

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

Special Attachment to Chapter 6: “Yes, God is serious about his covenant!”

How serious is God about a person being water baptized to enter his New Testament covenant of salvation with Jesus Christ? Perhaps we should examine past history of this and then answer the question.

Examples of Not Following the Specifics of a Covenant

The Bible is filled with many specific examples of what happens when we do not heed attention to God’s specific instructions. Here are just a few.

Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus Chapter 10)

Leviticus 10:1-3 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, “It is what the LORD spoke, saying, ‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.’ ” So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

Nadab and Abihu were two of the sons of Aaron, the High Priest of all Israel. They were privileged to be able to minister in the Tent of the Meeting of the Tabernacle on behalf of the people of Israel. One of those tasks was to offer incense on the altar in the Holy Place. The fire they were to use concerning this was from a fire coal removed from the Altar of Burnt Offering from the Courtyard (Lev 16:12). This proved inconvenient for the two young men, for they decided to use “strange fire” from another source and were likely inebriated while doing so (Lev 10:8). This was not what God commanded, therefore He immediately destroyed them with fire from the altar. God was serious about His covenant with the people of God and demanded reverence in carrying it out.



Achan during the Jericho Destruction (Joshua 7)

Joshua 7:19-21 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.” ²⁰ So Achan answered Joshua and said, “Truly, I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it.”

The people of Israel had crossed the Jordan and were beginning their conquest of the Promised Land. When they came to Jericho, the first major city to be destroyed, the

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people were given specific commands concerning the spoils. *Joshua 6:18-19* “But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it.”¹⁹ “But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD.”



There was a man named Achan. He and his family decided that they would covet some of the treasure for themselves and bury it in the ground of the floor of their tent. This caused God to withdraw His support for the next battle in Ai, which led to their defeat. They died because Achan saw, coveted, took and hid the spoil for himself. In the end it would cost the life of not only him, but his entire family. God was serious about the words of His covenant being followed.

Uzzah and the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6)

2 Samuel 6:6-7 But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it.
⁷ And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.

King David was having the Ark of the Covenant moved to the permanent location of the Jerusalem. According to the Law, only Levitical Priests were permitted to move the Ark (Numbers 7:9). Nobody else was allowed to touch it at all.

While in transport, there was a man named Uzzah who was not a Levite. He walked alongside the Levites. When the oxen stumbled a bit, causing the Ark to lean and nearly fall, Uzzah, out of the sincerity of the heart, put forth his steady it. He immediately died at the hand of the LORD. God is serious about keeping the specific commands of His covenant.



Saul and the Covenant of a King (1 Sam 15)

The first king of Israel was Saul and he was hand-selected by God Himself. There was a wicked group of people called the Amalekites in the land of Israel. Saul was commanded to destroy them all. *1 Samuel 15:3* “*Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.*” The specific command was to wipe these vile people off the map, for if they did not do so it would come back to haunt them for generations. What did Saul do with the specific commandment of God? *1 Samuel 15:8-9* *He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.*⁹ *But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.*

Yes he warred against the Amalekites, but he spared the king and saved the best of the cattle for a personal sacrifice to God. Saul had good intentions, but was in violation of God’s specific command. When the prophet Samuel came and saw King Agag and heard the bleating of

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sheep, he sharply rebuked Saul. *1 Samuel 15:22-23 Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams."*²³ *"For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king."* Saul had a covenant with God to be king of all Israel, but because he refused to heed the specifics of God, was rejected from that covenant. God is serious about the commands of His covenant.



Noah: An Example of Taking the Specifics Seriously

We have examined what happens when the people of God fail to heed the words of God. The results are catastrophic. What happens when we take the seriously and with reverence?

Genesis 6:13-18 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth."¹⁴ "Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch."¹⁵ "This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits."¹⁶ "You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks."¹⁷ "Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish."¹⁸ "But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

The world at the time was in prevailing wickedness, being filled with evil and continual violent against their fellow man (6:11). God regretted that He made man (6:7) and vowed to destroy them from them. Among all the unrighteous, God did find a righteous man named Noah (6:9) and offered a covenant exemption to him and his immediate family members. Since God was going to destroy the flesh of the earth with a great flood, His plan for deliverance from the deluge would be a nautical vessel called an ark. The specifics of such a vessel was spelled out in detail.

1. The vessel shall be made of gopher wood.
2. The vessel shall have many rooms with a tar covered pitch on the inside and outside.
3. The vessel shall have a loading door on the side and a window near the top.
4. The vessel shall be 300 cubits long and 50 cubits wide.
5. The vessel shall be three decks high.



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Noah was set his heart on the righteousness of God and the Lord extended a covenant for him and his family. The terms and conditions of the covenant was specific. If he built the ark out of cherry or oak wood, if he failed to cover it with pitch, if he failed to not have a door for loading the animals and supplies, if he failed to provide a hatch door at the top, if he built it small or larger than he was asked to or built it more or less than three levels, then he would not have been obedient to the terms and conditions of the covenant with which God was offering the promise of preservation from the flood.

Noah kept the specific commands because he wanted the specific promise for him and his family not to perish with the rest of the world in the flood. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:20 in reference to this, *“who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.”* Do you really believe an ark made not to the specifics would have survived the flood? Do we really have the right to change the blueprints to that which was convenient? We know it would have been much easier to build an ark small with less decks. We know it would have been easier to build an ark without applying pitch both inside and out. We know it would have been easier to skip the many rooms, the loading door and window hatch. Though convenient to cut corners, it would have resulted in nothing but disaster on the day the flood began.

Stop Being Fooled!

There are many sincere religious groups in the name of Jesus who are preaching a different gospel than that which is taught in the New Testament. Many are teaching that God’s covenant specifies saying a sinner’s prayer, but that is not found in the New Covenant. Others are saying you can be saved apart from water baptism, but that is not what the New Testament is teaching. Nobody in the Book of Acts was “dry-cleaned” into the kingdom of God, yet this is what much of the religious world is teaching. Sincere souls are lusting after entertainment, big crowds and big promises, but are ignorant of God’s word. Personal grounding in Jesus Christ and His covenant begins following the specifics of the gospel. Do you really feel safe in a group of people who teach a different gospel (Galatians 2:8-9)? Do you really think your sincere feelings trump God’s sincere facts? Ask Nadab and Abihu! Ask Achan! Go ask Uzzah and Saul about how sincere they were, yet they still paid the price!

Conclusion:

God is serious about His word concerning His covenant of salvation for the New Testament Christian in the Bible. Peter would go onto to say concerning the Christian covenant in the New Testament in relation to Noah and Ark. *1 Peter 3:21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...* Under the New Covenant God offers eternal life through Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. He is specific that we are believe and confess Jesus’ resurrection from the dead (Romans 10:9), repent and be water baptized INTO the covenant for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). It is at that last step of water baptism that we

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receive the *answer of a good conscience toward God through Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead* (1 Pet 3:21).

God is serious about the specifics of His word concerning His covenant for the New Testament. He told us how to become a covenant Christian of God. Did you seriously take Him up on the offer? If so, then rejoice in your salvation! If you have not, then weigh up your soul, for you are running out of time. Hell or heaven awaits. What is your choice?