

Bible Covenants



“Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments...” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

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The Rainbow Covenant

Introduction

- I. As God was instructing Noah concerning the building of the ark, He promised to make a *covenant* with Noah (Gen 6:18).
 - A. This is the first time the word covenant appears in the Bible, but after this verse, the word occurs 318 more times in the NKJV of the Bible.
 - B. In the simplest form, a covenant is an agreement between two parties and involves promises on the part of each to the other.
 - C. The idea of a covenant between a holy God and His people is one of the central themes of the Bible.
- II. In this series of lessons we want to examine five covenants between God and man.
 - A. The extraordinary thing about God's covenant with His people is that God is holy, all-knowing, and all powerful.
 - B. However, He condescended to enter into covenant with weak and sinful men.

Discussion

I. What Is A Covenant?

- A. In the Biblical sense a covenant implies much more than a contract or a simple agreement between two parties.
 1. A covenant is "a solemn agreement between two or more parties, made binding by some sort of oath" (Herion, "Covenant," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*).
 2. "A *covenant* is an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance" (Mendenhall, "Covenant," *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*).
- B. Most *contracts* have an end date, but a *covenant* is thought of as a permanent arrangement.
 1. Another difference is that a contract generally involves only one part of a person, such as a skill, while a covenant involves the person's total being.
 2. "In the Ancient Near East there were two basic types of covenants or agreements that could be made. First, the parity covenant was an agreement between equals. Examples of this type can be found in Genesis 21:22-32 (Abraham and Abimelech), Genesis 26:26-33 (Isaac and Abimelech), and Genesis 31:44-54 (Jacob and Laban). Second, the suzerainty covenant was an agreement made between a superior (often a king) and an inferior (vassal). Examples found in the Old Testament include the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 15:18 (God and Abraham), and the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 19 (God and the nation of Israel). The covenant made with Noah in Genesis 9 but first referred to in Genesis 6:17 is obviously of the suzerainty-vassal form." (Gangel and Bramer, *Genesis*, 82)

- C. The word usually translated as *covenant* in the Old Testament also provides us with additional insight into the meaning of this important idea.
1. “The technical language used when covenants were made was ‘to cut a covenant’ (*karat berit*). This terminology referred to ritual sacrifices that accompanied covenant making. Often animals sacrificed would be cut in two. In some covenant rituals part of the animal would be eaten by the covenanting parties and part burned in honor of their god. Sometimes the parties would walk symbolically between the pieces of the animal. In any case, the shedding of blood in such rituals signified the solemnity of the covenant, each party vowing not to break the covenant on pain of death.” (Cowan, “Covenant,” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*)
 2. This explains the strange custom of two people passing through the cut bodies of slain animals after making an agreement (Jer 34:18–20).
 - a) Ancient Hittite and Assyrian texts describe ceremonies where people would walk between severed halves of animals as they made covenants.
 - b) It is usually thought that the cutting of the sacrifice would warn the parties of the consequences of breaking the covenant.
 - c) “The Hittite ritual is similar to its Biblical counterpart, but the Assyrian texts may help us to understand its true significance. Essentially, these rites served as self-imprecation oaths, by which people called down curses upon their own heads should they fail to keep their part of the covenant they were solemnly ratifying. The ritual was a way of saying, ‘May what happened to these animals happen to us if we break this covenant.’ Zedekiah’s covenant symbolized what would befall covenant-breakers. In this case Zedekiah and his people did break the covenant, and the death and destruction the ritual enacted were indeed the outcome.” (Kaiser, *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, 1251)
 - d) A ritual or ceremony such as this always accompanied the making of a covenant in the Old Testament.
 3. Sometimes those entering into a covenant shared a holy meal, such as when Laban and Jacob made their covenant (Gen 31:54).
 4. Abraham and his male descendants were commanded to be circumcised as a “sign of covenant” between them and God (Gen 17:10–11).
 5. Moses sprinkled the blood of animals on the altar and upon the people who entered into covenant with God at Mount Sinai (Exod 24:3–8).
- D. The Old Testament contains many examples of covenants between people who related to each other as equals.
1. The covenant between Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:27, 32).
 2. The covenant between Isaac and Abimelech (Gen 26:26–31).
 3. The covenant between Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:43–54).
 4. The covenant between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:3).
 5. The covenant between David and Abner (2 Sam 3:12–13).
 6. The covenant between David and the elders of Israel (2 Sam 5:3).
 7. The covenant between Solomon and King Hiram of Tyre (1 Kings 5:12).
 8. King Asa of Judah led his people to make a covenant to seek the Lord after many years of rebellion (2 Chr 15:9–15).
 9. Marriage is understood to be a covenant as well (Mal 2:14).

