

GOD'S COVENANTS

INTRODUCTION TO GOD'S COVENANTS

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Covenants in the Scriptures are of primary importance to every believer. Learning about covenants is vital to understanding God's eternal plan of salvation for mankind.

We find covenants throughout the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Yet their significance is not always apparent to us. Both the general concepts of covenants, and the specific details of each covenant made between God and man, are important to study.

Foundational to our study of covenants is knowing that God is a **Covenant-Making** and a **Covenant-Keeping** God. Our God makes promises. Then He makes an oath upon Himself – since there is nothing greater (Heb 6:13) – that He will fulfill His promises. God is the supremely all-powerful Being in the universe. He has all the power and authority needed to fulfill His promises to mankind.

WHY STUDY COVENANTS?

God has **progressively revealed** Himself and His plans for mankind over the centuries. They are recorded in the Bible. This revelation is further detailed through God's covenants with man, also in the Bible. The covenants reveal much about how God communicates with and deals with mankind.

Students of the Bible know that one way to determine the importance of a word or subject in the Bible is to count how many times it appears. When God speaks about a subject repeatedly, it likely has high importance with God.

The subject of covenants is one of those important topics. The word covenant is used 282 times in the Old Testament and 34 times in the New Testament – **a total of 316 times!** It is obvious that the subject of covenants is a priority principle to God. Therefore, we need to understand this significant subject.

FIRST MENTION

There is a principle in Bible study known as the “**law of first mention.**” The law of first mention means that the first time something is mentioned in the Bible, it is important to take notice. A doctrine or truth, when first mentioned in Scripture, is in its most basic form. More about that doctrine or truth may be revealed later in the Bible. Thus, this law of first mention should also guide how we interpret each following occurrence in Scripture of that same word or subject.

The Book of Genesis is the first book in the Bible. It begins God’s revelation of Himself to mankind. Even the word “genesis” means *begin, or come into existence*. It is important to notice that four of the eight covenants that God makes with mankind are found in this book of beginnings called Genesis. Our study of God’s covenants begins in the Garden of Eden, with Adam and Eve. We will then progress through Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and conclude with the final covenant in Scripture, the New Covenant.

STUDY BENEFITS

Let us now look at some of the great benefits of studying and gaining an understanding of the covenants:

1. Our study will help to establish a **sure foundation** in Jesus Christ. Witnessing the faithfulness of God throughout human history will build our **faith**. It will teach us to “*walk by faith and not by sight*” each day (2Cor 5:7). We can, with confidence, expect God to continue to be faithful – for He cannot violate His own covenant (Num 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18).
2. The study of covenants will confirm that biblical history is not a series of random events or stories. It is instead the step-by-step **unfolding of God’s great plan of redemption for mankind**. Each of the eight covenants is linked, in purpose and plan, to the one before it and the one after it. Every successive covenant brings us a step deeper in the revelation of God’s plan of redemption; and a step closer to when Jesus (the Christ, Messiah, Savior) will return. This deeper revelation is also a revelation of God’s heart: A heart that does not seek to condemn His creation, but seeks salvation for His creation (John 3:16,17).

3. Our study of covenants will reveal that the **historical events of the Bible fit together** in a logical sequence within the context of the covenants. There are 3,000 individuals named in the Bible. Yet, those with whom God has made covenants – men like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and primarily Jesus Christ – are some of the most important to study.
4. This study of covenants will help us know that **God has a purpose for mankind**. He has chosen to reveal His purpose through a series of successive covenants. Each covenant reveals something important about God's nature and also reveals something important about man's nature.

God's highest purpose, of course, is His redemptive plan to restore fallen mankind to a rightful relationship with Him. We catch a glimpse of the right relationship God intended for us in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2. Sadly, that relationship between God and mankind ended up broken (read Genesis Chapter 3).

From that moment of broken relationship, the remainder of the Bible represents an unfolding of successive covenants. These covenants are part of God's plan of restoration and salvation for mankind. The covenants all lead and point to the final and ultimate covenant: The New Covenant of redemption ushered in by Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior (1Cor 11:25, Heb 8:6). The relationship with God the Father that was broken by man in the Garden can now be restored through Jesus and the New Covenant!

5. Our study will show why **Jesus Christ is the only way, truth and life** (John 14:6). All people, of every nation, tribe and tongue can know and walk again with God. But there is only **one way** that can happen – *through Jesus Christ* as a result of the New Covenant. This is the final covenant in which we now live.

We will also learn that, as Christ followers, we have entered in to a covenant relationship. As part of that New Covenant, we become sons and daughters of God, and co-heirs with Jesus (Gal 4:5-7).

6. The study of covenants will reveal that God desires **relationship** with us, not simply religious formality or ritual. As Adam walked with God in the Garden (Gen 3:8), so God desires to walk with us daily by His Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25).
7. Our study will give us fresh eyes to see the **8,000+ promises** of the Bible. We will look at conditional promises (require an action on our part) and

some that are not conditional (a gift, favor or **grace**). As New Covenant believers, having faith in God's promises can give us greater authority and power in our lives and ministries.

8. The study of covenants will give new understanding of the greatness of our God and the profound truth in His Word. **Our faith and trust in God will grow** as we see afresh His faithfulness and unstoppable purpose being worked out through the ages. We will also see more of the purpose of God for our lives and ministries made manifest by His Holy Spirit.

Truly, our God is a *covenant-making* and *covenant-keeping* God. All of His promises to us are “yes” and “amen” in Christ (2Cor 1:20). As you study, allow your heart to rise with praise and thanksgiving; allow your faith to soar! Discover afresh the solid ground of the hope we have in Jesus, as God's plan of salvation unfolds around us and through us.

THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE BIBLE IS REDEMPTION

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

As students of the Bible, it is critical for us to know the Bible's origins. One can say that 40 writers who were **inspired by the Holy Spirit of God** wrote the 66 books of the Bible. These writers came from all walks of life and their writings spanned more than 1,500 years.

GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF THE BIBLE

While it is true that man wrote down the *words* on paper, the **Author of the Bible was God!** The Bible itself reveals this: “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (2Tim 3:16); “*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2Pet 1:20,21). The Bible testifies and clearly states that God authored the Bible.

As pastors and leaders in the Church, everything we say and do should be in agreement with the Bible, the Word of God (Gal 1:6-9; 2Tim 2:15). In the Bible are the words of life, and all that we need to know for a godly life in Christ

Jesus. In addition, all that we say and do should be for God's glory alone (John 7:18; 1Thess 2:4-6).

THE THEME OF THE BIBLE

As with most books that we read or study, we first try to discern the theme. In finding the theme of the Bible, we will also discover the miraculous nature of the Bible.

The Bible has an incredible design. God used 40 different people with different backgrounds, literary styles and educations, spread out over 1,500 years of history. And yet *there is still one unifying message* of the Bible: **mankind's redemption**. It is a theme running clearly from Genesis to Revelation. This theme is sometimes called the "scarlet thread of redemption," *athread of Christ's blood* shed for us.

COVENANTS

The redemption theme is most clearly understood when we see the Bible as God's interaction with mankind through a series of eight primary **covenants**. The word *covenant* is a word that has no exact parallel in modern times. The words contract, promise, will, or testament are similar. But they do not have the exact same meaning or significance as the biblical term *covenant*.

COVENANT THEOLOGY

In the Bible, there are covenants between men, tribes and nations. The Bible is actually a record of many different covenants.

However, the most important covenants for us to study are the **eight covenants** that God made with man and mankind. They are:

1. The Edenic Covenant: a *Covenant of Innocence* made with Adam before he sinned.
2. The Adamic Covenant: a *Covenant of Conscience* made with mankind through Adam after "the Fall."
3. The Noahic Covenant: a *Covenant of Human Government* made with man through Noah.
4. The Abrahamic Covenant: a *Covenant of Promise* made with man through Abram (Abraham).

5. The Mosaic Covenant: a *Covenant of Law* made with man through Moses.
 6. The Palestinian Covenant: a Covenant made with man through Moses, which was a reaffirmation of the Covenant of Law and of the Abrahamic Covenant promise.
 7. The Davidic Covenant: a Covenant made with man reaffirming that the Christ, Messiah or Savior would come through the lineage of David the king and that Christ's Kingdom would be eternal.
 8. The New Covenant: a *Covenant of Grace* made with mankind through Jesus Christ. This is the covenant in which we live today.
- As we progress through this study, we will examine each of these eight covenants in greater detail.

BLOOD COVENANTS

The most binding type of covenant was the Blood Covenants. This type of covenant was ratified or signed in blood. The study of this type of covenant is called Blood Covenant Theology.

The importance of blood in the biblical covenant process cannot be overlooked, as we examine the covenants between God and man.

1. Blood of animals was shed by God in the Garden of Eden when He provided covering (clothing) for Adam and Eve, after they disobeyed God and ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen 3:21).
2. Blood of animals was shed when animals became available to eat through the Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:3,4).
3. Blood of man was shed in circumcision as a sign of the covenant through Abraham (Gen 17:10,11).
4. Blood of animals was shed in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament Mosaic law (examples are found in Leviticus Chapter 14 and Numbers Chapter 19).
5. Blood of the **Lamb of God** was shed by the perfect sacrifice, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (John 1:29, Eph 2:13, Heb 9:14).

BECAUSE LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD

What makes blood so important to God? It is because *life is in the blood*. To shed blood requires a life. It is only by the shedding of blood that atonement

can be made for sinful man (this will become more clear as we later study the New Covenant.) The high cost of sealing a covenant in blood allows us to see how profoundly God takes His Covenants (Lev 17:11; Heb 9:22).

GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION

As Christians – and particularly as Christian *leaders* – it is important for us to know that the Bible was given to us by God. The books of the Bible have been assembled to present in very clear terms:

1. The **origin and history of mankind**.
2. God's **plan for mankind**, through which man would find that it is impossible to please God by his own efforts or works.
3. The means by which God would fulfill His **redemptive work for mankind**. How will we present the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, unless we know and understand God's plan for the salvation of man? This plan was to be accomplished through Jesus *the Messiah* (Hebrew word for savior) or Jesus *the Christ* (Greek word for savior).

This plan of God – which **He initiated** – is seen from the time of the Garden of Eden and throughout the Bible! The entire Old Covenant (or Old Testament) speaks of the anticipation and yearning to see the New Covenant of Grace initiated and fulfilled through the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

GOD DOES NOT MAKE MISTAKES

God already knows the outcome of every event that will take place. This principle that God knows everything (including what each person may choose to do) is called His *forethought* or *foreknowledge*.

