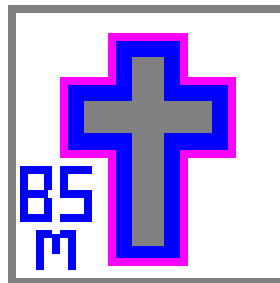


Covenants of God

A Study of the Covenants of God 12 weeks

- 01 – Covenants
- 02 – Biblical Covenants
- 03 – Covenant With Adam
- 04 – Covenant With Noah
- 05 – Covenant With Abraham
- 06 – Covenant With Moses
- 07 – Covenant With David
- 08 – New Covenant
- 09 – Covenant Of Grace
- 10 – Covenant Of Redemption
- 11 – Covenant Versus Kingdom
- 12 – Conclusion



Covenants of God

This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen (-) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

Bible scholars and teachers use number of different names when teaching on the Covenants that God has made with man. Listed below are some of the more common names used by today's Bible teachers:

- Covenant in Eden (usually seen as made before the fall)
- Covenant with Adam (usually seen as made after the fall)
- Covenant with Noah
- Covenant with Abraham
- Covenant with Isaac
- Covenant with Jacob
- Covenant of healing (Exodus 15:20-27)
- Covenant in Sinai
- Covenant with Moses
- Covenant in Palestine
(usually seen as made with Hebrews after they reached the promised land)
- Covenant with David
- Blood Covenant (seen in several places throughout the Bible)
- New Covenant (Christ Jesus and the Church)
- Covenant of Grace
- Covenant of Works
- Covenant of Redemption

Some of these names can be used to speak of the same covenant agreement, but not all of them.

How many covenants to you think God has made with man from the beginning of man's history until the current time?

The Covenants Of God - 01

Which of these, if any, do you think is the most significant and why?

Why take the time to study the covenants God made with man?

Some Bible scholars believe the covenants recorded in the Bible reflect the kind of relationship that exists between the persons of the Holy Trinity. They believe God had these recorded to help us understand the kind of relationship God wants to have with us.

If this is true, then understanding the covenants could help us grasp the type of relationship God desires to have with us.

The Covenants Of God - 01

There were two major types of covenants in the ancient world; the “Party Covenant,” and the “Suzerainty Covenant.” (soo-zer-rain-tee)

The “Party Covenant”

an agreement between two equal, or nearly equal, partners where each had something to offer the other.

The “Suzerainty Covenant”

an agreement between a king and his subjects and was always unilateral in nature. Basically this means the king makes all the decisions as to what the covenant will provide and what the conditions of the covenant will be.

There are two types of statements in the Bible that fit this discussion. One is a covenant between two humans and the other is a covenant between God and a human. It can be tempting to make a distinction between religious and secular covenants, but since both follow the same pattern it is better to make our distinction based on the purpose.

When a covenant is between two humans, the purpose of the covenant is to bring about some legal order or resolution to their situation. When a covenant is between God and a human, the purpose is to use the legal aspect to clarify a theological situation.

A Suzerainty treaty was the formal basis for ancient empires. It specified the terms of the relationship between the head of the empire, such as the king, and the lesser groups of people. Usually it consisted of a king’s offer to protect the people in exchange for their support and tribute.

When one party was significantly superior to the other in power or authority, the superior party would simply announce the decree which he thought best and the other party either accepted or rejected the terms. There was no negotiation of terms in the Suzerainty agreement.

The Covenants Of God - 01

Before reading further, which of these two types of agreements; Party Treaty or Suzerainty Treaty; do you think best describes the kind of agreement God made between Himself and man? Why?

Consider all the Covenants God made with different people recorded in the Bible. Is this true of every one of them?

It is generally accepted by Bible Scholars that the Old Testament covenant form resembles the late Bronze Age Hittite vassal treaties. Suzerainty covenants of the 2nd millennium B.C. Hittites consisted of six parts:

- Preamble,
- Historical Prologue,
- Stipulations,
- Curses and Blessings,
- Enlisting of Witnesses,
- Succession Arrangements.

This pattern can be seen in the covenant renewal recorded in Deuteronomy.

The Covenants Of God - 01

Read Deuteronomy 1:1-5 and make notes:

Preamble: (Deuteronomy 1:1-5)

Words are to:

ALL ISRAEL

The place where these words took place:

in the desert east of Jordan, in the territory of Moab

Date of the address:

40th year, 11th month, 1st day

After he had defeated Sihon, king of the Amorites

Read Deuteronomy 1:1-5 several times (maybe different translations as well) and write down any new insights you receive or perhaps questions you may have.

The Covenants Of God - 01

Read Deuteronomy 1:6-46 and make notes:

Read Deuteronomy 2:1-37 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 01

Read Deuteronomy 4:1-49 and make notes:

Historical Prologue: Deuteronomy 1:6 - 4:49

The historical basis for this covenant begins with the covenant promise made to Abraham. There is a covenant tradition of promise and an experience of God working out the content of the promise.

Read the passage several times (maybe from different translations) and write your insights or questions.

Stipulations: (Deuteronomy chapters 5 through 26.)

You probably won't have time to read all of the Scriptures listed below. Select one or two sections and read the Scripture text several times.

#1 – Daily Lifestyle = The Ten Commandments Deut 5:6-6:9

- Prohibition of other gods than the Lord
- Prohibition of images of God
- Prohibition of using God's name improperly
- Observance of the Sabbath Day
- Honor your parents
- Prohibition of murder
- Prohibition of adultery
- Prohibition of theft
- Prohibition of false witnesses
- Prohibition of coveting

#2 – Concerning the Promised Land Deut 6:10-25

#3 – Policy of War Deut 7

#4 – Wilderness Lifestyle Deut 8

#5 – Crossing the Jordan Deut 9

#6 – The Tablets and the Ark Deut 10

#7 – Choose Blessing or Choose Curse Deut 11

#8 – The Sanctuary Deut 12

#9 – Dangers of Idolatry Deut 13

#10 – Various Religious Practices Deut 14

#11 – A Year of Release Deut 15

#12 – Major Festivals and Appointments to Office Deut 16

#13 – Sacrifices Deut 17

#14 – The Priests Deut 18

#15 – Cities of Refuge Deut 19

#16 – Conduct of War Deut 20

#17 – Family Affairs Deut 21

#18 – Sexual Behavior Deut 22

#19 – Miscellaneous Laws Deut chap 23 – chap 25

#20 – Ceremonial Fulfillment Deut 26

The Covenants Of God - 01

What insights or questions did you get from this overview?

How clear, or specific, are the stipulations of this covenant? Did God leave any vagueness in what He expected from this people with whom He was entering into a covenant? Explain your answer.

The Covenants Of God - 01

Select one of the sections and read the text several times (maybe from different translations). Write down your insights or questions for discussion at the Class or Group.