II. The Rainbow Covenant (The Noahic Covenant)

- A. Centuries before the time of Abraham, God made a covenant with Noah, assuring him that He would never again destroy the world by flood (Gen 9:11).
- B. Noah lived at a time when the whole earth was filled with violence, yet he did not allow the evil standards of his day to rob him of fellowship with God.
 - 1. Noah stood out as the only one who “walked with God” (Gen 6:8–9), as was also true of his great-grandfather Enoch (Gen 5:22).
 - 2. The Lord singled out Noah from all his contemporaries and chose him as the man to accomplish a great work.
 - 3. God promised to establish a covenant with Noah (Gen 6:17–18).
- C. When God saw the wickedness that prevailed in the world (Gen 6:5), He told Noah of His intention to destroy the ancient world by a universal flood.
 - 1. God instructed Noah to build an ark (a large barge) in which he and his family would survive the deluge.
 - 2. Noah believed God and obeyed Him and “according to all that God commanded him, so he did” (Gen 6:22).
 - 3. Noah is listed among the heroes of faith (Heb 11:7).
- D. With unswerving confidence in God, Noah started building the ark.
 - 1. During this time Noah continued to preach God’s judgment and mercy, warning the ungodly of their approaching doom (2 Pet 2:5).
 - 2. He preached for 120 years, however, without any converts (1 Pet 3:20).
 - 3. People continued in their evil ways and turned deaf ears to his pleadings and warnings until they were overtaken by the flood.
- E. When the ark was ready, Noah entered in with all kinds of animals “and the Lord shut him in” (Gen 7:16), and he was cut off completely from the rest of mankind.
- F. When the waters of the great flood receded, Noah was grateful to the Lord who had delivered him from the universal, worldwide disaster.
 - 1. After the flood Noah built an altar to God and made a sacrifice, which God accepted graciously (Gen 8:20–22).
 - 2. The Lord promised Noah and his descendants that He would never again destroy the world with a universal flood.
 - 3. The Lord made an everlasting covenant with Noah and his descendants, establishing the *rainbow* as the sign of His covenant (Gen 9:1–17).
 - 4. This rainbow covenant called for no human response.
 - 5. “The designation of the rainbow as a sign of the covenant does not suggest that this was the first rainbow ever seen. The function of a sign is connected to the significance attached to it. In like manner, circumcision is designated as a sign of the covenant with Abraham, yet that was an ancient practice, not new with Abraham and his family.” (Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 39)
 - 6. “The rainbow in the clouds speaks to humankind from God. God allowed Noah to understand what the bow meant to him: a visible declaration that the Lord will never again destroy the earth by flood. The rainbow, then, is God’s promise made visible. Covenant signs express covenant promises to covenant people.” (Kaiser, *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, 17)

- G. One part of the covenant God made with Noah involved the sanctity of human life, i.e., that “whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man” (Gen 9:6).
1. “Following his comments about the killing of animals, God addresses the issue of homicide. Violence by ‘all flesh’ (v. 11), i.e., by man and animals, prompted God to send the flood (6:11, 13). If human nature has not improved after the flood (6:5; 8:21), how is violence to be prevented in the future? This legal enactment is the answer: **From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.** This means that any animal or person that takes a human life will be held accountable by God, working through human representatives (e.g., Exod 20:13; 21:28). **Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.** Here the principle of talion, a life for a life, is applied (see Exod 21:23)...Human life is to be valued so highly that it is protected by this system of punishment because **God made man in his own image**, and so to murder another human being is to murder what is most like God, and is thus implicitly an attack on God himself.” (*ESV Study Bible*, on Gen 9:5–6)
 2. “Exacting punishment for murder is not reserved for deity but is placed under the purview of human judicial systems here, whether they are located in courts or in clans. This verse may well mark the beginning of judicial responsibility that is eventually evidenced in the compilations of sample verdicts (such as those found on the Hammurabi Stele) throughout the ancient Near East. These compendia demonstrate that the kings and societies of the ancient world took their judicial responsibilities seriously. Many of these indicate that capital punishment was common in cases of homicide, though often lesser penalties were exacted depending on the social status of both the perpetrator and the victim.” (Walton, *ZIBBCOT*, 1.53)
 3. God’s law concerning the death penalty pre-dates the Law of Moses, and it is still in effect today.

Invitation

- I. The covenant that God made with Noah was an *unconditional* covenant—no power on earth could stop God from keeping His word.
- II. However, the New Covenant established by Jesus, and paid for with His blood, has *conditions* that we must meet in order to obtain the promised blessings.
- III. Have you obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ? (Mark 16:16)

The Abrahamic Covenant

Introduction

- I. In our last lesson, we noticed that God made a *covenant* with Noah after he and his family left the ark (Gen 9:1-17).
 - A. This covenant included God's promise to never again destroy the world by a universal flood (Gen 9:11).
 - B. The covenant also included the death penalty for those who took a human life—and this covenant was to last as long as the world remained (Gen 9:6).
- II. Centuries after the flood, God made a covenant with Abraham.
 - A. In making a covenant with Abraham, God promised to bless Abraham's descendants and make them His own special people.
 - B. In return, Abraham was to remain faithful to God and to serve as a channel of blessing to the rest of the world (Gen 12:1-3).
 1. The land promise ("to a land that I will show you," Gen 12:1).
 2. The nation promise ("I will make you a great nation," Gen 12:2).
 3. The seed promise ("in you all families of the earth shall be blessed," Gen 12:3).