God initiates His plans in order to accomplish His purposes. Even though God knows what a man will do, man still has the God-given ability to make freewill choices for either good or bad (Ps 94:11).

For instance, we read in the Scriptures that “*we love Him because He first loved us*” (1John 4:19). God loved us first.

Another example of God initiating an action is: “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him*” (John 6:44). God initiates His plans. But each person must still choose how to respond to God's action, invitation and will.

We will look at the eight primary covenants that God initiated in succession. It may *seem* that when one covenant “failed,” God created another covenant to replace the previous one. Nothing could be further from the truth! **God never fails and He never makes mistakes.**

As we study the covenants, we will find important lessons as to why **man failed** to keep covenants with God. But thankfully, God did not give up on mankind!

MAN’S LIMITED UNDERSTANDING

God knows everything. It is man who is limited in his understanding. Often man – instead of believing God’s truth and acting on it – chooses to **experience** the truth through trials, tribulations and testing.

It would be God’s desire that we learn through a relationship of trust in Him and by obeying His Word (using **godly wisdom**). Unfortunately, we see throughout biblical history that mankind would often rather “*do what is right in their own eyes*” (Judges 21:25). Often man chooses to learn through hard experiences instead of walking with God and following His loving commands.

TWO TEACHERS

There are two teachers in life: wisdom and experience. Throughout history, man has chosen to learn about himself the difficult way, through the way of experience.

As we consider in our minds what we might do in a given situation, we may think noble, heroic, admirable thoughts about ourselves and our possible actions. But when actually faced with adversity or temptation, we often end up falling far short of those ideals. All of us can relate to this experience!

Fortunately, we have the ability to choose to live by God’s wisdom, understanding and knowledge as revealed in the Bible, rather than living by our own limited wisdom and knowledge.

The Word of God was given to enlighten and instruct us (2Tim 3:15-17). God’s Word was given to guide us (Ps 119:105). God’s Word never fails (Isa 40:8; 2Pet 1:19).

Everything we need to know in life (2Pet 1:2) is made available to us through God's Word, the Bible (Deut 29:29). God has even given us a measure of faith (Rom 12:3) so that we might walk by faith in Him and not by sight (2Cor 5:7; Gal 2:20). We can trust in God's way of doing things.

A COVENANT-KEEPING GOD

There are several ways to make agreements between two individuals.

1. You can make a **verbal promise** to someone, which is a familiar method.
2. A more formal kind of agreement would be a legally binding **written contract**.

These first two types of agreements are limited. They can be limited by the agreement itself or limited by the power, strength and authority of the one who must fulfill or enforce it.

3. A third type of agreement is a **will or testament**. In the case of a will, the testator (the one who makes the will) must die before the terms of the will go into effect.

God has made agreements with mankind. God also has unlimited power, unlimited strength and unlimited authority. Thus, God *can* and *will* fulfill ALL of His agreements and promises. God always keeps His covenant.

PROMISES

A promise is a commitment by someone to do (or not do) something. Obviously by making a promise, there is an implied **intent** to fulfill the promise.

Man's promises are limited to *intent* because none of us can absolutely guarantee fulfillment of a promise. This is because we do not have absolute power or control over all circumstances of life.

For example, I might promise to meet you next week on Tuesday at 10 a.m. in the train station. Yet, when that morning arrives, I become violently ill and end up in the hospital and cannot fulfill my promise to meet you. Some things are out of our control because our strength and power are limited.

God also makes promises. Some students of the Bible have found 1,260 *specific* promises in the Bible. However, some would argue that since *everything* that God says will come to pass, then *everything* that God says is a promise! With this broader definition of a promise – that everything God says is a promise – one could say that the Bible has more than 8,000 promises!

GOD SAYS WHAT HE MEANS

God is not like a man (Num 23:19). God makes promises and He has the **authority** and **power** to keep them all. When God makes a *formal promise* to mankind, it is called a **covenant**.

When we understand that God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God, we begin to see the Bible as a unified, logical revelation of God's purpose, plan and program.

Knowing God as a covenant **keeper** causes our faith to grow and mature. We will recognize the faithfulness of God toward His Word: "*So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it*" (Isa 55:11).

As we embrace and stand upon God's Word, we will see Him perform it! Let us now look more closely at covenants.

WHAT IS A COVENANT?

We will study the Bible as a series of covenants that God has made with man. So let us look at the word *covenant* more closely.

The word used for covenant in Hebrew is "beriyth"; in the Greek it is "diatheekee." "Beriyth" literally means *to divide* or cut a sacrifice in two. When a sacrifice was split, the two parties of the agreement (known as **covenant heads**) would walk between the parts of the sacrifice. The term "to cut a covenant" comes from this definition.

A covenant is a **binding contract** or agreement between two people or two groups. It involves promises on the part of each to the other. For example, when an employer hires a worker, a verbal or written contract is made or "cut."

A biblical covenant implies much more than a contract or simple agreement. A contract can be between any two people, and the contract has an end date. A covenant is also between two individuals (called *covenant heads*), but can extend for generations.

Another difference is that a contract generally involves only one part of a person, such as a talent, possession or skill. But a covenant covers a person's **total being**, and even includes family members, clan members and all of their possessions. This last point is very important to understand. **A covenant extends to every person that is connected to the covenant head.**

In a biblical covenant, one covenant head is generally **weaker** in power, authority or wealth. The weaker party would usually covenant with a **stronger** covenant head. For instance, Jonathan (a prince and son of King Saul) was a stronger party who formed a covenant with David (1Sam 18:1-4). At that time, David was just a common man from a small family of shepherds.

CONDITIONAL (LAW) VS. UNCONDITIONAL (GRACE)

A covenant can be either conditional or unconditional. A **conditional** covenant exists when both parties agree to do certain things. For example, an employer agrees to pay wages *if* the worker performs certain tasks over a period of time.

An **unconditional** covenant is when one party agrees to do certain things (a promise) whether or not the other party performs any function or work. The covenant is not dependent on the ability of the weaker party to perform a function or duty. In other words the *stronger* covenant head extends favor or **grace** to the *weaker* covenant head.

Grace can be defined as: Favor or kindness shown to a person without regard to the worth or merit of the one who receives it, and in spite of what that same person deserves.

Grace is a key attribute of God. *“And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and **gracious**, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth’”* (Ex 34:6). Grace is associated with mercy, love, compassion and patience; as the source of help; with deliverance from distress.

SCRIPTURE AS COVENANTS

As you know, the sacred Scriptures are divided into two significant divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is composed of 39 books and the New Testament is composed of 27. All of the books of Scripture are God-inspired (2Tim 3:16).

The word “testament” means *witness, testimony, or covenant*. In other words, we could rightly call the two major sections of Scripture the “Old Covenant” and the “New Covenant.” As a matter of fact, the word testament is used only 2 times in the Bible (Heb 9:16, 17) while the word covenant is used 316 times in the Bible.

COVENANTS BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

As we study each of the eight major covenants in Scripture, we will gain a greater understanding of three important things:

1. **A historical perspective.** To understand the times and settings in the development of man’s understanding of God as He progressively revealed Himself.
2. **Why God established each covenant.** God knows all things, past, present, and future. It is important that we realize He also knows the outcomes.
3. **Man could not save himself.** From the beginning, God knew that man needed a Savior.

ESSENTIAL COVENANT PRINCIPLE

We will study in more detail the component parts of a covenant. But first, let us examine an essential principle in a blood covenant that is key to understanding the faithfulness of God.

As we have learned, a blood covenant is the most binding of all the covenants. A blood covenant also involves an ***exchange that takes place between the two parties of the covenant*** or the covenant heads. This exchange results in “*oneness*,” with the two parties of the covenant becoming one entity. The **marriage covenant** is an example of two becoming one. In marriage, the two parties become one, one flesh (Gen 2:24; Matt19:5,6; Eph 5:31). In addition, all that belongs to the bride – including possessions, debts and future potential – now belongs to the bridegroom. All that belongs to the

bridegroom – possessions, debts and future potential – now belongs to the bride. All the resources, power and authority **are now shared** between the covenant heads (in this case, the bride and bridegroom).

A COVENANT EXCHANGE

In the Bible are many examples of a powerful person coming to the aid of a weaker one because of the covenant principle. This principle gives the weaker person the **authority to call upon and receive** the power of the stronger one because of the promises made in covenant agreement.

In Genesis Chapter 14, Lot (Abram's nephew) chose to leave the physical protection and covering of Abram and move to the region of Sodom. Sometime later, a war broke out (v9). The region in which Lot lived was conquered and of course "to the victor goes the spoils." The cities, including Lot's, were plundered of all their wealth (v11).

But the conquering kings made a fatal mistake; they took Lot captive (v12). Abram discovered what had happened: *"Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan"* (v14).

Because Lot was of Abram's clan, Lot's captivity set in motion **the entire clan** of Abram against their now common enemy. *"So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people"* (v16). The weaker (Lot) received the power of the stronger (Abram) because of the covenant relationship between them.

This is a very important covenant principle for us as Christians. Because of the New Covenant we have with Christ, which was established by His own blood, we have the power and authority of Jesus released to us! This profound truth will be studied in more detail later in this teaching.

A RIGHT HEART

We have learned that an essential principle of covenants is *exchange*. This is an exchange of authority, power or material goods between the stronger party and the weaker party.

A successful covenant requires:

- Both parties to understand the terms or conditions of the covenant.
- A sincere desire (a right heart) of each party to fulfill their part in the covenant.

Obedience to the covenant has a better outcome than failure followed by sacrifices of repentance (1Sam 15:22). True obedience includes a genuine willingness of heart to obey (Isa 1:19), rather than a reluctance to obey or obedience due to fear.

SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT COVENANTS

We have studied in general terms the definition of a covenant, principles of making a covenant, and the importance of the exchange of power, authority and wealth. Let us now examine in more detail seven primary covenants in the Old Testament, and then the New Covenant.