Curses and Blessings: Deut. 27-30

Enlisting of Witnesses: Deut. 31:1 – 32:45

Succession Arrangements: Deut. 32:46 – 34:12.

The Covenants Of God - 01

Even without reading all the Scriptures listed from Deuteronomy; in looking at the outline of the text as;

- Preamble,
- Historical Prologue,
- Stipulations,
- Curses and Blessings,
- Enlisting of Witnesses,
- Succession Arrangements:

Does it appear God had a clear and specific idea of the kind of relationship He desired to have with the Jewish People; or was it just basically do as you please and give God some attention on occasion? If so, please describe it.

What, if anything, does this say to you when you see how specific God was in spelling out the stipulations of the relationship He wanted with the Jews?

The Covenants Of God - 01

List the insights or questions did you get from this study, and take them to the share with the Small Group at your next meeting:

There are different interpretations given for the Biblical word “covenant.” Some define “covenant” as a “compact or agreement between two parties binding them mutually to undertakings on each others behalf. Others define covenant as “an unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of their relationship.”

Theologically, covenant “denotes a gracious undertaking entered into by God for the benefit and blessing of man.”

These definitions of the Biblical use of “covenant” are supported by the Old Testament. The making of a covenant was as common of a practice in Old Testament times as going to a notary public is for us today to have a signature certified.

The Hebrew word for covenant, “brit”, “berit”, or “berith”, denotes the covenant between God and the Jewish people. Characteristic of the Old Testament berit is that it is unalterable and permanently binding. The Hebrew term “berit” goes beyond the idea of a contract and expresses the concept of a binding expression of divine will. The original meaning of the Hebrew word “berit” is not “agreement or settlement between two parties.” In it’s original form this word conveys rather the concept of “imposition, liability, or obligation.”

Consider the meaning of the Hebrew word for covenant. How is it different from the way the average Christian today views covenant?

Is the Hebrew meaning of the word translated “covenant” different from the view of covenant you have had in the past? If so, how?

An Old Testament term commonly used in connection with “*berit*” is the word “*dabhar*” which means “word or promise.” While there is a promise that makes up a part of the *berit*, the *berit* must be recognized as more than just a “word of promise.”

From the Jewish point of view the conditional “*berit*” is not to be confused with the unconditional “*chesed*”; love of God. The blessings and the promises of the “*berit*” are conditional upon us fulfilling the requirements of the covenant. The unconditional “*chesed*” is God saying, regardless of what you do or how many mistakes you make, I am your God and you are my people.

God’s blessings are conditional while his unfailing love is unconditional.

The Old Testament concept of the covenant was not just an ancient idea. This concept was strictly embraced in later years as can be seen in the translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek (called the Septuagint). The Hebrew word “*berit*” is translated as the Greek word “*diatheke*” 270 times in the Septuagint.

The Greek translators who produced the Septuagint did not use the Greek word “*syntheke*” which refers to a treaty or agreement where both parties are basically equal, such as in a Party Treaty. Neither did the writers of the New Testament use the word “*syntheke*.” Both the translators of the Old Testament and the writers of the New Testament used the Greek word “*diatheke*” which refers to a covenant where one of the parties stipulates the provisions and conditions, as in a Suzerainty Treaty.

The Covenants Of God - 02

This Biblical use of “covenant” is further supported by the New Testament concept of covenant. The Greek word “*diatheke*” is found 33 times in the New Testament. In Hellenistic law, a valid “*diatheke*” cannot be contested or altered.

Considering this concept of “*diatheke*”, the biblical covenant is to be understood strongly in terms of a divine operation and it has unconditional validity. The New Testament word “*diatheke*” signified an arrangement offered by one party (God) which the other party (man) may accept or reject but cannot alter.

Some scholars insist it is an inadequate translation of the Greek word “*diatheke*” for it to be translated “testament” or “covenant.” Since man has nothing to do with determining the nature, grounds, demands, or provisions, this is a unilateral pact. They argue that man is free only to decide to enter into this pact or to reject it. This argument seems to be ignoring the fact that a suzerainty treaty is more than the modern concept of a “testament” or “covenant.”

The biblical covenant may be superseded or replaced by a different covenant but it cannot be altered once it is established. It is the nature of a covenant that it has to be observed faithfully and sincerely. Behind God’s covenant is his sovereign will and graciousness, to be the God of his people and to have a people.

This implies a relationship and provides a security for life of mankind. God has lovingly provided a means of communion and has excluded all other means. We are to have a loving, living, personal relationship with God.

Read Hosea 6:6 and make notes:

This Scripture makes it clear that this relationship is of more consequence than all the sacrifices and offerings we could possibly ever offer.

The concept of a covenant between God and His people is a special feature of the religion of Israel. It appears to be the only ancient religion that demanded an exclusive loyalty to one deity. Most other nations of the ancient Israel era did attribute a level of deity to their earthly king, but often had spiritual gods they honored as well. For hundreds of years the only king recognized in Israel was their God.

The idea of biblical covenant is never one of an agreement that has been negotiated between God and man. Man is never invited to the negotiation summit to work out the details. God remains sovereign in the details of his covenants.

Ancient Israel believed they owed their land to their “suzerain”, God. Just do a Bible word search for all the Scriptures where God says, “I will give you this land” or speaks of the “land I gave.”

The relationship between the suzerain and the vassal had to be in a written document. It isn't surprising that the tablets of the covenant became so important in the religion of Israel. Covenant is the center of Israel's understanding of their relationship with God. The Bible does not conceive any law code without a covenant as the base of that law. The covenant requires the Jews to affirm their faith in God and to follow his commandments. The Jews in turn expect God to fulfill his promise of making them into a great and holy nation.

The oath is the main thing that validates the covenant, but the pledge is usually accompanied by a ceremony. The covenant was also typically accompanied by some kind of external sign or token to help remind the parties involved of their obligations. The common expression for concluding a covenant is “*karath berith*” meaning to “cut a covenant.” Thus the cutting of the parties involved or the cutting of an animal would usually accompany the covenant.

We need to be careful not to become fixed on the external shapes of the covenants. We must take care not to divert our attention to the form and away from the vital aspect, or the content of the covenant. We need to be careful that we do not lose the purpose due to our fixation on the ritual.

The Covenants Of God - 02

In the ancient world, covenants were spoken of as being “cut.” Blood was released as a sign of the covenant. Blood covenants are found throughout recorded history. Many Biblical persons made Blood offerings; Abel, Noah, Abraham, Israel at the First Passover, Moses at the giving of the Law, Israel under dispensation of the Law, David as the removal of God’s judgment, and Solomon at the dedication of the Temple.

The mixing of blood symbolizes the mixing of two lives. Among many ancient tribes of people throughout the world is the practice of mutual cutting and sharing each others’ blood. In some cases the practice was to simply rub some of your blood upon the body of the person with whom you were making covenant. Other tribes would rub the two cut wounds together, or hold them together. This was at least symbolizing the sharing of blood if not actually believing that it was being shared. Still other tribes would literally drink some of the covenant partner’s blood. While the actual practices varied, there was a common idea of inter-transfusion of the very life substance of each covenant partner.