Discussion

I. The Abrahamic Covenant

- A. Abraham's story begins with his migration, along with the rest of his family, from Ur of the Chaldeans, a prominent Sumerian city (Gen 11:31).
 1. He was from the great and populous city of Ur, and therefore a Gentile although he became the first Hebrew.
 2. His parents were heathen and served other gods (Josh 24:2, 14).
 3. He and his family moved north from Ur along the trade routes of the ancient world and settled in the flourishing trade center of Haran.
 4. Haran, located about 500 miles northwest of Ur, was noted for its moon worship.
 5. Abraham remained there until his father died (Gen 11:32).
 6. While living in Haran, at the age of 75, Abraham received a call from God to go to a strange, unknown land that God would show him.
 7. Apparently, the call in Haran was God's second call to Abraham (Acts 7:2-4).
- B. Abraham moved south along the trade routes from Haran, traveling through Shechem and Bethel, to the land of Canaan (Gen 12:4-9).
 1. Canaan was a populated area at the time, inhabited by the Canaanites.
 2. Abraham's belief that God would ultimately give this land to him and his descendants was an act of faith.
 3. The circumstances seemed quite difficult, but Abraham's faith in God's promises allowed him to trust in the Lord.

- C. God promised Abraham that He would make him the father of a “great nation” (Gen 12:2).
 - 1. The promise must have seemed unbelievable to Abraham because his wife, Sarah, was childless (Gen 11:30).
 - 2. Abraham obeyed God with no hint of doubt or disbelief.
 - 3. He took his wife and his nephew, Lot, and went to the land that God would show him.
- D. Abraham’s place in the Bible’s portrait gallery is unique and unapproachable.
 - 1. He stands out as a landmark in the spiritual history of the world.
 - 2. Abraham’s life is given us in detail, and we know him as we know few men of the Bible.
 - 3. He was a rough, simple, venerable Bedouin-like sheep master.
 - 4. He uttered no prophecy, wrote no book, sang no song, gave no laws.
 - 5. Yet in the long list of Bible greats, he alone is spoken of as being “the father of the faithful” (Rom 4:11) and “the friend of God” (Jas 2:23; 2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8).

II. The Covenant Reaffirmed

- A. In Genesis 15 the Lord *reaffirmed* His promise to Abraham.
 - 1. The relationship between God and Abraham was a covenant relationship.
 - 2. Abraham agreed to go to the land that God would show him (an act of faith), and God agreed to make Abraham a great nation (Gen 12:1–3).
 - 3. However, Abraham became anxious about the promise of a nation being found in his descendants because of his advanced age—and so the Lord then reaffirmed the earlier covenant.
- B. Because Abraham was childless, he proposed to make a slave, Eliezer of Damascus, his heir (Gen 15:1–3).
 - 1. We know from recent archaeological discoveries at Nuzi and Larsa (both in Iraq), a common practice of that time among heirless families was to adopt a slave who would inherit the master’s goods.
 - 2. “Numerous ancient Near Eastern documents provide for the adoption of a stranger who inherits the estate in return for the performance of filial duties. These include paying the adoptive parents the proper respect, maintaining the household, taking care of their physical needs and comforts in their old age, and performing the funerary rites at their death. In such cases, the adopted son cannot be deprived of a share of the inheritance even if there are subsequently natural-born sons. Thus, God’s emphatic and unambiguous reply in verse 4 can only mean that the patriarch, despairing of having children, had decided to resort to the adoption of his servant but has not yet acted. God assures him that this will not be necessary.” (Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary*, notes on Gen 15:3)
 - 3. God rejected Abraham’s proposal and challenged his faith (Gen 15:4–5).
 - 4. Abraham’s response is the model of believing faith (Gen 15:6; Heb 11:8–16).