COMPONENTS OF EACH COVENANT

Our study will examine one covenant at a time, with each covenant presented with the same components as follows:

- ***Name of the Covenant*** – Each covenant name describes either the human “covenant head” or the location where the covenant was made. These are not all names that God gave to the covenants. They are names given by theologians to help distinguish the covenants one from another.
- ***Covenant Heads*** – In each covenant, God was one of the covenant heads. The person(s) with whom God made the covenant was the other covenant head.
- ***Survey and Terms of the Covenant*** – This will give a brief overview of the times, places and people of the covenant, as well as the terms of the covenant.
- ***Christ Revealed in the Covenant*** – Old Covenant characters sometimes “foreshadow” the character or actions of Jesus Christ. For instance, Moses was an intercessor for the people (Num 11:2; 21:7); Christ is our Intercessor today (John 17:9; Heb 7:23-25). This kind of foreshadowing or symbolism is called *typology*. We would say that Moses is an Old Testament **type** of Jesus Christ.

These typologies provide a **prophetic** glimpse into what will come. For example, the flood of Noah's day (Genesis Chapters 6 and 7) is later referenced as a symbol for baptism (1Pet 3:21). So "Christ Revealed" in a particular covenant references the person or events that symbolize what is to come in Jesus Christ our Lord.

- **Keys to the Covenant** – Many volumes of books would be needed to thoroughly examine the details of each covenant. Our purpose here is to highlight some important "keys" of each covenant that lead us to the ultimate covenant – the New Covenant that was purchased through the blood of Jesus Christ.
- **Concluding Thoughts about the Covenant** – Closing thoughts for summary and reflection.

1. THE EDENIC COVENANT

God made the first covenant with Adam in the Garden of Eden **before** Adam and Eve had sinned. This period before the "fall of man" is often called the *Age of Innocence* because Adam and Eve knew no evil.

THE COVENANT

The Edenic covenant is found in Genesis 2:15-17: *"Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"*

God said, "You shall not eat." With that command was the immediate ability for Adam to choose: he could either obey or disobey God.

COVENANT HEADS

God made the covenant with Adam; therefore, both God and Adam were the covenant heads. However, everyone joining Adam's family or future clan would also be subject to the terms of the covenant. This means that the entire human race was represented by Adam, the first man, in this covenant.

At the time of the Edenic covenant, Eve had not yet been created. When God created Eve (Gen 2:21) she also became subject to the terms of the covenant.

TERMS OF THE COVENANT

The covenant in the Garden of Eden is the first “universal covenant,” meaning it pertains to all mankind. In it, Adam is charged with three responsibilities, two general and one specific:

1. **General:** To be fruitful and multiply (produce children) and to subdue (manage) the earth and have dominion (rule) over all the living things. *“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’”* (Gen 1:28).
2. **General:** To maintain and care for the Garden of Eden and enjoy its fruit (Gen 1:29; 2:15).
3. **Specific:** To not eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, under penalty of death (Gen 2:16,17).

SURVEY OF THE EDENIC COVENANT

The Scriptures show that when God created the world, He created a perfectly moral earth. *“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day”* (Gen 1:31).

God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden. It was truly a paradise. There was no struggle to survive, no physical wants – every need was met. There was no hunger, sickness or disease. There was no sin, nor the horrible consequences of sin. Adam was unaware of sin; he lived in a state of “innocence.”

Adam was blessed in every way. The greatest blessing Adam enjoyed was a **personal relationship** with God the Father, his Creator (Gen 2:8,9). God also had perfect communion and fellowship with His child, Adam (Gen 2:1-25).

It is understood that mankind, through Adam, was created to walk with God and enjoy the benefits of His blessings. God gave opportunity for Adam to use his own free will, and choose to love God in return. The blessings of this relationship between God and man could continue as long as no one rebelled against God and ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This would test Adam’s obedience and acceptance of God’s sovereignty over him. Would Adam obey or rebel?

CONFRONTATION WITH THE SERPENT

“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:14,15).

In Genesis 3:1, the serpent (Satan) approaches the woman and uses lies (John 8:44) to deceive her. Eve, being drawn away by her own desire, is tricked into disobeying what Adam had taught her about the Edenic Covenant with God.

TOOLS OF THE DEVIL

“Has God indeed said?” (Gen 3:1). The devil begins his trickery by sowing seeds of doubt about God. Then Eve makes a tragic mistake. She stops and enters into conversation with the devil (v2). In her innocence, she does not run away, but ponders the lies the devil is sowing.

Eve responds with what God has said about the fruit in the Garden, but adds to it: *“nor shall you touch it”* (v3), which God had not said. The devil, having hooked Eve into conversation, boldly tells her that God lied and falsely threatened her with death (v4).

Then the devil appeals to Eve’s pride, and uses his age-old method of a half-truth and half-lie: you will be like God (a lie) and know good and evil (a truth). **Deception** is a key strategy of Satan even to this very day. His goal is to create doubt about what God has said in order to lead people into destruction and death.

SIN ENTERS THE WORLD

Eve is seduced by the false offers and her desire for the fruit (Gen 3:6). Eve *chose to believe the lies* (1John 2:16). She takes the fruit and eats, and then gives some of it to Adam.

The Bible reveals that Eve was deceived, and then sinned (1Tim 2:14). But Adam, as the covenant head, knew exactly the choice he was making when eating the fruit. He simply chose to disobey the covenant he had made with God.

Thus, sin entered Adam's heart and through him, as the covenant head, sin also entered the entire human race. Sin and death were now part of mankind's spiritual inheritance (Rom 5:12).

Adam and Eve were aware of their sin because their conscience had been awakened. They also knew that they were naked, so they covered themselves and hid. For the very first time Adam and Eve knew guilt, shame and condemnation.

CONFRONTATION WITH GOD

In their guilt and shame, Adam and Eve tried to run and hide from God in the Garden. God called to Adam, "*Where are you?*" (Gen 3:9). Their open fellowship of holiness and righteousness had been **broken by sin**.

Adam's statement that he was afraid and naked reveals his **lost innocence**. God already knew what Adam had done. God was not surprised. Our God knows all things; nothing is hidden from His sight.

MAKING EXCUSES

In response to God's inquiries, Adam does what mankind continues to do today. He puts the blame on someone else. "*Then the man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate'*" (Gen 3:12).

The Bible clearly states that through the one man, Adam, sin entered the world. This was followed by death (spiritual and physical) for them and all mankind, because all have sinned (Rom 5:12-19).

Adam was a *foretype* of Jesus (v14), but with these important differences:

- Through Adam's disobedience, mankind received death through sin; through Jesus, the obedient Son, we have been given the gift of eternal life through His grace.
- Through the sin of one man (Adam), death came to all men; but through the righteous sacrifice of the one God-Man (Jesus), all have been offered the free gift of eternal life (v15).

The end result of Adam's sin was condemnation. The end result of the free "gift of God" in Jesus is *justification* (being **judged innocent**, or saved; Rom 5:18,19).

Sin came into the world through one man, Adam. Salvation would come into the world through one Man, Jesus. There is no other way to salvation than through Jesus. He is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12).

THE KEYS TO THE EDENIC COVENANT

Progressive Revelation

The key to understanding the Edenic Covenant: The Garden of Eden is the beginning of God’s progressive (step-by-step) revelation of Himself and His plan of redemption for mankind.

It is as if mankind were being “tutored” by the experiences of life that God would arrange. God began with Adam and Eve in the Garden and continued through the ages until the New Covenant at the Cross of Calvary.

Age of Innocence

In a perfect environment such as the Garden of Eden, where every need was met, man still chose that which was forbidden. Even **innocence** (without evil) is no guarantee that one will not choose sin.

“If only my circumstances were different, I would not sin.” We see from the Garden the false premise of this common reasoning. Thus, this argument can be eliminated from man’s thoughts about having holiness and righteousness due to his own merit.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). No man can ever say to God, “I am holy and righteous because I am innocent!” For no man or woman is innocent through his or her own effort. *“There is none righteous, no, not one”* (Rom 3:10).

God knows our frame (Psalm 103:14). He shows us by experience that we cannot make ourselves holy or righteous. Even innocence will not change the human tendency toward rebellion against God.

Human nature wants to be independent of God. We want to “work or earn” our own salvation. But this is not possible, for our own attempts at righteousness are like filthy rags (Isa 64:6).

There can be no boasting in Who truly does the work of making one holy and righteous (Eph 2:9). It is clear that it can ONLY be God!

CONCLUSION OF THE EDENIC COVENANT

Eve does not accept responsibility for her sin either. Instead, she blames the serpent. *“And the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ Eve responded with, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’”* (v13).

The Edenic covenant was broken by man’s disobedience. Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The consequences of their disobedience resulted in their spiritual and eventual physical deaths.

But rather than leave mankind in this hopeless state, God’s response to the failure of Adam and Eve was to establish **another covenant with Adam**.

CHRIST REVEALED IN THE EDENIC COVENANT

Adam as a Type of Christ

Despite their perfect circumstances and the innocence of Adam and Eve – and the simple yet beautiful covenant made by God – they still chose disobedience and rebellion. This choice brought devastating consequences for them and the entire human race.

A Glimpse of Heaven

The Edenic Covenant gives us a preview of what Heaven will be like (Rev 22:1-5). It will be like the Garden of Eden before man’s fall, without sin, which is a “type” of Heaven. Heaven is the place where Jesus Christ is now (Acts 3:20,21).

Heaven is also the final destiny of all those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior (John 14:2-4) as promised by the New Covenant.

Ruling and Reigning

In the Garden of Eden, man was given rule and reign over all things on the earth. As a result of Adam’s disobedience, his right to rule and reign was given to the serpent, Satan. This is because Adam, the covenant head, chose to obey Satan and disobey God.

We see evidence of Satan's rule during the temptation of Christ, when Satan offered Jesus the authority that had been delivered to him (Luke 4:5-7). In Scripture, Satan is called the "*ruler of this world*" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11); the "*prince of the power of the air*" (Eph 2:2; 6:12); and the "*god of this world*" (2Cor 4:4).

Restored Authority

The final covenant, the New Covenant, restores man's authority. It was regained by Christ and given to every believer. The early disciples experienced this when they went out to minister. They came back to Jesus rejoicing for victories and He affirmed the authority He was giving them (Luke 10:18-20).

The Matter of Innocence

Another insight we gain from the Edenic Covenant is that innocence cannot keep us holy and righteous. Eventually, that which is forbidden will attract people to do what they should not do (Prov 9:17). Now that sin has entered the human race (Rom 5:12), we are powerless in our own strength to resist temptation (Rom 7:15-23).