Isn’t it interesting that Jesus established the practice of “ceremonial” drinking of his blood when he set forth the communion meal with the disciples?

The Bible indicates the necessity of shedding of blood in covenant relationship. Adam and Eve tried to hide their sins with leaves. The leaves could not hide their nakedness.

In the Old Testament, animals were substitutes for human beings. Adam should have died but an animal was killed instead. Isaac was to die but a ram was given in his place. Abel brought a blood sacrifice to God. His blood sacrifice was accepted.

We can state the following concerning covenants in general:

- #1. A covenant is made by two or more persons who agree on something.
- #2. Personal responsibility of each party is involved in a covenant.
- #3. The strength of a covenant is determined by the strength of the parties who make the covenant.

The Covenants Of God - 02

Concerning a Biblical covenant we can be more specific:

- #1. Biblical Covenants demonstrate God's desired relationship with man.
- #2. A divine covenant is a spiritual treaty rather than a legal contract.
- #3. Covenants between God and man are intended to be eternal.
- #4. God's covenants will last forever regardless of how weak the human partner is.
- #5. God's covenants are powerful because He is all-powerful and eternal.

God's agreements with man are suzerainty agreements. God's covenant is an agreement made by God with man. God tells man all the blessings He will bestow upon those who obey His divine rule. God's covenant carries rewards and/or punishments. God cannot lie, so only man can break the covenant with God.

God made covenants with people who were very different; Adam was weak, Noah was strong, Abraham was called "father of faith", Moses was a leader, David was a spiritual warrior. In each of these, the human party had only the opportunity to agree to God's offer or to reject it.

Most Biblical covenants have a sign of validity:

The Rainbow symbolized the Noahic Covenant;

Circumcision symbolized the Abrahamic Covenant;

The Law symbolized the Mosaic Covenant;

The Blood of Jesus symbolizes the New Covenant.

What insight or understanding did you receive from this study on the Covenants of God?

Adamic Covenant

While the word “covenant” is not used in the first several chapters of Genesis, all the elements of the covenant are easily seen in the creation account. Some Bible scholars see a clear definition of all the parts of a covenant in the text;

- parties involved,
- conditions of their relationship,
- promise of blessing for obedience,
- punishment prescribed for disobedience.

Read Genesis 2:17 and make notes:

Read Hosea 6:7 and make notes:

God made a promise to Adam that depended upon Adam satisfying a condition. He also attached a condition of penalty for disobedience. When God was speaking to the prophet Hosea, he said the people of Israel had broken the covenant “like Adam”. This indicates God looked at the relationship with Adam as that of a covenant.

The Covenants Of God - 03

The covenant with Adam consisted of:

- promise of eternal life upon condition of perfect obedience
in a probationary period;
- threat of death upon disobedience;
- sacrament of the tree of life or the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

This Adamic Covenant has been given several different names:

- “the covenant of nature”
- “the covenant of life”
- “the covenant of works”
- “the Edenic covenant”

This covenant is sometimes called “covenant of life” because life was promised; and sometimes it was called “covenant of works” because works was the condition of fulfillment. There are those who suggest “Covenant of Works” is the most appropriate designation of this relationship because the blessings depended upon the “works” of obedience by Adam and Eve. But this doesn’t seem to be all that different from what is required by a number of other covenants as we shall see.

What do you think is the best name for this Covenant and why?

The Covenants Of God - 03

The Adamic Covenant had a mandate of “do this and you will live.” The covenant God made with Adam and Eve was conditional upon their obedience. Man was superior to all creation because the breath of God was in him and man had been given power over creation. God intended the earth to be replenished with a new order; man.

Read Genesis 1:27 and make notes:

Man was superior because he was created in the image of God.

Read Genesis 2:7 and make notes:

Man was superior because he had the very breath of God within him.

Read Genesis 1:28 and make notes:

Man was superior because he had the power to subdue all other parts and creatures of creation. Man had the authority to rule over all of creation.

Read Genesis 3:8 and make notes:

Man was superior because he was created for fellowship with God.

Since man was a superior creature as compared to the rest of creation on earth, do you think it was easy for man to be obedient to the covenant? Or was it so difficult of a requirement that man was doomed to fail?

For God to call Adam into a covenant relationship was an act of divine elective grace. Nothing in the nature of man as created by God demanded that God have fellowship with man. There is no evidence in the bible that God made any such covenant with any of the other creatures.

The Covenants Of God - 03

Read Genesis 1:26 and make notes:

This covenant was to express God's fatherly love for the man he had created. Having created man in his own image, God entered into a covenant with man that would give man life. The condition to receive this life was perfect obedience.

There is no negotiating on the part of man. God imposes the covenant and the only opportunity Adam and Eve are given is to accept it or reject it. The earth was to be subdued for the purpose of serving man. Man was to take care of the garden.

Read Genesis 2:15 and make notes:

Man, as originally created, was created to live in paradise as a reality.

Read Genesis 1:28 and make notes:

The earth was to be filled with man.

The Covenants Of God - 03

Read Genesis 1:29-30 and make notes:

No blood had to be shed in order for something else to live. Both man and animals were all vegetarian. There was complete peace and harmony between man and all the other creatures.

Did God really intend for man to live in this environment forever, or was it just something God wanted man to experience before his inevitable failure?

The Covenants Of God - 03

Read Genesis 2:17 and make notes:

Man had only one prohibition in this covenant relationship. He was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Read Genesis 2:17 and make notes:

The prescribed penalty for violating the covenant was death.

Read Genesis 3:6 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 03

The first man and the first woman, violated the covenant. They proved to be covenant breakers rather than covenant keepers. Adam and Eve disobeyed, violated the covenant relationship, and the penalty for violating the Adamic Covenant went into effect.

The disobedience of Adam and Eve in the covenant relationship, brought consequences for more than simply the two of them. It seems that all of creation came to suffer come consequence of their covenant violation.

Read Genesis 3:14 and make notes:

The serpent became the most cursed of all creatures.

Read Genesis 3:15 and make notes:

Enmity, that can not be reconciled, was established between two parts of creation.

Read Genesis 3:16 and make notes:

The woman would have to suffer in order to give birth. The woman was made subordinate. And even if she did not want to be subordinate, her heart would experience “desire” for her husband and this would cause her to place herself in a place of subordination. This is very different from the idea that the husband would “make” her a subordinate.

Read Genesis 3:17 and make notes:

The man would have to suffer labor and toil in order to eat from the earth. The earth would no longer “give” all of man’s needs. Now man would have to “take” from the earth as is needed.

The earth became cursed because of man. The diet is still vegetarian, but man will have to work and “sweat” in order to eat.