- C. The rest of Genesis 15 consists of a ceremony between Abraham and God that was commonly used in the ancient world to formalize a covenant (Gen 15:7–21).
 - 1. Here we see the cutting of the animals in two (cf. Jer 34:18–20).
 - 2. As we mentioned in our prior lesson, ancient Hittite and Assyrian texts describe ceremonies where people would walk between severed halves of animals as they made covenants.
 - 3. God passed between the pieces of the torn flesh (the smoking pot and flaming torch were symbolic of God’s presence).
- D. Later, God repeated this covenant to Abraham’s son, Isaac (Gen 17:19).
- E. Stephen summarized the story in the book of Acts (Acts 7:1–8).
 - 1. Abraham was a man who answered God’s summons.
 - a) As the writer to the Hebrews put it, Abraham left home without knowing where he was to go (Heb 11:8).
 - 2. Abraham was a man of faith.
 - a) He left his homeland not knowing where he was going, but he believed that, under God’s guidance, the best was yet to come.
 - b) Even when he had no children and when, humanly speaking, it seemed impossible that he should ever have any, he believed that someday his descendants would inherit the land God had promised to them.
 - 3. Abraham was a man of hope.
 - a) In the end, he never saw the promise entirely fulfilled—but he never doubted that it would be.

Invitation

- I. He was known at the beginning as *Abram* (“father is exalted”), but God changed his name to *Abraham* (“father of a multitude,” Gen 17:5).
- II. Both John the baptist and the apostle Paul showed that physical descent from Abraham did not guarantee eternal salvation (Matt 3:9; Rom 9:1–33).
 - A. Foreigners would join and sit with Abraham in the kingdom of Christ (Matt 8:11; cf. Luke 16:23–30).
 - B. Jesus invited lost sons of Abraham to come to salvation (Luke 19:9–10).
 - C. True children of Abraham do the works of Abraham (John 8:39).
- III. According to Exodus 2:23–25, centuries after Abraham died, God “remembered” the Abrahamic covenant set in motion the plan for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

The Mosaic Covenant

Introduction

- I. After the flood destroyed the ancient world, God made a covenant with Noah after he and his family left the ark (Gen 9:1-17).
 - A. God promised to never again destroy the world by means of a universal, cataclysmic flood.
 - B. The sign of this covenant was the rainbow in the sky.
 - C. The presence of the rainbow, when rain clouds are in the sky, was intended to be a visible reminder of God's everlasting covenant (Gen 9:16).
- II. Last week, we noticed the covenant that God made with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3).
 - A. This covenant included three great promises from God.
 1. The land promise ("to a land that I will show you," Gen 12:1).
 2. The nation promise ("I will make you a great nation," Gen 12:2).
 3. The seed promise ("in you all families of the earth shall be blessed," Gen 12:3).
 - B. Many centuries later, Stephen summarized God's intention when He made this covenant with Abraham (Acts 7:2-7).

Discussion

I. Abraham's Descendants

- A. Abraham's descendants moved to Egypt during the time of Joseph (Gen 46:1-7).
- B. The book of Exodus gives us the account of Israel's slavery in Egypt for 400 years, which fulfilled God's words to Abraham (Gen 15:13-16).
- C. While they were welcomed guests at first, in the process of time a new Pharaoh arose and turned the Israelites into slaves (Exod 1:8-11).
 1. Pharaoh was afraid the Israelites were becoming so numerous that they would organize and threaten Egypt, so he made them slaves and oppressed them to kill their spirit and stop their growth.
 2. However, Pharaoh's oppressive tactics backfired, for the more the people were oppressed, the more they grew in number.
 3. This, in turn, resulted in still more severe oppression.
 4. The people cried out to the God of their forefathers (Exod 2:23-25).
- D. God had promised to bring His people out of Egypt (Gen 46:3-4).
 1. God raised up Moses to deliver His people (Exod 3:1-10).
 2. Pharaoh, however, did not want to release the people of God.
 3. God, through Moses, sent a series of plagues against Pharaoh and "against all the gods of Egypt" (Exod 12:12).
 4. After the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh sent Moses and the people of God out of Egypt (Exod 12:31-32).
- E. Three months after leaving Egypt the children of Israel camped at the base of Mount Sinai, also known as Horeb (Exod 19:1-2).