It is only through Christ and the New Covenant that we are set free from the power of sin (Titus 3:4-7). And, we are given a "helper," the Holy Spirit (John 15:26, 16:5-10). The Holy Spirit helps us see the truth (John 14:17), leads us away from temptation (Rom 8:14) and empowers us to live only for Christ!

2. THE ADAMIC COVENANT

The second covenant that God made with man was with Adam and Eve. This time, Adam and Eve were in a different spiritual condition than at the time of the first covenant. They were no longer innocent because they had sinned and their eyes were opened to the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3:7).

Adam and Eve could discern good and evil. Since they were able to make clear choices, this period of time is often referred to as the **Age of Conscience**.

THE ADAMIC COVENANT

The second covenant God made is found in Genesis 3:14-21. Turn in your Bible and carefully read that passage.

COVENANT HEADS

The Adamic Covenant was between God and Adam and Eve.

TERMS OF THE ADAMIC COVENANT

The conditions of the Adamic covenant are:

1. **The Serpent is cursed** (Gen 3:15)

- The curse affects not only the serpent, but also the evil force behind the serpent, Satan.
- Satan is judged. Though he will have some power and success, it will be for a limited time. *“You shall bruise His heel”* prophecies that Satan will **seem** to have victory over Jesus the Messiah as He hangs upon the Cross with His weight upon His heel. But ultimately, Satan will be judged by Christ and trampled at the Cross: *“He shall bruise your head”* (see 1Corinthians 2:7,8). In a broader sense, the human race will one day completely triumph over the evil one (Rom 16:20).

2. **A Savior is promised** (Gen 3:15)

The first prophecy in the Bible of the **coming of a Savior** or Messiah is given in the reference to a Seed.

3. **The woman comes under God’s general curse** (Gen 3:16)

- Includes pain in childbirth.

4. **The man comes under God’s general curse** (Gen 3:17-19)

- The ground is cursed and will bring forth weeds among man’s food.
- The man’s role is changed, damaged, crippled; his work will be filled with sweat, challenge and futility, and will end in death.

5. **Due to sin, all of mankind dies spiritually** and ultimately will die physically. His flesh will decay until it returns to the dust from which it originally came (Gen 3:19; Rom 5:12-21).

SURVEY OF THE ADAMIC COVENANT

The Curse of the Fall

The covenant with Adam is the second of the universal covenants (pertaining to all mankind). It could be called the “Curse of the Fall” for the covenant establishes the conditions that will remain in the world until the curse of sin is lifted (Isa 11:6-10; Rom 8:8-23).

CHRIST REVEALED IN THE ADAMIC COVENANT

Jesus Christ Foreshadowed

God speaks a prophetic word to the serpent, Satan (‘serpent’ or ‘dragon’ are used in Scripture as symbols of Satan). *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel”* (Gen 3:15).

There are 3 important issues to examine; (1) the **enmity** between the serpent and the woman, (2) the **Seed** and (3) the **bruising**s. All of these are foreshadows of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.

Enmity

The word *enmity* speaks of **the struggle** started in the Garden of Eden that continues to this very day. The battle is between the devil and his followers, and the godly line of believers in Christ who are the faithful remnant of God (Eph 2:2; 6:12).

The devil will continue to use deception and temptation to release his destruction upon mankind. This battle will continue until that day when Jesus, the **Seed**, comes to totally defeat the enemy and cast him into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:10).

Until that day comes (Revelation 20:19), we are called to:

- *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”* (Eph 6:11).
- *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1Pet 5:8).

- Do warfare in prayer and use our Christ-given authority: *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God...”* (2Cor 10:4,5).

Seed

In reference to the enmity, God addresses the serpent (Satan) and *“your seed”* (Gen 3:15). This seed refers to all people who will follow Satan, as well as demonic forces.

In the same verse, God also refers to the *“Seed”* of the woman. This refers not only to the righteous seed that will be born of her throughout the generations, but ultimately to the **Seed of the Messiah, Jesus Christ** (Rom 1:1-4; also see Luke 3:23-38 for Christ’s genealogy).

In the midst of the tragedy of man’s fall, God implants the hope of a Redeemer!

Bruise

“He [the Seed] shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Gen 3:15). This expression means that Jesus would pay the price to defeat Satan. Jesus was *“bruised in His heel”* at the Cross. He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice for our redemption. It cost Jesus His life, but the Father raised Him up from the grave as a testimony of His victory over sin and death (1Cor 15:20-26). At the Cross, the power of Satan was broken (Col 2:13-15; Heb 2:14,15; 1John 3:18). *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30).

The bruising of Satan’s head, which began at the Cross of Calvary, will be completely finished when Satan and all of his followers are cast into the Lake of Fire. *“And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts’”* (Rev 21:6).

See also: Christ Revealed in the Edenic Covenant.

THE KEYS TO THE ADAMIC COVENANT

Conscience

The “school” or tutoring of God’s progressive revelation continued. For about 950 years, man relied on his own **conscience** to do what was right in God’s eyes – and failed miserably. Choosing instead to do what was right in their own eyes, the entire world became corrupt (Gen 6:5).

Thus, we see that the **human conscience was eliminated as a sole means of holiness and righteousness**. The conscience alone is not enough to keep mankind from sin

At the same time, the hope of a Savior (Seed) was kept alive by the remnant, a small group of people who trusted in God. Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, had a son named Enosh. People then began to worship and pray to the Lord (Genesis 4:26). In the midst of the decades of evil that followed, there remained a godly line that would lead to the family of Noah.

CONCLUSION OF THE ADAMIC COVENANT

One by one, the excuses a person might make to be found acceptable to God are being removed. In the Edenic Covenant, man showed that being innocent would not prevent one from choosing sin. The Adamic Covenant reveals that even having a conscience, discerning good and evil, is not enough to keep one from choosing evil or sin.

God makes a prophetic promise of a Seed (Jesus Christ). Yet, in God’s foreknowledge He knew that **man had not yet learned** how desperately he needed a Savior. Another covenant was needed. This time it would be with a man named Noah.

3. THE NOAHIC COVENANT

The third covenant is the Noahic Covenant. God made this covenant with Noah and his descendants just after the Great Flood. Noah and his family were the **only** survivors of the flood.

Biblical scholars refer to this period of time as the **Age of Human Government**. We read in the Scriptures of God’s displeasure and sorrow at the violence and sin that had spread throughout the earth during the time of the Adamic Covenant (Genesis 6:11-13).

THE COVENANT

The covenant between God and Noah and his descendants is found in **Genesis 9:1-17**. Please turn to this passage in your Bible and read this covenant.

THE COVENANT HEADS

The covenant heads of the Noahic Covenant are God and Noah.

THE TERMS OF THE COVENANT

The provisions of the Noahic Covenant:

1. The responsibility to populate the earth is restated (Gen 9:1; cf. Gen 1:28).
2. Man having dominion over the animal kingdom is restated (v2; cf. Gen 1:28).
3. Up to this point, man had been vegetarian. Man is now permitted to eat the flesh of animals, though not the meat with blood in it (vs3,4). God established the shedding of blood as a substitutionary sacrifice for man's sin. Therefore, blood belongs to God; man is not to partake of blood (Lev 17:11).
4. All human life is sacred. Any man or animal that sheds a man's blood must be put to death (vs5,6). The judgment upon sin is ultimately death; this is affirmed by the Edenic, Adamic and Noahic Covenants.
5. God confirms the covenant with Noah, with all mankind, and with every living creature on the face of the earth (vs 9,10).
6. God promises to never again destroy the earth by a universal flood (v11). The next time God destroys the earth, it will be with fire (2Pet 3:10).
7. The rainbow is given as God's testimony to the existence of this covenant and His promise to never again destroy the earth by flood. The rainbow reminds us that the Noahic Covenant remains in effect (vs12-17).

SURVEY OF THE NOAHIC COVENANT

The covenant with Noah is the third universal covenant (pertaining to all mankind). Noah has just passed through the Great Flood in which the world's entire population was destroyed.

Only Noah, his wife, their three sons and their sons' wives (eight people) represent the world's total population. It is virtually a new beginning. Noah, in

a sense, is the new Adam. All the world's populations are to be descendants of Noah (Gen 9:19).

THE CURSE OF THE FALL STILL IN EFFECT

When God made the Noahic Covenant, He reaffirmed to Noah (and all of humanity to follow) that the Edenic and Adamic Covenants were still in effect. What is new in the Noahic Covenant is the provision of human government. This human government was intended to limit the spread of sin and violence. If this was the result, it would not be necessary to destroy life on the earth again.

CHRIST REVEALED IN THE NOAHIC COVENANT

Noah as a Type of Jesus

We see Noah as a prophetic type of Jesus because:

1. Noah is the deliverer or savior of his family; Jesus is the Deliverer and Savior of the world.
 - Noah (1 Peter 3:20)
 - Jesus (John 4:42)
2. Noah was a preacher; Jesus also preached the Kingdom.
 - Noah (2 Peter 2:5)
 - Jesus (Luke 4:43)
3. Noah found favor in God's eyes and walked with Him; Jesus did the same.
 - Noah (Genesis 6:8-9)
 - Jesus (Luke 2:52)
4. Noah did all God showed him to do; Jesus did what the Father showed Him to do.
 - Noah (Genesis 6:22)
 - Jesus (John 5:19)
5. Noah was proclaimed righteous; Jesus is proclaimed as righteous.
 - Noah (Gen 7:1)
 - Jesus (1 John 2:1)

The Flood as a Type of Baptism

The Great Flood, which was God's judgment upon sin, is a prophetic foretype of the baptism of the New Covenant (1 Peter 3:20,21).

Noah's Obedience as a Type of Faith

God introduces the importance of faith as part of His progressive revelation of holiness and righteousness. *"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith"* (Heb 11:7).

THE KEYS TO THE NOAHIC COVENANT

Government

The purpose of human government within the Noahic Covenant is to **hold back the outbreak of sin and violence**. It was unrestrained sin and violence that made it necessary to destroy those on the earth by flood.

Here is the key to understanding the Noahic Covenant: Though God introduced human government, it would soon become clear that human government cannot control how human beings act toward one another. Human government cannot lead people to become holy and righteous.

Human government may control external behavior to some extent, but still *does not change the motivations or issues of the heart*. Laws are important, and provide a measure of restraint. But external laws that dictate how society should operate *are not enough* to prevent lawless behavior.