Read Genesis 3:19 and make notes:

Man is sentenced to lose his body to deterioration back to it's basic substances.

Read Genesis 3:24 make notes:

Man lost his place in paradise and was even prevented from getting near the tree of life. It was "guarded" by a Cherubim with a flaming sword.

The results of the broken Adamic Covenant in summary:

- a curse was placed upon the serpent
- enmity was set into place between parts of creation
- sorrow of woman in childbirth
- subordination of woman
- curse upon the ground
- man had to suffer in order to eat
- physical death began to take place
- man lost his place in paradise

Because of Adam, the whole world has suffered.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 and make notes:

Adam was acting as a representative for mankind. His fall affected all those who would come after him. The penalty Adam incurred has fallen upon all of mankind.

The earth was not given to Adam alone, but to his heritage. The dominion over the lower creatures was not only given to Adam, but to his descendants as well. The promise of life was to Adam's descendants as well as to himself, and so was the penalty of death. The earth is at least as much cursed for Adam's descendants as it was for him. His descendants must earn their food by the sweat of their brow. The pains of childbirth are common to all.

Read Genesis 3:7 and make notes:

Read Genesis 3:21 and make notes:

Man and woman were now in need of outward covering. Not only is it notable that man and woman are in need of covering, but they now have feelings of shame. They desire to be covered. The age of innocence is gone and the age of guilt has arrived.

Read Genesis 3:8 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 03

Read Genesis 3:10 and make notes:

Instead of enjoying the paradise created for them, the man and the woman were now experiencing fear instead of joy. They were now avoiding God's presence instead of anticipating it.

What new insight, or understanding, do you have from the study of the Adamic Covenant? How can it be helpful in living the Christian Life?

Noahic Covenant

Read Genesis 6:18 and make notes:

Prior to Noah, the concept of covenant can be seen, but it isn't properly called as such until the time of Noah. Following the flood, God continued his promise to man by outlining the features of the covenant he was about to make with Noah.

Read Genesis 6:5-6 and make notes:

In like fashion to God's call of Adam, Noah's call into a covenant relationship was a divine elective act of grace. It wasn't just that Adam and Eve had violated the covenant, it seems that most of mankind had violated the covenant. It had become so bad that God was even sorry that he had made man on the earth.

Read Genesis 9:9-10 and make notes:

Man had failed in the covenant relationship, but because of God's grace, man was given another chance. It is important to note the gracious purpose and intent of God was to bless all the people of the earth and in fact every creature on earth.

The Covenants Of God - 04

What does this say about God's intention toward man's environment and existence with other creatures?

Read Genesis 9:11-17 and make notes:

God told Noah that he will establish "my covenant" with you. If God had said he would establish "a covenant" with Noah, then it would be reasonable to interpret this as a separate covenant from the one with Adam. Since he said "my covenant" it makes perfect sense to understand it as the same covenant as was established with Adam. The covenant is renewed or sealed after the flood.

Read Genesis 8:21-22 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 04

Never again would the ground be cursed because of the actions of man. When God renewed to Noah the covenant with man, he expanded the covenant to include not only all living creatures but all of nature as well. As long as the earth remained so would seed-time, harvest, cold, heat, summer, winter, day, and, night.

Read Genesis 9:1 and make notes:

This sound just like the instructions God gave to Adam. God still wants the earth to be filled with covenant keeping people.

Read Genesis 9:12-13 and make notes:

As with any valid covenant, there is a sign. The sign reminds both parties to the covenant of their commitment and responsibilities of the covenant. This sign is placed where it is clearly visible to both parties.

Read Genesis 9:16 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 04

This is an everlasting covenant. This statement should not be a surprise since that is the nature of a covenant. (review the first two lessons of this study for clarification)

Some Bible scholars suggest the covenant with Noah was different from the others because it did not require faith or obedience on the part of man. This view ignores the simple fact that to build the ark was obedience on Noah's part. To trust God, first that a flood would come, and second that God would protect him and his family required faith on Noah's part. God gave Noah instructions as to how to build the ark.

Read Genesis 6:22 and make notes:

Read Genesis 7:5 and make notes:

These Scriptures leave no room to question Noah's obedience.

Read Hebrews 11:7 and make notes:

Noah was in fact a man of faith for it says, "By faith Noah. . .built an ark" and "by his faith. . .became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." Noah was indeed a man of both obedience and faith. Because of Noah, mankind continued to exist on earth.

The Covenants Of God - 04

Read Genesis 9:2 and make notes:

There is one noticeable difference from the covenant with Adam. Man was to continue his dominance over all things on earth, but now it would take on the form of forced subservience . Man's environment would now be hostile toward him.

Read Genesis 9:3 and make notes:

Read Genesis 9:4-5 and make notes:

Another new stipulation is man would be allowed to kill animals for food. And yet, at the same time man is expected to be careful about the shedding of blood or the eating of blood. Even the blood of animals is to be seen as having a level of sacredness.

The Covenants Of God - 04

Read Genesis 9:5-6 and make notes:

Even though man has fallen into sin and has broken the covenant relationship, God still recognizes man as being in “his image.” In the covenant being established with Noah, God sets forth the provision for capital punishment. Anyone who takes the life of another human being must lose his life at the hands of human beings.

What new insights, or understanding, do you have from this study of the Covenant with Noah? How can it be applied to the Christian lifestyle today?

Abrahamic Covenant

It may be worth noting that the covenant made with Abraham was established after the confusing of the tongues at the Tower of Babel. God's covenant with Adam was intended to be for all mankind. The covenant with Noah was intended in like fashion. But the covenant with Abraham was established with one people group rather than all of mankind.

Read Genesis 12:1-3 and make notes:

Read Genesis 15:18 and make notes:

The basis of this covenant may be seen as early as Genesis 12, but it is conclusive in Genesis 15, "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram." The covenant made with Abram forms the basis of the relationship between God and the Jewish people.

There are those who believe some parts of the covenant are unconditional and will happen regardless of man's response. In referring to the Abrahamic Covenant, those who hold this view, believe God promised to make Abraham's name great and nothing would frustrate that. They believe the conditional part of this covenant applied to Abraham's descendants.

The simple reading of the text doesn't support this view. The promise to make Abraham's name great (Genesis 12:2) followed God's instruction to "Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to a land I will show you"(Genesis 12:1). From a covenant view it is reasonable to understand the promise as being tied to following the instructions just given.

Would God have made Abraham's name great even if Abraham had not left his country, his people, and his father's household? Would God have made Abraham's name great if Abraham had not gone to the country God would "show" him? The plain reading of the text indicates the "making of a great name" for Abraham was conditional upon Abraham doing what God instructed him to do.

Some Bible scholars favor the idea of the Abrahamic covenant being like a royal land grant where a benefactor such as a king decides to convey a blessing upon a subject. This was usually something like a reward for services rendered by the subject, though sometimes it has no apparent reason.