II. The Covenant At Sinai

- A. At Mt. Sinai God promised to make a *covenant* with the Israelites (Exod 19:3-6).
1. Before they even know the conditions of the contract, the people agreed to abide by whatever God said (Exod 19:7-8).
 2. God promised to descend in “a thick cloud, that the people may hear” (Exod 19:9).
 - a) The reason for the manifestation on this occasion seems to have been so that the people should believe in the reality of God’s communication to Moses, and thus believe in Moses as well as in God.
 3. They had three days to sanctify, cleanse, and ready themselves (Exod 19:10-11).
 4. This event was intended to make a deep impression on the whole nation of the majesty of Jehovah and the holiness of His Law (Exod 19:16-20).
 - a) These people knew very little about Jehovah.
 - b) The Lord descended the smoke-filled mountain in fire, demonstrating His majesty and holiness.
 - c) The people trembled in response as Moses led them to the foot of the mountain. By now the mountain trembled violently, with the trumpet sound growing louder and louder.
 5. The Lord appeared at Mt. Sinai with thousands of angels (Deut 33:2).
 6. Before God began to speak, the people wanted to draw near (Exod 19:21).
 7. Bounds were set around the mountain (Exod 19:23).
 8. Moses went up to receive the Law (Exod 19:24).
- B. The Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17) are the *foundation* of the covenant, but they are not the *entirety* of it.
1. The first four commandments deal with one’s relationship to God.
 - a) They were to have no other gods before *{before}* Him (Exod 20:3).
 - b) Do not make or bow down to carved images (Exod 20:4-6).
 - c) Do not take God’s name in vain (Exod 20:7).
 - d) Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy (Exod 20:8-11).
 2. The next six commandments deal with one’s relationship to their fellow man.
 - a) Honor father and mother (Exod 20:12).
 - b) Do not commit murder (Exod 20:13).
 - c) Do not commit adultery (Exod 20:14).
 - d) Do not steal (Exod 20:15).
 - e) Do not bear false witness (Exod 20:16).
 - f) Do not covet anything of your neighbors (Exod 20:17).
- C. **Interlude:** Before God had finished giving the Law, the people asked Moses to speak with God, for they were afraid (Exod 20:18-21; Deut 5:22-33).
1. If the terror stricken people had not prevailed, if God had not heard their prayers, the entire Law would have been proclaimed directly from Mt. Sinai.
 2. The laws given after the first ten were just as much a part of “the covenant.”

- D. While the people stood afar off, Moses drew near to the presence of God to hear the rest of the covenant (Exod 20:21–23:33).
1. Laws concerning the altar (Exod 20:22–26).
 2. Laws concerning servants (Exod 21:1–11).
 3. Laws concerning crime and (capital) punishment (Exod 21:12–27).
 4. Laws concerning the treatment of animals (Exod 21:28–36).
 5. Laws concerning theft and personal property (Exod 22:1–15).
 6. Laws concerning morality (Exod 22:16–31).
 7. Laws concerning justice and oppression (Exod 23:1–9).
 8. Laws concerning the Sabbath of the seventh year (Exod 23:10–13).
 9. Laws concerning the three annual feasts (Exod 23:14–19).
 10. Laws concerning the bounds of the promised land (Exod 23:20–33).
- E. After receiving the entire law, Moses spoke the words of the covenant to the people and they agreed to obey (Exod 24:3).
1. Moses then wrote the conditions of the covenant down, offered sacrifices to God, and then sprinkled both the book and the people with blood to seal the covenant (Exod 24:4–8).
 2. There was only one Law given at Sinai, not two!
 3. Sometimes people try to make a distinction between the “ceremonial” and “moral” laws of God.
 4. This covenant was not completed until Moses heard all the words and proclaimed them to the people—then the people accepted the covenant.
 5. This covenant guided God’s people for next 1500 years.
- F. Once the people of God entered the Promised Land they were to recite the *blessings* and the *curses* of the covenant from Mounts Gerizim and Ebal (Deut 11:26–32; 27:1–8; 28:1–68; Josh 8:30–35).

Invitation

- I. This covenant was between God and the people of Israel—you and I are not a party in this contract (Deut 5:3; 29:1; cf. Gal 3:24).
- II. This covenant between God and the people of Israel was *temporary*—God promised a day in which He would make a *new covenant*, not only with Israel but with all mankind (Jer 31:31–34; cf. Luke 22:20; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8–12).

The Davidic Covenant

Introduction

- I. After the flood destroyed the ancient world, God made a covenant with Noah after he and his family left the ark (Gen 9:1–17).
 - A. God promised to never again destroy the world through a universal, cataclysmic flood.
 - B. The sign of this covenant was the rainbow in the sky.
 - C. The presence of the rainbow, when rain clouds are in the sky, was intended to be a visible reminder of God’s everlasting covenant (Gen 9:16).
- II. The covenant that God made with Abraham included three great promises (Gen 12:1–3).
 - A. The land promise (“to a land that I will show you,” Gen 12:1).
 - B. The nation promise (“I will make you a great nation,” Gen 12:2).
 - C. The seed promise (“in you all families of the earth shall be blessed,” Gen 12:3).
- III. Centuries later, God made a covenant with Abraham’s descendants, the Jews, at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:3–6).
 - A. The Ten Commandments were the *foundation* of the covenant, but they were not the entirety of it (Exod 20:1–17).
 - B. Before God had finished giving the Law, the people asked Moses to speak with God, for they were afraid (Exod 20:18–21; Deut 5:22–33).
 - C. After receiving the entire law, Moses spoke the words of the covenant to the people, and they agreed to obey (Exod 24:3).
 - D. Moses then wrote the conditions of the covenant down, offered sacrifices to God, and then sealed the covenant with blood (Exod 24:4–8).
 - E. This covenant between God and the people of Israel was temporary—God promised a day in which He would make a *new covenant*, not only with Israel but with all mankind (Jer 31:31–34; cf. Luke 22:20; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8–12).
- IV. Nearly 1,000 years before Jesus established the new covenant, God made a covenant with David, the king of Israel.

