word, they were

entering relationships which would lead them to practicing idolatry and “profane the holiness of God” (Malachi 2:11). God’s demands in his covenant with Israel forbade such marriages (Exodus 34:14-16). They were not just breaking a contract with God; they were profaning a holy covenant with Him.

In addition, they were violating another “covenant”. They were not only marrying foreign women, but were divorcing their wives. Malachi addresses this sin by saying, “...Jehovah hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou has dealt treacherously, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant” (Malachi 2:14). They not only broke God’s covenant by marrying foreign women; they broke their own covenant made with their spouse whom they married in their youth.

In marriage, we are not merely forming a legal contract. We are making a promise in the form of a sacred oath to our mate before God. We are promising with this oath to be governed by

the demands of God’s word, the basis for His covenant with us.

When we promise our mate to “love and cherish till death do us part”; when we promise “to have and to hold from this day forward for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health”; we are entering a covenant with that person strengthened by a sacred oath before God. Oath’s are serious before God, and should be with us (Ecclesiastes 5:4, Exodus 22:11).

God demands we “put not asunder” or “separate” in divorce what God has “joined together” (Matthew 19:6). He designed marriage for life, not till one tires of the other. He has not changed. He still “hates divorce” (Malachi 2:16).

Only sexual immorality, the illicit sexual intercourse with another, gives one the right to divorce his or her mate (Matthew 19:9, Matthew 5:32). Short of that, we must honor the covenant we make with our spouse, and not profane the governing covenant with God.