Would God have given this land to Abram and his offspring (Genesis 12:7, 13:15) had he not been obedient in leaving Ur? In order to receive the land being offered by God, Abram had to leave Ur and go to Canaan. The blessing of land was conditional upon Abram's obedience in first leaving and then going where he was directed.

There are those who view the promises to Abram, such as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3 as unconditional grants. Would Abram have been made a great nation had he not been obedient to God's instructions to leave and to go? Would Abram still have become a blessing to all nations had he not left and gone? Would God have made Abram's name great anyway?

The Covenants Of God - 05

Do you believe Abraham's descendants would have been given the "promised land" if Abraham had not been obedient? Explain.

Read Genesis 17:1 and make notes:

Read Genesis 17:9 and make notes:

The most practical way to read this text concerning the Abrahamic covenant is to understand God's invitation to Abram as expressing the blessings that would become his should he be obedient to the following the instruction given. God's requirement for Abram was to "walk blameless" and specifically "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come." When we look at the entire text of Abraham's interaction with God it is evident that obedience was expected in order to maintain the covenant blessings.

God's promise that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation can be a reflection of the original instruction in the garden, "be fruitful and increase in number."

The Covenants Of God - 05

There are some who suggest the unconditional unilateral Abrahamic covenant continued to be in effect regardless of the repeated breaking of the reciprocal Mosaic covenant. They point out that the covenant does not indicate a time limitation. While God bound himself to do these things, he did not say when he would do them. However, if the blessings are conditional, then the fulfilling of the covenant conditions would be the determining factor as to when.

As with the call of Adam and Noah, God's calling Abram into a covenant relationship was purely an act of divine elective grace. The first part of Abram's covenant condition was for him to be obedient in leaving Ur of the Chaldees. The covenant with Abraham is primarily a promissory covenant. Abraham was promised the land "because he obeyed God and followed his mandate."

Read Genesis 15:18 and make notes:

The ritual is one in which Yahweh is making a covenant with Abraham to diminish the insecurity of Abraham. Abram was a Chaldean when God called him. In the land of the Chaldees at the time of Abram, covenants were affirmed and validated by the death of an animal. According to the importance of the covenant, it would sometimes require a number of animals.

Read Genesis 15:9 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 05

God instructed Abram in exactly what animals and the number to be brought as sacrifices. Abram probably understood the sanctity and the importance of this covenant due to the number of animals God instructed him to gather for this purpose. Abram most likely expected to walk between the animal parts together with God since this was the customary practice in his day. This would have indicated a bilateral covenant where the fulfillment was predicated on the responsibility of both parties.

When it came time to pass among the divided animals, Abram fell into a deep sleep and God passed between the pieces alone. This covenant was established as a unilateral covenant where God was to fulfill the promise of Abram having seed too numerous to count. The continuance of the blessings of this covenant was contingent upon each individual's response in faith.

Read Genesis 17:10-14 and make notes:

God specifies circumcision as the identifying marker of those who were to participate in the promise made as part of this covenant. Circumcision was to be a symbol, or the sign, of the purification called for in their lives.

God had given man another chance by establishing His covenant with Noah. Man violated that covenant relationship. In the Abrahamic covenant God gave man yet another chance and again put into effect His covenant.

God prophesied that Abraham would become a great nation. God protected Abraham in this covenant. God promised land to Abraham's descendants. Abraham's life was built on faith in God. Abraham's faith was tested, tempted, and tried. Abraham kept the covenant with God. His faith strengthened the relationship with God. Abraham proved faithful in the case of Isaac. God honored Abraham's faith and sacrifice.

The Covenants Of God - 05

Read Genesis 12:2-3 and make notes:

God made a seven fold promise to Abraham:

to make Abraham a great nation,

to bless Abraham,

Abraham's name to be great,

Abraham would become a blessing,

God will bless those who bless Abraham,

God will curse those who curse Abraham, and

all families on earth will be blessed because of Abraham.

Read Genesis 22:13 and make notes:

There is perhaps no greater picture of God's plan of salvation than the scene where a ram was provided to take Isaac's place as a sacrifice. Because of Abraham, the whole world has been blessed.

What insight or understanding did you gain from this study of the Covenant made with Abraham? Can this be applied to our everyday life? If so, how?

Mosaic Covenant

Read Exodus 2:24 and make notes:

Read Exodus 3:13-16 and make note:

Read Exodus 4:5 and make notes:

Read Exodus 6:3 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 06

Read Exodus 6:5 and make notes:

Read Exodus 6:8 and make notes:

Read Exodus 19:5 and make notes:

God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt was directly related to God's remembering the covenant he had made with Abraham. The covenant made at Sinai was conditional, "if you obey me fully and keep my covenant".

The people of Israel, liberated from the bondage of Egypt, seem to have derived their strength from the idea of a theological covenant with Yahweh, which had fixed promises and obligations. The Old Testament clearly reveals Israel had its origins in a family. Through the time of the patriarchs and even through the Egyptian bondage, Israel remained a loose association of people by families who recognized their covenant existence with God.

At Sinai the formation of this people into a nation took place. God clarified in the Mosaic covenant how Israel could enjoy the full blessings promised in the Abrahamic covenant. This could be done by their obedience to what God had said to do.

The Covenants Of God - 06

There are those who try to present the case for the Mosaic covenant blessings being completely dependent upon Israel's obedience while the Abrahamic covenant blessings were not conditioned upon Israel's actions. They do not see the Mosaic covenant as a restatement or an expansion of the Abrahamic covenant. They believe the purpose of the covenant made in the Sinai was to fulfill the promise to provide a kingdom over which the Jews could reign.

Do you think the covenant with Moses was a re-establishing of the covenant with Abraham or was it a new and different covenant? Why?

For those holding this view, the distinction between the unconditional and conditional gets a little cloudy when discussing Israel's purpose as demonstrating to the kingdoms of this world what it meant to be under the dominion of the Lord. Roy Zuck, one who holds this view states, "So long as Israel discharged her covenant mandate faithfully, she would continue to exist and be blessed. If and when she failed to do so, however, she could anticipate the termination of her role and its benefits." He seems to contradict his position by this statement.

The Covenants Of God - 06

Do you believe Israel's role and the blessings promised are unconditional and cannot be terminated? Or do you believe they can be terminated as a result of disobedience because they are conditional?

Some point to the parallels seen in this covenant to those of the secular suzerain covenants. But the uniqueness of this covenant is more profound than any apparent parallel. The covenant placed moral and spiritual values above political and economic considerations.

Read Exodus 4:22 and make notes:

Read Deuteronomy 8:5 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 06

Another significant difference in this covenant is the people were adopted into a family relationship with God. God would be more than a suzerain; he would be their father.

The covenant of law was used to shape the community life into a vehicle of God's presence among his people. The covenant of Moses appears to have given eternal authority to the Israelite law. And yet it was necessary to have it renewed from time to time. The covenant with Moses was primarily an obligatory covenant.