Discussion

I. The Davidic Covenant

- A. This was a covenant in which David and his descendants were established as the royal heirs to the throne of the nation of Israel (2 Sam 7:12–16).
 1. “They were arguably the most significant words God had spoken since the revelation at Mount Sinai; they would change the landscape of Israelite politics and ignite messianic hopes that would energize the people of God through the end of the biblical period.” (Andrews and Bergen, *I & II Samuel*, 6.245)
 2. This promise to David can be summarized by four main points...
 - a) David’s seed would be set upon the throne.
 - b) It would happen after David’s death.
 - c) God would establish this throne.
 - d) This descendant of David would build God’s house.
 3. These promises were fulfilled by Jesus Christ, the son of David, when He ascended into heaven to sit at God’s right hand.

- B. This Davidic covenant fulfilled the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant that the Patriarchs would be the fathers of kings (Gen 17:6, 16; 35:11).
 - 1. Abraham's great-grandson, Judah, was promised that rulers would come through him (Gen 49:10).
 - 2. Both Jesus and David were descendants of Judah.
 - 3. David knew he had been chosen by God and was a part of the Messianic line that would result in a divine King (Ps 2:6-7; cf. Acts 13:33; Ps 110:1-4; cf. Matt 22:44; Acts 2:32-35; 1 Cor 15:25).
 - 4. Ethan the Ezrahite wrote Psalms 89, which is a prayer that God would honor the Davidic covenant (Ps 89:1-4, 28-37).
- C. Many Old Testament prophets spoke of the Davidic Messiah Who was to come, the One who would rule on David's throne forever.
 - 1. Isaiah (Isa 9:1-7; cf. Matt 4:13-16; Isa 11:1-5).
 - 2. Jeremiah (Jer 23:5-6; 30:4-11).
 - 3. Ezekiel (Ezek 34:23-24; cf. John 10:11-18; Ezek 37:24-25).
 - 4. Amos (Amos 9:11-15; cf. Acts 15:12-21).

II. The Son Of David

- A. The Davidic covenant reached its fulfillment when Jesus, a descendant of the royal lineage of David, was born in Bethlehem about a thousand years after God made a covenant with David (Rom 1:3-4).
- B. The gospel of Matthew starts off by showing that Jesus was "the Son of David," and thus He had the right to rule over God's people (Matt 1:1).
- C. The angel Gabriel promised Mary that her Son would sit on "the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).
- D. Many centuries before God had promised, through Amos, to "raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages" (Amos 9:11).
 - 1. The NKJV adds a textual note to the word *tabernacle* in this verse, which says, "Literally *booth*, a figure of a deposed dynasty."
 - 2. The "tabernacle of David" was the "royal family" of David.
 - 3. The prophet Amos had gone from his home at Tekoa to Bethel to speak against the kingdom of Israel, which had become very corrupt, and to warn the people of their coming doom (Amos 1:1; 7:7-17).
 - 4. The rule of David's house had ended for Israel when they left the theocracy; it ended for Judah with the carrying away of Coniah into Babylon (Jer 22:24-30).
 - 5. God's people were sifted and scattered among the nations, and these verses in Amos refer to their return from captivity.
 - 6. When the apostles and elders met in Jerusalem to discuss the state of the Gentiles, James quoted the prophecy of Amos and pointed out that it had to be fulfilled *before* the Gentiles could seek after God (Acts 15:13-19).
 - a) What had to happen before the Gentiles could seek after God?
 - b) The tabernacle of David had to be rebuilt.
 - c) If Christ is not on David's throne, if the "tabernacle" has not been rebuilt, then the Gentiles cannot seek after God!

- E. David's throne was *established* when God raised up "Christ to sit on his throne" and exalted Him "to the right hand of God" (Acts 2:29-36).
 - 1. The promises to David were fulfilled in Christ.
 - 2. Jesus was indeed of the seed of David.
 - 3. His coronation in heaven took place after the death of David.
 - 4. Jesus was raised up "to sit on his throne."
 - 5. God's house, the church, has been built (1 Tim 3:15).
- F. Paul, in a sermon at the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia, claimed the Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promise to David (Acts 13:20-24).
- G. Paul told the Colossians how God "has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col 1:13).
- H. The Hebrew writer reminds Christians that, "since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb 12:28).
- I. Christ said, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev 3:21).