Step by step, we see that God is revealing to mankind the futility of human attempts to become holy or righteous. We have seen thus far that innocence (Edenic Covenant), conscience (Adamic Covenant) and human government (Noahic Covenant) cannot make people morally or spiritually good.

CONCLUSION OF THE NOAHIC COVENANT

The Tower of Babel

The building of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9) reflects man's sinful pride and rebellion. It is clear that the corruption of man was not restrained by human government. Man was symbolically trying to reach or approach God on their own terms. This is a human problem that still exists today: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber"* (John 10:1). At Babel, God confused the languages of the people. As a result of not being able to communicate with each other, they abandoned their efforts to build the tower and scattered as various tribes throughout the earth.

Man's failure to fulfill his part in the Noahic Covenant (righteousness through human government) necessitated yet another covenant, this time through a man named Abraham.

4. THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The Abrahamic Covenant is the fourth in a series of covenants in Scripture that demonstrate mankind's need for a Savior. This covenant was made with **Abraham**, known as "the Father of Faith" (Heb 11:8-10).

PROMISE

Through the promises God made to Abraham, the beginnings of a nation were instituted – Israel, God's chosen people. *"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth"* (Deut 7:6). And through Abraham, all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen 11:10-22; 12:1-3).

God promises to use the people of Israel as an example of the kind of relationship He desires in a people He can call His own. *"I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people"* (Lev 26:12). This is why this time period is often called **The Age of Promise**.

COVENANT INITIATED

The Abrahamic Covenant is initiated in **Genesis 12:1-3**. It is an unconditional covenant, which means it will be fulfilled solely by God. It is a covenant of grace that is not dependent on man's behavior. **It depends solely upon God** Who promises to fulfill the blessings.

The Abrahamic covenant was first given in simple, general terms (Gen 12:1-3). It was later confirmed to Abraham in greater detail (Gen 13:14-17; 15:1-7, 18-21; 17:1-8).

COVENANT HEADS

The Abrahamic Covenant is made between God and Abraham.

TERMS AND SURVEY OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

God adds something new to the covenant with Abraham. It is the first of the **theocratic** covenants. The word “theocratic” or “theocracy” means that God is the supreme ruler of the government. God is looking for a people to call His own. Because He is a Sovereign King, His will is to rule and reign over His people.

The Abrahamic Covenant is the foundation of all future theocratic covenants. It provides for blessings in three general areas:

1. National – *“I will make you a great nation”* (Gen 12:2)
2. Personal – *“I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing”* (v2)
3. Universal – *“In you all families of the earth shall be blessed”* (v3)

National

There is a national aspect to the Abrahamic Covenant. God promises that, through Abraham, a nation will be formed. That nation is the biblical nation of Israel, which exists to this day.

- Abraham had a son, Isaac. Isaac had a son, Jacob. Jacob’s name was changed by God to Israel (Gen 32:28; 35:10).
- Jacob (Israel) had 12 sons named Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin. These 12 tribes were collectively known as the nation of Israel.
- Jacob (Israel) and his sons were forced by famine to go down into Egypt. When they arrived, they and their families were 70 in number (Gen 46:27). Within 400 years, the nation of Israel had increased to 600,000 men of fighting age (Ex 1:7; 12:37).

Personal

The personal aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant is specifically for Abraham:

- To be the father of a great nation, fulfilled in the nation of Israel (see above).
- To receive personal blessing, including Abraham and Sarah having a son at well past childbearing age (Gen 17:1-22).
- To receive personal honor and reputation (Gen 24:1).
- To be a source of blessing to others.

Universal

The universal aspects of the covenant, which extend far beyond Abraham, are:

- Blessings for the people and nations that bless Abraham and the nation that comes from him.
- Cursing upon those people and nations that curse Abraham and Israel.
- Blessings upon all the families of the earth through the Messiah Who, according to the flesh, is Abraham's son and provides salvation for the entire world (Matt 1:1-17).

God **seals** His covenant with Abraham by the splitting of animals. He then indicates that the **sign** of the covenant will be **circumcision** (Gen 15:9-21; 17:10,11).

CHRIST REVEALED IN THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The Son of Promise

God gave Abraham and Sarah a child in their old age (Gen 21:1,2), fulfilling what He had promised (Gen 15:4). Their son was Isaac, and through his descendants a new nation would be formed. Through this nation, all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Abraham had a previous son through Hagar, but that son (Ishmael) was not the son of promise (Gen 17:15-21). Ishmael and Hagar left Abraham's household and went to live in the land of Egypt (Gen 21:14). Therefore, only Isaac remained at home, the one born according to God's promise.

Abraham's Sacrifice

Within Abraham's story, the Bible unveils an amazing foreshadowing of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Genesis Chapter 22). God asked Abraham to sacrifice his long-awaited and only beloved son, Isaac (vs1,2), as a test of Abraham's faith and obedience.

What an incredible thing God was asking. Abraham had waited 25 long years (Gen 12:4) to see God's promise of a son fulfilled. Now God was telling him to sacrifice that very same son! What is even more amazing is that we see no indication of Abraham arguing with God.

Though it must have been agonizing for Abraham, he still trusted in God and obeyed God's word to him (v3). For three days, Abraham and Isaac walked toward the mountain. We can only imagine Abraham's heart breaking with each step, thinking he would be sacrificing the son he loved so deeply (vs4-6).

Who Will Provide the Sacrifice?

Finally, Isaac speaks: *"But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' Then he said, 'Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'My son, **God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.**' So the two of them went together"* (vs7,8).

Isaac asked a perfectly reasonable question. When Abraham answered, he was speaking in faith, both in the present and prophetically, *"God will provide for Himself the lamb for a sacrifice"* (v8). Yes, we now know that Abraham was speaking of a ram stuck in the thicket by its horn (Gen 22:13). But he was also speaking of a far-off day when God would provide the perfect sacrifice for all mankind: Jesus, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

The Story Continues

"Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' So he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that

you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided’ (Gen 22:9-14).

THE SYMBOLS IN THIS STORY

Isaac

We are all like Isaac, condemned to death. We are all sinners and deserve God’s judgment. In this account, God in His grace saves Isaac from death by providing a substitute. This is a beautiful foretype of how God, in His grace, has come to mankind’s rescue by providing a substitute Lamb to be slain for our salvation.

The story of Abraham’s sacrifice teaches us that the only way one can be saved is through the way of the Perfect Sacrifice that God provided (Rom 5:6-10).

The Ram

God provided a ram to die in the place of Abraham’s son, Isaac. The Bible gives us insight into the symbolic nature of the sacrificial system (see Hebrews Chapter 10). The sacrificial animals were merely used until “the Perfect” came.

Therefore, the ram that replaced Abraham’s son on the altar was an illustration of a greater, more perfect sacrifice that would one day come. It is an illustration of the Savior whom God promised to send into the world. That Savior would take the place of sinners who deserve God’s righteous judgment!

The Promise

Remember what Abraham said to his son as they were climbing the mountain? He said: “God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” He also said of the place of sacrifice: “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

In both cases, God was speaking prophetically through Abraham of a future event (see John 3:16). The event was the crucifixion of Jesus on the Mount of Calvary. On that Cross was the Lamb slain for our salvation, Jesus Christ. *“And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth’”* (Rev 5:9,10).

THE KEYS TO THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The Promise of God

The key to understanding the Abrahamic Covenant: Throughout the Old Testament, mankind is being **tutored** by God. Man has experienced innocence, conscience and human government as a means of securing holiness and righteousness. We can clearly see that none of these was sufficient. Now God makes an **unconditional promise**.

With each covenant, man has failed to keep his part of the covenant. This is because the covenants required man to be holy and righteous in his own power and strength, or by enforced external means. Of course, God knew before each covenant that man could not succeed. But man needed to realize his own desperate need for God and a Savior.

With each covenant failure by man, God had planned for our failure by providing another covenant step. Each step brought us closer to the final step, the new and “better covenant” (Heb 8:6).

It is Unconditional

The Abrahamic Covenant provides something new, an **unconditional** covenant of promise through Abraham (Rom 4:16). This Covenant is not about what man must do, but instead **what God Himself has promised to do**.

Abraham saw the fulfillment of the promise in his own life because he walked by faith in God and not by sight (2Cor 5:7). Abraham trusted God even when it seemed impossible: *“Being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness”* (Rom 4:21,22).

Our faith is accounted to us as righteousness as well, when our faith is in Christ for salvation. *“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’”* (Rom 1:17); *“But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness”* (Rom 4:5).

God made great promises to Abraham and his people. Yet, we see in the Scriptures and in the life of the nation of Israel that many will forget the promises of God and lose their way.

CONCLUSION OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The splitting of an animal as a covenant rite may seem very odd to some of us today. But in ancient times it was a fairly common custom. As a matter of fact, the sacrifice of animals is a non-Christian practice that still takes place in various parts of the world.

The Need for Purification

A sacrifice was considered a necessary part of a covenant agreement. The word *beriyth* (“covenant” in Hebrew) also means **to purify** or cleanse. In all covenants between God and man, sin and sinfulness were always associated with man. A holy God could not enter into a covenant with sinful man unless there was a purifier. Therefore, in all covenants, a sacrifice was offered for the removal of offences and for the reconciliation of God to the sinner.

So the word *beriyth* signifies not only a covenant, but also the sacrifice that was offered on the occasion. This sacrifice was made by a priest or anointed one.

Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, is not only our High Priest, but also **the** Sacrifice that became our atonement and purifier before God (Heb 9:11-15). Hallelujah!

Abraham and God

We see an example of the splitting of animals for covenant purposes when God established a covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:9,10). It is interesting to note that every animal on this list is also sacrificed later under the Mosaic Law (v9). Only the birds were not split (see Leviticus 1:17).

The animal sacrifices represent a **foreshadowing** of what was to come when Moses received the Law and the sacrificial system from God.

The sacrificial system given to Moses was also a prophetic foreshadow of the sacrifice of the "*Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29) in the New Covenant.

Passing Between the Sacrifice

"And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces" (Gen 15:17). In this mysterious and symbolic dream, God manifests Himself to Abraham in fire and smoke. God would later actually appear to the people of Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex 13:21,22). In Abraham's dream, God passes through the sacrificial pieces to authorize the covenant that He had made with Abraham. God's glory was enveloped in fire and smoke. Abraham could not pass between the sacrificial pieces, because only the One Who had initiated the covenant and made the promises could ratify the covenant; this was God alone.