Read Exodus 3:12 and make notes:

Read Exodus 6:6-8 and make notes:

Read Exodus 19:4-6 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 06

The purpose of the deliverance was redemptive – “delivering the people from bondage and making it possible for them to worship God.” This helps to explain the above text concerning the Mosaic Covenant. God’s choice of Israel as his people is fixed. However, their continuance in the blessing rests upon their obedience.

Moses received irrevocable commandments from God. The Mosaic Covenant guaranteed a land of promise. This Covenant also typified the meaning of sacrifice. It was the foundation for greater things. The love of the Mosaic Covenant foreshadowed the New Covenant. Because of Moses, we have an understandable concept of God having a “called out people.” (this would later be called the church)

What insights or understanding did you receive from this study of the Covenant made with Moses? How can this be applied to our everyday life?

Davidic Covenant

The word “covenant” is not used in the pact with David but the idea of covenant is clearly there. God remembers his earlier promises and enlarges them with additional blessings. The Davidic Covenant is equal in importance to the Abrahamic covenant.

The Davidic covenant was not a new interruption in the history of revelation. It was a rehearsal of the promises made at Sinai and then an expansion or improvement.

Read 2 Samuel 7:9 and make notes:

Read 2 Samuel 7:10 and make notes: (compare to Gen 15:18, Deut 11:24)

Read 2 Samuel 7:12 and make notes: (compare to Gen 17:7-10, 17:19)

The Covenants Of God - 07

Read 2 Samuel 7:14 and make notes: (compare to Exod 4:22)

Read 2 Samuel 7:23-24 and make notes:
(compare Gen 17:7-8, Gen 28:21, Exod 6:7, Exod 29:45, Lev 11:45,
Lev 22:38, Lev 26:12, Num 15:41, Deut 4:20, Deut 29:12-13)

David desired to build a house for God. He had the tables turned on him when God said I don't need you to build me a house, but I will build one for you. Based on David's past faithfulness, God established the Davidic covenant.

The Davidic Covenant has two parts. Each part has three sections. Part one found fulfillment before David's death but part two had a future fulfillment.

The Covenants Of God - 07

Part one:

Section One – 2 Samuel 7:9 – made thee a great name

Section Two – 2 Samuel 7:10 – appoint a place for my people Israel

Section Three – 2 Samuel 7:11 – cause thee to rest from your enemies

Part Two

Section One – 2 Samuel 7:12 – your seed, established kingdom forever

Section Two – 2 Samuel 7:16 – your kingdom established forever

Section Three – 2 Samuel 7:16 – your throne established forever

David was able to function as a priest as well as a king because his right to rule was rooted in the Abrahamic covenant which pre-dates the Mosaic covenant. Chapters one through nine of 1 Chronicles trace the lineage of David all the way back to Adam. The connection of David as an earthly king to Adam, the first king, is obvious and refreshes the original instruction to have “dominion over all things.”

Read 2 Samuel 7:12-17 and make notes:

The promise of being given a land has a new element added. Now it includes a promise of “ruling” over the land. The covenant with David was primarily a promissory covenant. David was promised the grace of kingship “because he had served God in truth, righteousness, and loyalty.”

After David was anointed as God’s servant, God probed him in his weakness. God had great patience with David and kept his covenant with him. God was always with David and he assured him of continued royal posterity.

Blessings of Davidic Covenant include:

- Davidic house to last forever,
- Davidic throne to last forever,
- Davidic kingdom to last forever,
- Israel promised land forever,
- Israel would no longer be afflicted by other nations, and
- Israel would receive fatherly care from God.

The Davidic Covenant was more specific than Abrahamic Covenant.

What new insight, or understanding, do you have as a result of this study of the Davidic Covenant? How can it be applied to the Christian lifestyle?

New Covenant

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and make notes:

Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant in which God would perform a great work of salvation sometime in the future. A “new covenant” that would succeed the old will be realized “after those days,” or after God’s redemptive acts of building and gathering. This new covenant would place the law into the hearts of the people, which refers to knowing God. It would be for everyone from least to greatest. This new covenant would provide forgiveness for sins.

There are some who see the new covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31 as not only different from the covenant made with Moses but as a replacement for it. Others see the contents of the “New Covenant” referred to in Jeremiah 31 as a renewal and an expansion of the Abrahamic and Davidic promises. Still others see the classic passage in Jeremiah 31 as temporary and provisional because of the continued violation by the Israelite nation as a whole.

Which of these three views do you believe is correct? Why?

The Covenants Of God - 08

Some believe there are two new covenants that are as distinct as Israel and the church. One prophesied in Jeremiah 31 and the other mentioned in 2 Corinthians 3 and in the book of Hebrews. Others believe there is only one new covenant but it has dual applications. The physical implications apply to Israel and the spiritual implications apply to the church.

The promise of a new covenant is included in the statement that occurs so often in Scripture, “I will be your God and you will be my people.” This means a complete restoration of the normal relationship with God. Remember, the original normal relationship of man with God was what Adam had in the Garden of Eden. God and man walked and talked together. Every obstacle to intimate fellowship with God is to be removed.

The highlight of Jeremiah’s portrayal of Israel’s future restoration was the “New Covenant.” It would not be new in the basic demands of the covenant but in the people’s capacity to obey. Instead of having the law written on stone tablets, the law would be written in the heart of each person of the new covenant. This New Covenant is bestowed upon men in their inability to keep the commandments of God and due to His boundless grace forgives their sin and accepts them as his children.

It is significant that in this new covenant, the people will have the law of God written in their “minds” and in the “hearts.” This means they may not be able to quote chapter and verse as to the location; but they “just know” that certain things are right and certain things are wrong.

Read 1 Peter 2:22 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 08

Read Romans 5:18-19 and make notes:

Christ Jesus fulfilled the requirement of the covenant of works. Christ completely obeyed God on behalf of everyone.

Read Hebrews 12:24 and make notes:

In the New Covenant, Christ is the mediator of the covenant between God and man. It has the distinctive Old Testament sense of a covenant. It involves redemption from the sins that were committed under the first covenant. The plan of salvation is a covenant for more than the mere fact that the word “covenant” is used. The plan of salvation is given to us in the form of a covenant.

All the elements of the covenant are present:

the parties involved are God and man,
promises,
stipulations, and
conditions of the covenant relationship.

The condition of the new covenant is faith in Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:25 and make notes:

The blood or death of Jesus established a new “*diatheke*” and the fruit of the vine represents it. “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” refers to God’s provision for man which allows a proper relationship between man and God. The cup of the Lord’s Supper is an outward testimony to God’s new covenant with man.