III. Christ Is On His Throne

- A. More than 500 years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Zechariah spoke about the reign of the Messiah (Zech 6:12-13).
 - 1. The "branch" in Zechariah 6:12 is a reference to Jeremiah 33:15 and the "Branch of righteousness" who was a descendant of King David.
 - 2. Zechariah reiterates Jeremiah's promise of a future righteous king who will "branch out" and build the temple of the Lord.
- B. According to Zechariah, Christ was to do three things on His throne (Zech 6:13).
 - 1. He would *sit* on His throne.
 - 2. He would be a *priest* on His throne.
 - 3. He would *rule* on His throne.
- C. A *syllogism* is a logical argument that applies deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion based on two or more propositions that are assumed to be true.
- D. If we turn Zechariah 6:13 into the form of a *syllogism*, we would say...
 - 1. He would rule on His throne while priest.
 - 2. He is a priest on His throne right now (Heb 8:1).
 - 3. Therefore, He is ruling on His throne now.
- E. Notice another syllogism.
 - 1. He is a priest on His throne (Zech 6:13).
 - 2. He is a priest in heaven (Heb 4:14).
 - 3. Therefore, His throne is in heaven!
- F. One last syllogism for your consideration.
 - 1. He could not be a priest if He were on earth (Heb 8:4).
 - 2. However, He is a priest on His throne (Zech 6:13).
 - 3. Therefore, His throne cannot be on earth!

Invitation

- I. When Jesus returns, it will not be for the purpose of establishing His kingdom.
- II. At this very moment, Jesus is the Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev 17:14).
- III. He rules as sovereign King over His kingdom right now.
- IV. When Christ returns, He will deliver “the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” (1 Cor 15:24-25).

The Covenant Of Promise

Introduction

- I. On the night of our Lord's betrayal, He instituted the Lord's Supper and spoke of the "new covenant" (Matt 26:26-29).
 - A. These words must have shocked the apostles!
 1. Just a few hours before, a lamb was slain and its blood shed at the Temple and the apostles were now consuming that animal's body.
 2. Jesus brought something new to their understanding—it would no longer be an animal's blood that would cover sins, but His blood!
 - B. As we pointed out in our last lesson, the kingdom of Christ, the church, has already come and Christ is on His throne right now (Rev 3:21).
 1. Thus, as we partake of the Lord's Supper today, we are communing with Christ in His kingdom right now.
 2. We will continue to partake of this memorial "until He comes" (1 Cor 11:26).
- II. When Jesus spoke of the "new covenant," this was not something that He had just dreamed up!
 - A. God, through His servants the prophets, had foretold of the day when He would make a "new covenant" with His people (Jer 31:31-34).
 - B. God's purpose in the old covenant, the Mosaic law, was to inform His people of His laws, to convict them of sin, to establish the pattern of sacrifice, and give a promise of salvation that was fulfilled in Christ.
 - C. This passage does not suggest that the old covenant itself had flaws, but that the experience of human beings under the Mosaic law was faulty.
 - D. The old covenant had not met the needs of sinful human beings.
 - E. The old covenant could reveal sin, but it could not remove it.
 - F. It could not justify or save sinners.
 - G. Under this new covenant, God would "write His law" on human hearts, which suggests a new level of obedience, a new knowledge of the Lord, and the forgiveness of sin.
- III. A failure to understand the difference between the two covenants is the source of a lot of religious division today.

Discussion

I. The Covenant Of Promise

- A. The New Testament makes a clear distinction between the covenant of the Mosaic Law and the covenant of promise.
 1. The apostle Paul spoke of these *two covenants*, one originating "from Mount Sinai," the other from "the Jerusalem above" (Gal 4:21-26).
 2. Paul also argued that the covenant established at Mount Sinai was a "ministry of death" and "condemnation" (2 Cor 3:7-11).
 3. The point is that the old covenant, the Mosaic law, had no provisions to *remove* the sins of mankind.
- B. The death of Christ on Calvary's hill ushered in a new covenant under which we are justified by God's grace and mercy—it is now possible to have the true forgiveness (remission) of sins.

1. Jesus is the Mediator of this better covenant between God and man (Heb 9:15).
2. Jesus' sacrificial death served as the oath, or pledge, which God made to us to seal this new covenant.
3. He is determined to give us eternal life and fellowship with Him, in spite of our unworthiness.
4. The new covenant is the new agreement God has made with mankind, based on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