Covenant of Promise

"On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates'" (Gen 15:18). The same promise had been previously made to Abraham in general terms (see Genesis Chapters 12 and 13). But it is important to note that the promise is not termed a covenant until it is **ratified by a sacrifice**.

In this instance, the covenant is not a contract between two parties with mutual conditions. It is rather an **unconditional promise** because it is an act of grace on the part of God. There was nothing that Abraham needed to do except embrace this covenant by faith. *"For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise"*(Gal 3:18). The Bible often foretold a promised Savior that God would send. But those covenant promises were not fulfilled until blood was spilled and the sacrifice made through Jesus Christ at His death on the Cross for us. This promise of salvation is an **unconditional covenant promise from God**. It is a covenant of grace, and one that we cannot earn. Therefore, the only thing we can do is to embrace the covenant promise and receive our salvation by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.

5. THE MOSAIC COVENANT

The fifth major covenant we will study is the **Covenant of the Law** or the **Mosaic Covenant**. It was made between God and the people of Israel through Moses.

THE AGE OF THE LAW

There is a period of time that began at the giving of the Law to Moses and ended at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the Cross. It is known by theologians as the **Age of the Law**. During this time, there were three covenants instituted by God. They are the Mosaic Covenant, the Palestinian Covenant and the Davidic Covenant.

The Mosaic Covenant is probably the best known because it relates to the **Law**. A large part of the Bible is about the Law. Fully 38 of the 39 Old Testament books in some way involve the Law or the Mosaic Covenant. The word law (or laws) appears 460 times in the Bible. When God gave the Law to Israel, He was communicating to them the kind of behavior – personal, societal and national – that would both please Him and most benefit the people. But they would need to be willing to embrace and live by His Law.

WILLING AND OBEDIENT

God was looking for a people who were “willing and obedient” (Isa 1:19). This went beyond obedience as just a way to receive a blessing or some other benefit from God. A person’s **motive** for obedience is important to God, and is also a key to understanding the purpose of the Law.

The right heart motive could come only from a heart that loved God (Deut 6:4-6; 10:12,13,16). When questioned by the learned Law experts (the scribes) of His day, Jesus affirmed the heart of the whole law and its requirements of man (Matt 22:35-40).

THE MOSAIC COVENANT

The requirements and blessings for the Mosaic covenant are found in Exodus 19:5-8. Please read this passage before we continue in the study.

THE COVENANT HEADS

The Mosaic Covenant heads were God and Moses. Moses was acting on behalf of the people of Israel.

SURVEY OF THE MOSAIC COVENANT

The covenant with Moses is the second of the theocratic covenants (the first is the Abrahamic Covenant). The Mosaic Covenant is **conditional** because of the following language: *“if you will indeed obey My Voice... then you shall be a special treasure”* (Ex 19:5). If the people would do their part, then God would do His part. From the time of Creation to this point in history, *the overwhelming human challenge continued to be obedience to God from the heart.*

The Mosaic Covenant was given to the nation of Israel. It was given so that those who believed in the promise to Abraham through the Abrahamic Covenant would know how to conduct their lives – both toward one another and toward God.

The Mosaic Covenant governs the lives of God’s chosen people in relation to Him, His people and His Tabernacle. Some of the provisions include:

1. **God’s Special Possession:** To make the children of Israel His special possession among all people if they would obey God and keep His covenant (Ex 19:5).
2. **A Kingdom of Priests:** To make the children of Israel a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6).
3. **The Ten Commandments:** As part of the terms of this covenant, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17). These commandments are explained in detail in the remainder of the Pentateuch (Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). The Ten Commandments were to govern their personal lives, mainly in relationship to God and to one another.
4. **The Judgments:** To govern their social lives, particularly as they related to one another (Ex 21:1–24:11).
5. **The Ordinances:** To govern their religious lives so that the people would know how to approach God in a way that would please Him (Ex 24:12–31:18).
6. **The Sabbath:** To give the children of Israel the Sabbath as the permanent sign of this covenant (Ex 31:12-17).

CHRIST REVEALED IN THE MOSAIC COVENANT

As we learned in the study of the Abrahamic Covenant, Jacob and his sons were forced by famine to go to Egypt. When they arrived, there were only 70 of them (Gen 46:27); but within four hundred years there were 600,000 men (Exo 12:37).

The Pharaoh of Egypt became concerned by the growing number of Israelites and enslaved them. In order to reduce their numbers even further, Pharaoh ordered the death of all male Hebrew children. During this time, Moses was born a Levite (priestly line) and was miraculously saved by Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus Chapters 1 and 2). Moses spent the next 40 years living in Pharaoh's court.

OUT OF EGYPT

After 40 years in Pharaoh's court, Moses spent the next 40 years in exile in the land of Midian. It was during this time that the God of Israel revealed Himself to Moses in a "burning bush" (Exodus 3:4). God then revealed His purpose for Moses: *"Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that **you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt**"* (vs9,10).

MOSES AS A TYPE OF CHRIST

The Book of Exodus is about **God's deliverance** through a man named Moses. It is the story of God delivering His Promised People out of slavery and bringing them to the edge of entering the Promised Land.

Exodus includes several important events: Moses confronting Pharaoh; the Passover; the crossing of the Red Sea; the giving of the Covenant of Law. All of these events are types and foreshadows of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.

1. **Moses confronts Pharaoh.** As Moses led his people (the Israelites) out of the bondage of Pharaoh and Egypt, so Jesus Christ leads His people out of the bondage of Satan and the world:
 - **Moses:** *"So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites"* (Ex 3:8).

- **Jesus:** *“...to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me”* (Acts 26:18).
2. **The Passover.** Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage and adoption by God were sealed by the Passover (Ex 12:23; Heb 11:28). Those who believed (had faith) in God’s instruction about the Passover would have life; those who did not would die.
- There was instruction given for the Passover before the exodus from Egypt (Ex 12:1-14). Following the Passover instructions was an act of faith toward a faithful God.
 - The same is true today of our faith in the grace-gift of God through Christ that saves us. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”* (Eph 2:8,9).
 - The Passover was a type of sacrifice that joined Israel to God. This was an act of God’s grace toward them.
 - The slain lamb is a foretype of *“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). Those who place their faith in Jesus Christ will live; those who do not will die.
 - The unleavened loaves, called “bread of affliction” (Deut 16:3), were a reminder of past affliction. They symbolized the new life that had been cleansed from the leaven of the old “Egyptian-like” nature (1Cor 5:8).
 - God’s Passover sacrifice (Ex 23:15-18; 34:25) came first. Then, because of God’s provision, came the seven-day feast of unleavened bread. This symbolized that they now walked in the strength of the pure bread of a new life and in fellowship with God.
3. **Crossing the Red Sea.** In crossing the Red Sea, the people of Israel had already been redeemed by blood (Passover lamb) and had left Egypt (the old life) forever. They were entering into a “new life” and taking on a new “leader.”

In order to embrace the new life, they had to leave the old life behind. Isn’t this also true about a Christian’s baptism? It symbolizes the “death of the old man” and being raised to new life in Christ. Paul the apostle writes of the believer’s baptism: *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead*

by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:3,4).

The crossing of the Red Sea foreshadows water baptism for the Christian. *“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1Cor 10:1,2).* Note the reference to being “baptized into Moses.” In the same way, the Christian is “baptized into Jesus.” We can see that Moses foreshadows or is a type of Christ, the One Who leads us out of bondage to sin and Satan and into new life as we follow Him.

THE KEYS TO THE MOSAIC COVENANT

Introduction of the Law

The Law was introduced to explicitly guide people into the behavior God knew was best for His people. The Law dictated what every aspect of life should look like for those who were in covenant with God. It was meant to regulate worship, business, social and family interactions. The Law defined what God would bless and what God would curse.

Remember: Each new covenant that God established with Man did **not** cancel out the previous covenant. Each new covenant simply built upon or **added to** the prior. For example, the Mosaic Covenant did not replace the Abrahamic Covenant. The purpose of the Mosaic Covenant is clearly set forth by Scripture (Gal 3:17-19):

1. The Mosaic Covenant came 430 years after the Abrahamic Covenant.
2. The Mosaic Covenant was added alongside the Abrahamic Covenant so that the people of Israel would know how to conduct their lives until “the Seed” prophesied by the Adamic Covenant – the Christ or Messiah – would come and make the complete and perfect sacrifice.
3. The laws and sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant are merely a copy or shadow of the very real salvation and deliverance that the New Covenant provides (Heb 8:5-7; 9:23-28).

Helpless and Hopeless

The Law was given so that man would recognize that he is helpless and hopeless to perfectly obey what is required for righteousness and holiness

before God. The Mosaic Covenant was never given to provide salvation for those who would keep it perfectly, since no one could.

The Mosaic Covenant was given so that **all would realize** that they cannot do what God wants them to do, even when God writes it down on tablets of stone. All of the covenants we have studied thus far, step by step, have pointed us to this truth.

CONCLUSION TO THE MOSAIC COVENANT

In the Old Testament, 38 of the 39 books (Exodus to Malachi) cover the period of the Covenant of the Law. During this span of about 1,500 years in the life of Israel, we learn some important things (1Cor 10:1-11):

1. **God never changes** (Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8). God's purpose and plan for man has not changed since the Creation in the Garden of Eden. That purpose and plan for man was – and still is – for God to be in personal relationship and fellowship with His creation, man.
2. Man is born with a **“sin nature”** (Ps 51:5) as a spiritual inheritance from our father, Adam (Rom 5:19). This sin nature will always strive to have its own way.
 - *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes”*(Judg 21:25).
 - *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes...”* (Prov 12:15).
 - *“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts”* (Prov 21:2).
3. The Old Testament gives many examples of God's chosen people “drifting away from” or “rebellious against” the laws of God and experiencing His wrath. That wrath would come by allowing the enemies of Israel to defeat and enslave them. This would happen time and time again throughout their history.
4. The Law provided a contrast so that sin could be seen for what it is. Man then had a clear choice about who or what to serve and obey: God and His ways, or sin and its consequences:
 - *“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin”* (Rom 3:20).
 - *“For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law”* (Rom 5:13).
 - *“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law”* (1Cor 15:56).

Israel quickly discovered that the **heart condition** required to lovingly keep God's commandments was not attainable. The "law of sin" was already at work within them (Deut 5:28,29; Rom 7:7-22).