Remember that a covenant is a promise confirmed by an oath or a sign. When Christ referred to the cup as a commemorating a new covenant, he was pointing to the promise of salvation God made on the basis of Christ’s death. The sign of beginning this new covenant relationship is Baptism and the sign of continuing the relationship is participation in the Lord’s Supper. This covenant is based entirely upon God’s unmerited favor toward the redeemed and this is why it is called a covenant of Grace.

What new insight, or understanding, do you have as a result of this study on the New Covenant? How will it affect your every day walk?

Covenant of Grace

The covenant of Grace may well be the original basic covenant God offered to man.

From the promise in the garden,
through the covenant with Noah,
through the covenant with Abraham,
through the covenant with Moses,
through the covenant with David,
and certainly through the New Covenant
there appears an abundant evidence of God's grace.

There was only a hint of the possibility of relationship with God at the time of Adam and Eve. Hints can be seen in the promise of the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15) and in God making clothes for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21). The covenant God made with Noah promised all mankind or animals would never be destroyed by flood.

What do you see in the Covenant with Noah that would indicate it is part of the Covenant of Grace? (refer to Lesson 4 of study)

The covenant made with Abraham remained in effect right through the fulfillment of Christ. (Luke 1:72-73. The Mosaic covenant could not save the people. It was merely a foreshadowing of the bearing of sin by Christ. (Hebrews 10:1-4, Hebrews 9:11-28).

The biblical covenant is a lifelong exclusive relationship between God and his people. God regards his people with a holy jealousy much like that of a husband toward his wife.

The Covenants Of God – 09

The circumcision served as a sacramental sign on Israel's pilgrimage to the promised land. The sacrament of the Passover sealed the enduring blessings of the covenant community. In the varying covenant relationships God has continued to reveal more of himself to his people.

What do you see in the Covenant with Abraham that looks like it might be part of the Covenant of Grace? (refer to Lesson 5 of this study)

When man betrayed the covenant in the garden, God did not abandon the covenant. He intervened in grace so that the covenant would remain alive. When man failed to obtain the blessing offered in the garden of Eden, God established another means of man receiving the blessings of God; one where man could be saved.

This was not necessary on God's part but it was necessary for man. After the fall, the rest of Scripture records the story of God working out the amazing plan of redemption where sinful people can come into fellowship with the Holy God.

The plan of Salvation has been the same under all dispensations or covenants; patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. Immediately following the fall, God made the promise of redemption to Adam. The promise of redemption made to our first parents was repeated and amplified from time to time until the Redeemer came.

What part of the Plan of Salvation do you see in the Covenants made with various people before Christ was born?

The Redeemer is the same though all the covenants:

the seed of the woman,
the seed of Abraham,
the son of David,
the Branch,
the servant of the Lord,
the prince of peace.

The Covenant of Grace, the plan of Salvation, has been the same from the beginning, with the same promise, same redeemer, and same condition; faith in the Son of God as savior.

The parts of the New Covenant that are revealed in Scriptures:

the parties of the covenant;

Hebrews 8:6, Hebrews 9:15, Hebrews 12:24;

the conditions of the covenant;

Romans 1:17, Romans 5:1, Romans 4:1-15, James 2:17, 1 John 2:4-6; and

the promise of the covenant;

2 Corinthians 6:16, 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, 1 Peter 2:9-10,
Hebrews 8:10, Revelations 21:3.

Some Bible scholars believe the Lord's covenant relationship to be the center of the messages of the 8th century prophets such as Hosea, Amos, and Micah. While the immediate future surely looked bleak, these prophets anticipated a time when the Lord would restore Israel on account of the unconditional eternal promises to Abraham and to David.

Did these prophets have the attitude that regardless of how reprobate the people became and regardless of how little consideration they may give God that things will become well for the nation because of a predestined promise of blessing and success? Or perhaps was it that these prophets were restating the conditions and blessings of the before established covenants; such as "if my people repent, I will forgive" (2 Chron 7:14)?

Rather than relying on a predestined unconditional blessing it is more likely these prophets understood God to be faithful to keep his "covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands" (Deut. 7:9). They could predict a time of blessings if the people would turn back to God and be obedient to his commands.

These prophets were all aware of the history of God's covenant relationship with Israel. They testified that God initiated the covenant. All three made references to Israel's salvation history where God delivered.

It is also important to notice that each deliverance appears to have come after a repentance and calling out to God by the people. If God delivers a people when they repent, this is more like the conditional blessing than the unconditional promise. The covenant principles of reward and punishment were in still in effect during the period of Israel's history in which these prophets lived.

What insight or understanding did you gain from this study of the Covenant of Grace?
How should it affect the way we live today?

Covenant of Redemption

Covenant theology sees the Covenant of Grace as founded on the Covenant of Redemption. The Covenant of Redemption is defined as the eternal pact between the members of the Holy Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit covenanted together for the redemption of mankind. This Covenant of Redemption was established even before man was created.

The Father's part of the Covenant of Redemption:

Read John 17:2 and make notes:

Read Acts 1:4 and make notes:

It is believed that the Heavenly Father covenanted to give this authority to Jesus and to give the gift of the Holy Spirit to man, before the creation of time.

The Son's part of the Covenant of Redemption:

Read 1 Peter 1:20 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 10

Read Galatians 4:4 and make notes:

The Son (The Word) covenanted before creation to be born into a fleshly body in order to fulfill the requirements of the covenant (law) on the behalf of all men.

The part of the Holy Spirit in the Covenant of Redemption:

Read Matthew 3:16 and make notes:

Read Luke 4:1 and make notes:

Read John 3:34 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 10

Read John 14:16-17 and make notes:

Read Acts 1:8 and make notes:

Before creation, the Holy Spirit covenanted to empower the physical body Jesus would be born into so that he could minister in the power of God. He also covenanted to take up residence (“live in”) those who would accept Jesus as their Savior and to empower them to be able to minister with the power of God.

The idea is that the Covenant of Redemption was agreed to, or entered into, by all three parts of the Holy Trinity before man was created.

The Covenant of Redemption is different from the suzerain covenants between God and man because the parties entered into it as equals. There is nothing that required God to enter into this covenant. It is simply an act of his gracious will.

Read Genesis 1:26 and make notes:

The Covenants Of God - 10

This text records the covenant of eternity past which provided for man's relationship with God, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule. . .over all the earth. . ."

Some Bible scholars believe the Covenant of Redemption was formed in eternity past and then revealed in time. It is a covenant between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and may well be beyond man's complete comprehension.

In the Covenant of Redemption, Christ, as one of the parties of the covenant, speaks of promises made to him before his advent.

Can you think of what some of these might be? If so, write them here:

The Covenants Of God - 10

Charles Hodge list the following promises as having been made to the Redeemer:

- .1 Father would prepare a body for the Son
- .2 Father would give Spirit to the Son without measure
- .3 Father would be at Son's side
- .4 Father would deliver Son from power of death
- .5 Son would receive Holy Spirit to send to whom he wished
- .6 All given by Father to Son would be kept and none lost
- .7 Multitude whom no man could count would become kingdom of Messiah
- .8 Son and his church would become highest manifestation of divine perfection

Do you agree with this list? If not, what changes would you make?