II. The New Covenant Established

- A. When Jesus partook of His last Passover meal with His disciples, He spoke of the cup and said, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt 26:28).
 1. Luke's account refers to this cup as symbolizing "the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20).
 2. When the apostle Paul recited the narrative he had received concerning the Last Supper, he quoted these words of Jesus about the cup as "the new covenant in My blood" (1 Cor 11:25).
- B. Hebrews gives the new covenant more attention than any other New Testament book—it includes the entire passage from Jeremiah 31:31–34 (Heb 8:7–13).
 1. "The Old Covenant was faulty, but the New is faultless. That is, relatively so. In one sense, the Old Covenant was just as perfect as the New. Each of them was perfectly adapted to the end for which it was designed. But the former never did and never could justify, sanctify, or save anyone. In these respects it was relatively faulty, and the New is faultless." (Robert Milligan, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 226)
 2. The subjects of the old covenant were not all pious.
 3. Many of them did not know God, but they enjoyed all the temporal and civil privileges of the Theocracy.
 4. But not so with the subjects of the new covenant, for they must *choose* to serve God: "I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Heb 8:10).
 5. Most of the subjects of the old covenant became such by physical birth; but the subjects of the new covenant must be born of water and Spirit (John 3:5).
- C. The work of Jesus Christ on the cross thus makes the old covenant *obsolete* and fulfills the promise of the prophet Jeremiah (Heb 8:13).
- D. Jesus is also referred to by the writer of Hebrews as "the Mediator of the new covenant" (Heb 9:15; 12:24).
- E. This covenant of promise is "a better covenant, which was established on better promises" (Heb 8:6), and rests directly on the sacrificial work of Christ.
- F. The new covenant accomplished what the old could not, i.e., the *removal* of sin and the *cleansing* of the human conscience (Heb 10:2, 22).

III. A Covenant For All People

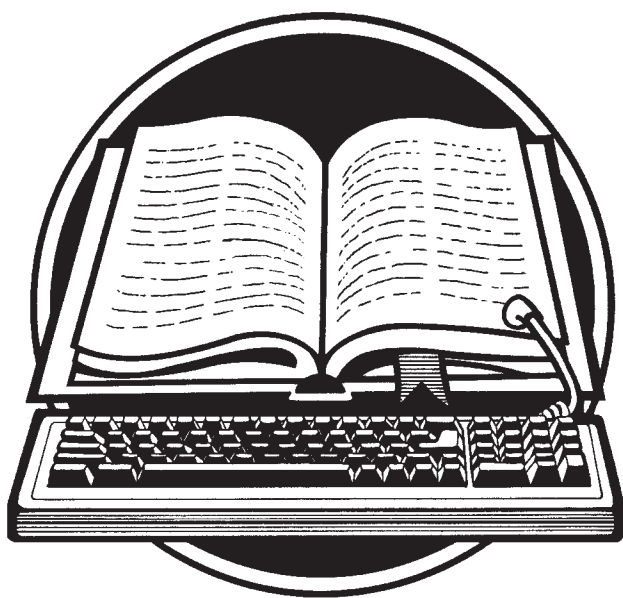
- A. The old covenant was for the Jews only; the new covenant is for all nations and peoples of the earth (Eph 2:12–16).
1. On the Temple Mount in the first century, there was an inner court which Josephus calls the “second court of the temple” into which no Gentile could enter (Josephus, *War* 5:193; *Antiq.* 15:417).
 2. This “second court” was protected by a dividing wall, the *soreg*, which stood about 4 and a half feet tall.
 3. There were thirteen stone slabs, warning signs, written in Greek and Latin and standing at intervals on the barrier, that warned Gentiles not to enter.
 4. Two of these stone inscriptions (one complete and one incomplete) have been found.
 5. The complete inscription can be seen in the National Archaeological Museum in Istanbul, Turkey.
 6. The inscription reads, “No foreigner is allowed to enter within the balustrade surrounding the sanctuary and the court. Whoever is caught will be personally responsible for his ensuing death.”
 7. The Roman authorities were so anxious to appease the Jews in this regard that they authorized execution even if the offender was a Roman citizen.
 8. This dividing wall had great significance for Paul, who was arrested in Jerusalem for reportedly bringing a Gentile into the inner court of the temple (see Acts 21:16–30).
 9. “Paul’s language in this verse appears to make allusion to this barrier—a symbol of the alienation of Gentiles from the Jewish people, from citizenship in Israel, from the promises of the covenants, and, more important, from access to the one true God. Paul declares that the barriers separating Gentiles from God and from Jews have now been destroyed. The physical balustrade at the temple still stood (until the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70), but there is no longer any fence prohibiting direct access to God.” (John Walton, “Ephesians,” 317)
- B. The new covenant offers a spiritual rebirth (John 3:1–5; 1 Pet 1:23).
- C. Those in Christ are “new creatures” (2 Cor 5:17).
- D. As we are “baptized into Christ,” we become heirs of the promise God made to Abraham nearly forty centuries ago (Gal 3:26–29).

Invitation

- I. In the Great Commission, Jesus sent His apostles into *all the world* so they could tell the story of the cross (Luke 24:46–47; Matt 28:18–20).
- II. None of us can afford to miss this great salvation (Matt 7:13–14).
- III. The gospel call extends to you today!

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