Israel's history under the Law revealed an important truth: Unless God provided a means for man's heart to be transformed, man was not capable of fully obeying the Lord's righteous requirements for a blessed life in relationship with Him.

Free from the Curse

The Law was given to prepare God's people for the New Covenant to come – one that would bring them the possibility of a new heart (Ezek 36:24-27). This principle is clarified when we read the words of Paul, a Jew raised under the Law.

In Paul's discourse about the nature of sin and the Law (Romans Chapter 7), he cries out in anguish, ***"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"*** (Rom 7:23,24).

Paul answers his own question with the glorious Good News: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death"* (Rom 8:1,2).

God in His wisdom was setting the stage for a final covenant that would be completely different from anything He has done before. This new Covenant of Grace would deal with the **sin nature** once and for all! But first, let us study two more covenants pertaining to the Law: the Palestinian and the Davidic covenants.

6. THE PALESTINIAN COVENANT

The next covenant is the Palestinian Covenant. It concerns the promised land of Palestine. The Palestinian Covenant is about the "land" that God had promised the people of Israel through the Abrahamic Covenant. This is not to be confused with the present-day Palestinian people.

A LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

The Promised Land was a land “flowing with milk and honey.” The expression “milk and honey” in Hebrew culture meant that the land was filled with fields for raising cattle (*milk* from the cattle) and was good for farming (*honeybees* are essential to farming).

The Bible describes in detail how Moses sent out twelve men, one from each of the tribes of Israel, to spy out the Promised Land (see Numbers Chapters 13 and 14). After 40 days, the spies returned to give their reports. They all agreed it was a lush land flowing with milk and honey (13:23-27).

However, ten of the spies reported that the inhabitants of the land were fierce and could not be defeated. Only Joshua and Caleb gave a positive report. They believed the Israelites could go in and take the land because their faith was in God, not in the appearance of circumstances (13:30; 14:6-9).

UNBELIEVERS DIE IN THE WILDERNESS

When the Israelites heard the negative report from the ten spies, they became fearful. They did not trust God to help them take the land He had promised to give them. God’s judgment on their sin of unbelief was about to be unleashed; but Moses interceded on behalf of the people, and God showed them mercy (Num 14:11-38).

God let the people live. But He declared that not one of that unbelieving generation would see the Promised Land. The only ones from that generation who would get to see the promised land of Palestine were Joshua, Caleb and Moses. A new generation of people would actually enter the Promised Land with Joshua and Caleb.

The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years until the old generation passed away and a new generation came into being. After 40 years of wandering, the Israelites were still in the same place where they had begun, but with a new leader, Joshua. Moses was still used by God to re-affirm His plan and purpose.

THE COVENANT HEADS

The Palestinian Covenant is made between God and Moses on behalf of the people, and is a re-affirmation of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants.

SURVEY AND TERMS OF THE PALESTINIAN COVENANT

The actual Palestinian Covenant language is found in Deuteronomy 29:10-15 and 30:11-20. Please read those passages in your Bible. This covenant took place during the Age of the Law, and was given 40 years after the Mosaic Covenant.

The Palestinian Covenant is the third theocratic covenant. It is theocratic because it deals with God's rule over His people, the Israelites; and because it **repeats** the language of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants.

In the Palestinian Covenant, God reaffirmed to the new generation that all of the theocratic covenants were still in effect. He also reaffirmed that the promised land of Palestine was theirs, and that He would be with them to overcome the occupants of the land.

It had been 40 years since crossing the Red Sea from slavery to freedom (darkness to light). The new generation of Israelites was now about to cross the Jordan River and enter into the promised land of Palestine under Joshua's leadership. God used this time to affirm to the people of Israel Who He is, and to reveal His purpose and plan for the nation. The Palestinian Covenant is what God chose to use to remind the people of His faithfulness.

The Mosaic Covenant Initiated Again

Carefully read again Deuteronomy 29:10-15:

1. The covenant is with all those who are preparing to cross the Jordan River and possess the land, Palestine, promised to the people of Israel (vs10-12).
2. God reminds the people that He is their God and they are His people (v13).
3. God reminds the people that this is an everlasting covenant He is making with them and with all future generations (vs14,15).

The Mosaic Covenant Ratified Again

Now read Deuteronomy 30:11-20:

1. The covenant is to take immediate effect; it is not for some future date (vs11-14).

2. God calls for blessings on those who obey His commandments, statutes and judgments, and upon those who will love Him. He also pronounces cursings upon those who disobey Him (vs15-18). You may read Deuteronomy Chapters 27 and 28 for details of the blessings and cursings.
3. The choice of living under the blessings or cursings belongs to the Israelites. The choice to walk with God in love or rebel against God is theirs to make. The final admonition reveals God's heart: *"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live"* (vs19,20).

CHRIST REVEALED IN THE PALESTINIAN COVENANT

Joshua as a Type of Christ

Joshua is a foreshadow or type of Christ as he leads the people through the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Jesus was immersed in the Jordan River at His baptism (Matt 3:13-17) and will lead His people to a heavenly promised land (John 14:2,3). It is also interesting to note that the Hebrew name for Jesus is Joshua.

Also see: "The Christ of the Mosaic Covenant" for more detail.

THE KEYS TO THE PALESTINIAN COVENANT

Palestine Belongs to Israel

The Palestinian Covenant is a reaffirmation of the commitment God made: The land of Palestine belonged to Israel.

God is a Faithful God

God always keeps His promises, even when people do not (Num 23:19; 2Tim 2:13; Heb 6:13-18). The history of Israel provides many examples of God's chosen people promising to follow Him – yet repeatedly failing to keep their promises and rebelling against Him. Of course there were consequences for their actions. But still God **never** forgot them, rejected them or turned His back on them.

CONCLUSION TO THE PALESTINIAN COVENANT

The history of Israel from Exodus to Malachi reveals that the Israelites were a “stiff-necked” or stubborn people (see Deuteronomy Chapter 9; 10:16; 2Kings 17:14-16).

Although their father was Abraham, the Father of Faith, they did not choose to walk by faith (2Cor 5:7).

Over and over again, the Israelites would walk by what they saw or thought was right in their own eyes (Deut 12:8-12; Judg 17:6), ignoring the laws and counsel of God. Instead of listening to God and choosing to walk with Him, they would choose their own way, and with it, the horrible consequences. *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”* (Prov 14:12).

But please remember that God was preparing Israel – and through them, all of mankind – to receive the ultimate revelation of Himself and His salvation through the New Covenant. The prior covenants were not designed to be sufficient to save (Heb 10:4). Rather, they served as a constant “tutor” or reminder that – because sin had entered the human race – every man, woman and child must have a Savior.

In the New Covenant, God would provide the “eyes,” “ears” and “heart” to see, hear and follow Him by His Holy Spirit (1Cor 2:9-16). That way was not yet available. Man first had to realize that the Law could not save or enable one to be holy and righteous.

7. THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

The Palestinian Covenant concerned the land (Promised Land). The **Davidic Covenant** relates to the “**Seed**” prophesied in the Adamic Covenant (Gen 3:15; Rom 1:3).

The Davidic covenant takes place during the Age of the Law (that was ushered in by the Mosaic Covenant). The Davidic covenant was made about 500 years after the Mosaic Covenant, and reaffirmed the lineage of the “Seed.”

THE SEED

The “Seed” spoken of is important because the ultimate “Seed” is Jesus Christ.

King David had a heart to build a house, a permanent dwelling place, for the Lord (see 1Chronicles 28:1-8). Prior to this time, the Ark of the Covenant was housed in a portable tent or *tabernacle*. David went so far as to draw up the plans for a place to house the Ark in Jerusalem.

But God told David that he was not to build the house, because David was a man of war and had shed blood (v3). God revealed to David that his son, Solomon, would build the Temple (vs6,7).

It is in this context of building a house for God that the **Davidic Covenant** was established. The building of a physical structure would be temporary and of limited value. But this physical temple was a prophetic foretype of a “spiritual house” from which the Messiah or “Seed” would come.

THE COVENANT

The actual language of the Davidic Covenant is found in **2Samuel 7:4-17**. Important key words are found in this passage. Many interpret the key words found in the covenant in the following way:

1. **House**: refers to a family line or dynasty (v11).
2. **Kingdom**: refers to a realm of political power and to a people who are governed by a king (v12).
3. **Throne**: refers to the authority of the king’s rule (v13).
4. **Forever**: refers to the eternal and unconditional nature of this promise to David and Israel (v13).

THE COVENANT HEADS

The Davidic Covenant was between God and King David, delivered through the prophet Nathan.

SURVEY OF THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

Unconditional and Theocratic

The Davidic Covenant is an unconditional covenant between God and David. It is the fourth theocratic covenant, and is theocratic in nature because it has to do with God’s rule through the lineage of David.

1. God promises David and Israel that **the Messiah would come from the lineage of David and the tribe of Judah**, and that He would establish a kingdom that would endure forever (2Sam 7:10-13).
2. God **reaffirms the promise** of the Promised Land (Palestine) that He made in the first two covenants with Israel, the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants (2Sam 7:10).
3. God promises that **David's descendent (Solomon) will succeed him** as king of Israel. God declares that He will establish Solomon's kingdom and throne, and that Solomon will build a house for God's name (2Sam 7:12,13).
4. God told David through Nathan the prophet, *"And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever"* (2Sam 7:16). This is important because it reveals that the Messiah will come from the lineage of David; and the Messiah will establish an **eternal** kingdom over which He will reign (Rev 11:15).

CHRIST REVEALED IN THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

David is a Type of Christ

David is a type of Christ because of his obedience to God that was demonstrated in his life. Jesus was characterized by His obedience to the Father: *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me"* (John 6:38; see also John 8:29; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 5:8,9).

However, unlike Christ, David was not perfect. But when David failed, he was quick to repent (Psalms Chapter 51). David was one of those rare people of the Old Testament who obeyed the Lord from a loving heart – so much so that God even called David, *"a man after My own heart"* (Acts 13:22-24).

The Davidic Covenant is part of the Law. Please see "Christ Revealed in the Mosaic Covenant" for more details.

THE KEYS TO THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

From the Line of David

The Davidic Covenant is so important because God reveals an unbroken line through which will come the Messiah (Jesus Christ). The Messiah will establish an eternal Kingdom over which He will reign.