The Covenants Of God - 10

When we speak of the Covenant of Redemption as something agreed to by the members of the Holy Trinity, we need to remember this completely voluntarily by God. This is not something God had to do.

This covenant was not like the covenants with man. This covenant was more like the Party Covenant, where all the parties entered as equals.

This has proven to be a very costly covenant for God to make and to keep in effect throughout man's history.

Why do you think God agreed to so great of a covenant responsibility? Especially considering the unreliability of man!

What do you think of this idea of a Covenant of Redemption having been entered into by the members of the Holy Trinity?

Covenant versus Kingdom Relationship

Some see the Covenant and the Kingdom as two sides of a single coin. In the creation process we see God covenanted his kingdom into existence. The original covenant remains forever as a foundation for the norm of life for man in God’s world.

When we speak of covenant we are looking back to the original charter. When we speak of kingdom we are looking forward to the promised goal of perfect renewal.

Several comparisons can be made between the covenant and the kingdom.

Covenant	Kingdom
Foundation oriented suggesting the idea of an abiding charter	Goal oriented suggesting the idea of an ongoing program
People are seen as Covenant people	People are seen as Kingdom citizens
Creator reveals himself as Father	Creator reveals himself as Lord

Covenant and Kingdom are both direction setting realities instead of structural realities. Both point the way to a childlike faith and obedience to God. What holds true for covenant also holds true for kingdom. Both share the same starting point or origin.

Some Bible scholars believe we don’t know God as he is but rather we know God as he manifest himself in his works. This makes our question not “Who is God in his essence?” but “Who is God in his relationship to us.”

“I will be your God and you will be my people” is the heartbeat of the covenant relationship between God and man. God keeps covenant with us as believing communities in which every member shares in the life of the body as a whole.

Conditional or Unconditional Covenant

Walter Kaiser believes the following covenants must be excluded from the conditional class:
the Noahic Covenant,
the Abrahamic Covenant,
the Davidic Covenant,
the New Covenant, and
the Covenant of the New Heavens and the New Earth.”

The reason given is that none of these covenants have a record of where the party agreed to certain obligations when the covenant was made. Then he follows this with the statement, “This is not to affirm that subsequent obedience is not required if some or all of these five covenant benefits are to be enjoyed.”

With the exception of the New Heavens and New Earth, Biblical evidence indicates each of these covenants required obedience on the part of man in order for the benefits to be received. The fact that man was given no option except to accept or reject does not change the condition of obedience required when the covenant was established.

The requirement for who will enter into the New Heaven and the New Earth is to have your name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. To have your name in this book requires obedience to God’s plan of salvation. So even this covenant still clearly has the obedience requirement.

Kaiser argues against the position that the Abrahamic covenant was conditional. He especially takes issue with the idea that the covenant is revocable concerning Abraham’s seed. He doesn’t believe any conditions were given until after the promise was made. For him it is in appropriate to speak of revocation or annulment of the promise.

Kaiser sees the conditional part of the covenant as applying to each generation’s responsibility to transmit the covenant requirements to the next. The transmission of the covenant to the lineal descendants of Abraham is not conditional. His conclusion is that we break the covenant by our personal or individual invalidation of the benefits of the covenant.

Is Kaiser correct or is he missing something regarding the covenant relationship and covenant requirements?

The Covenants Of God - 11

The debate over conditional or unconditional parts of the covenant may be misplaced. It is a type of over simplifying to speak of Old Testament covenants as conditional or unconditional. The promises from David to the patriarchs and the stipulated blessings laid out in the Sinai pact are two sides of the Old Testament covenant. These two compliment one another rather than contradict. The promise of salvation given to the patriarchs is the blessing of the Sinai covenant.

Are the promises of blessing tied to the requirement of obedience? If so, how?

Are the promises of blessing dependent upon man not violating the covenant requirement?
If so, how?

The Covenants Of God - 11

What insights or understanding did you receive from this study of the Covenant vs. Kingdom?

The conclusion:

There is just one covenant God has made with man; the Covenant of Grace.

This covenant of Grace has been established with various people from the first Adam through to the current man with different specifics of rewards and punishments. The various names of covenants between God and man recorded in the Scriptures are basically descriptive of the conditions as God's covenant is established with individuals and God's people.

God's "My Covenant" that was established with different peoples was always a covenant issuing forth from God's grace with the purpose of making it possible for man to fellowship with God and providing the necessary redemption.

Do you agree with this conclusion? Why or why not?

This helps us to understand, each time God established His Covenant with a person or a people, he was revealing something of the relationship he expects and desires from us.

Refer back to the view of Covenant Theology in the first lesson of this study. God desires for man's relationship with Him to be a reflection of the relationship shared within the Trinity (review the Covenant of Redemption - lesson 10). This also explains why some aspects of the covenant appear to be everlasting while the blessings and rewards continue to be conditional upon obedience.

Do you agree with is assessment? Why or why not?

Gordon Spykman points out six aspects of Biblical covenants:

All God's dealings with creation are covenantal in character,
The covenant is rooted in God's work of creation,
The covenant is one-sided in its continuation,
From the beginning to end covenant history reveals a basic continuity,
All men are either covenant keepers or covenant breakers,
Covenant is a full bodied way of life which we are called to live
before the face of God and in the midst of his world.

Do you agree with Spykman's view of the aspects of Biblical covenants?
If not, how would you state them?

The Covenants Of God - 12

Our salvation in the New Covenant must be viewed as much more than some qualifying event where once experienced we are allowed to go to heaven when we die.

Our salvation is entrance into a covenant relationship with the Heavenly Father where He fully expects and requires obedience in our daily walk. But more than obedience like that of some slave or servant. God is also looking for daily fellowship, conversation, and interaction in our lives.

Do you agree with this view of the New Covenant? Why or Why not?

We live in a community where the predominant view regarding salvation is that it is a one time experience which guarantees our entrance into heaven when we die. Many of the local people profess that it doesn't matter so much how you live and what you do as long as your salvation experience is real.

Others in this community, view salvation as a "works oriented" event. If you do enough right, or if you are doing right when you die, then you go to heaven. If you do too much wrong, or if you are doing wrong when you die, then you go to hell.

This study on the Covenants of God has attempted to provide a Biblical proof and basis for disputing both of these beliefs.

The hope is that more Christians will grasp the view of salvation as having requirements and expectations concerning lifestyle and actions here on this earth even before we should enter into heaven. Salvation is all about a covenant relationship and not merely some qualifying event in our life.

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What have you gained from this study on the Covenants of God that might be helpful in dealing with the wrong views of salvation in our community?

In what way has your attitude, or understanding, changed as a result of this study and the discussions in the Study Group?