- *“One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated, the Christ)” (John 1:40,41).*
- *“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Rev 17:14).*

Clearly Jesus is the King of **all** kings and Lord of **all** lords! There is none like Him (Phil 2:9-11).

CONCLUSION TO THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

God’s Perfect Plan

Jesus’ human father, Joseph, was His *legal* father but not His physical father (Luke 1:31-35). Joseph could trace his lineage to David through Jeconiah (Matt 1:1-17). This would mean that Jesus had a *legal right* to David’s throne. But Jeconiah (Coniah or Jehoiachin in Hebrew) was rejected because of sin; Jeremiah prophesied that no descendent of Coniah would sit on the throne of David (Jer 22:24-30).

However, David had another son, Nathan. His line was not cursed. Mary, the physical mother of Jesus, traces her bloodline back to David through Nathan (Luke 3:23-38). Mary, Jesus’ natural mother, provides the “blood line” to David through David’s son, Nathan.

Jesus in the Line of David

It is clear that Jesus receives His “blood right” to David’s throne through His earthly mother, Mary, and His “legal right” to David’s throne through His adoptive earthly father, Joseph.

God always keeps His Word! God ordained the “virgin birth” by Mary to keep His Word and to preserve its truth. The virgin birth (Isa 7:14) was absolutely essential not only to ensure the sinless character of Jesus (Heb 4:15), but also to fulfill the Davidic Covenant.

The Forever King

The primary promise of the Davidic Covenant was one of kingship forever in the line of David. This promise included the New Covenant, and is expressed and fulfilled in the Person of Jesus. *“And of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end”* (Isa 9:6,7). Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, forever! Hallelujah!

THE NEW COVENANT

The New Covenant is the wondrous and glorious fulfillment of the long-awaited promise of God. Before we study it in detail, let us first summarize the prior seven covenants we have studied.

1. **Edenic Covenant** – made with Adam before the entrance of sin; reveals God’s purpose for man’s creation.
2. **Adamic Covenant** – made with Adam after the fall of man for the redemption of the race of Adam.
3. **Noahic Covenant** – made with Noah and with mankind as a whole, and with all creatures; re-establishes God’s original purpose as revealed in the Edenic Covenant.

NOTE: The following four covenants were made primarily with the chosen nation of Israel. Yet each of these covenants contains a Messianic element that pertains to **all** people.

4. **Abrahamic Covenant** – involved Abraham, his natural seed, the national seed of Israel, the Messianic Seed Jesus Christ, and through Him, the spiritual seed of all those who believe on Christ for salvation.
5. **Mosaic Covenant** – the giving of the Law, designed to be a tutor or schoolmaster to prepare Israel to receive the Messiah (Gal 3:24).
6. **Palestinian Covenant** – renewed the Abrahamic Covenant of a promised land to a new generation, and reaffirmed the conditions upon which they were to enter and maintain it.
7. **Davidic Covenant** – made with David after the death of Saul and the establishment of David’s kingdom. It involved David and his natural and spiritual seed; it prophetically pointed to the Messiah, and His throne and Kingdom being established forever.

THE NEW COVENANT

The New Covenant is called “new” in contrast to the “old covenant” with Moses (Jer 31:32; Heb 8:6-13). **The new replaces the old** because the old Mosaic Covenant was limited. It could only *point* to the things that the New Covenant actually fulfilled: The child of God could live a victorious life consistent with the righteous commands and character of God.

The New Covenant fulfilled (consummated, completed) all previous covenant revelations. But it also established something infinitely greater. Thus, it exceeded all previous covenants.

All that was promised by God – all that had been revealed in the previous covenants by *prophetic foretype* – was now **completed and embodied in the Person of Jesus Christ**.

There was much that the prior covenants could not do, or were inadequate to perform. The prior covenants could not:

- Change man’s heart and nature.
- Open a way of salvation as a free gift to all people.
- Give every recipient of God’s salvation the power, ability and gifting that would enable them to lovingly obey God, be transformed from within and live victoriously.

All that could **not** be accomplished by the prior covenants is now **fully realized** in the New Covenant. It is **all** available through Jesus Christ and the person of the Holy Spirit now living within every believer!

COVENANT OF GRACE

The New Covenant is often referred to as the *Covenant of Grace*, or the “better” covenant (Heb 8:6; Heb 7:22). This is because the New Covenant is *unconditional* in its nature.

It is called the Covenant of Grace because the terms of the covenant are a **free gift** of God. The provisions of this New Covenant are undeserved and unearned. What mankind deserves and has earned is death (Rom 3:26; 6:23); but through faith in Jesus Christ we can now have life (2Cor 3:6).

NOT BY WORKS OF MAN

We cannot gain salvation or eternal life by our works (law), or by a combination of works and grace. It is by **grace alone** that we receive eternal life and salvation (Acts 13:39; Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16; 3:21). Jesus did it all for us! The only thing we can do is to put our faith (belief) in Jesus Christ: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”* (Eph 2:8,9).

There is nothing – and no one – that can add to or replace what Jesus has already done and provided for us (Rom 4:1-5).

FINISHED WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

The New Covenant was ushered in by the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary: *“So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit”* (John 19:30).

Jesus fully completed what He was sent to earth to do (John 3:16). As a result of His work, He accomplished the following for each of us:

1. Replaced the Old Covenant (Law) with a New Covenant (Grace): *“In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away”* (Heb 8:13).
2. Provided a way to the Father: *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6).
3. Cleansed us from our sins: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1John 1:9).
4. Prepared a place in Heaven for us: *“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you”* (John 14:2).
5. Exchanged our old sinful nature for a new nature: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2Cor 5:17).
6. Sent the Holy Spirit to us: *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you”* (John 16:7).
7. Destroyed the works of the devil: *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil”* (1John 3:8).

CHRIST REVEALED IN THE NEW COVENANT

What Jesus accomplished on the Cross of Calvary, in obedience to the Father, was something totally new. He guaranteed salvation to all who would

put their trust in Him (Rom 10:13). He also gave the Holy Spirit to every believer as a sign or seal of being born again (2Cor 1:21,22).

The Holy Spirit makes it possible for believers to live the life they are called to by God. The Holy Spirit gives power and help for a believer to be both willing and obedient (Phil 2:13). It is the Person of the Holy Spirit that makes the difference in the life of a believer (Acts 1:8).

The Holy Spirit is also given as a “guarantee” of God’s full redemption of our lives – body, soul and spirit (2Cor 5:1-5; Eph 1:13,14). Those who believe in Christ for salvation can be assured and live with great faith. We can know that we are empowered here on earth and that we have a place reserved for us in Heaven. Hallelujah!

TYPE AND FORESHADOWS

As we read the New Testament, we are reminded of the typology seen in the previous seven covenants. Let us now look at some of those typologies.

1. Shedding of Blood

Let there be no doubt of God’s love for us: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). It is God alone Who sent His own Son to die in our place, even though mankind is sinful and rebellious (Rom 5:6-10).

The phrase *“He gave His only begotten Son”* seems to understate the fact that Jesus was bruised, battered and rejected for us (Isa 53:4-6). **Jesus shed His own blood** to initiate the New Covenant. His sacrifice provided for us full forgiveness of sin, an overcoming life here on earth and a blessed hope of a future eternal life with Him.

- *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”* (Eph 1:7).
- *“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate”* (Heb 13:12).
- *“And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth, to Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”*(Rev 1:5).

2. The Great Exchange

In all covenants with God, an **exchange** takes place. As covenants are made and kept, God, as the stronger party, gives blessing, provision, protection, wisdom and more to the weaker party, which is man.

In our study of covenants, there is no better example of this *exchange* than the New Covenant. The exchange is so clear, and what we receive so glorious and abundant, that it is known by some scholars as “**The Great Exchange.**”

Let us look at some examples of the exchange provided by the New Covenant:

- Jesus took our **lack of power** and gave us His **authority**.
“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:18-20).
- Jesus took our **sickness** that we might have **health**.
“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed” (1Pet 2:24; Isa 53:5).
- Jesus took our **sin** and gave us **forgiveness**.
“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2Cor 5:21).
- Jesus took our **poverty** that we might have **eternal riches**.
“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2Cor 8:9).
- Jesus took our **lost and homeless condition** and gave us an **eternal home**.
“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (Matt 8:20; John 14:2).
- Jesus took our **weakness** and gave us **strength**.
“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8; Eph 3:14-16).
- Jesus took our **turmoil and confusion** and gave us His **peace**.
“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

- Jesus experienced **hell** that we might experience **heaven**.
“Now this, ‘He ascended’ – what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things” (Eph 4:9,10; Ps 16:10).
- Jesus took our **death** that we might have **life**.
“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom 5:10; Heb 2:9).

Of all the exchanges and agreements that have taken place since the beginning of time, the most important exchanges by far are those we have received from Jesus. He truly provided for us The Great Exchange!

We gave Jesus our sins, failures, guilt, shame and past. In return, Jesus: extends His friendship to us (John 15:14); He makes us joint-heirs with Him (Rom 8:17); wipes away our sins and our past (2Cor 5:17); gives us a hope and a future for this life and eternity (John 14:1-3; Col 1:27; 1Pet 1:3).

Let us thank God for the New Covenant that is far better than any prior covenants!

THE NAME OF JESUS

We have been given a name above every other name. It is a name that we are able to declare with boldness and faith: the name of Jesus! The name of Jesus is filled with His power and authority. Christians around the world know the power of His Name!

- *“...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Phil 2:10,11).
- *“And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And he came out that very hour”* (Acts 16:18).
- Even the demons tremble at His Name: *“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble”* (Jas 2:19).

3. Sacrifice

Jesus is “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). He is the Sacrifice that purifies and atones for our sins. We are justified, sanctified, made righteous and holy because of His **finished** work at the Cross of Calvary.

We are set free from the Law – a system that required endless sacrifices for sin. Even then, those sacrifices could not purify our hearts, transform us or set us free from sin (Heb 10:1-4).

But the sacrifice of Jesus was **once and for all** and need never again be repeated. His sacrifice is truly **sufficient to set us free** from sin and condemnation – set free to serve the only true God! “*By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” (Heb 10:10; see also Romans 6:10; Hebrews 7:27; 9:11-15).

BLESSINGS AND CURSINGS

As believers in Jesus Christ, we are in a covenant relationship with Him. “*And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father’*” (Gal 4:6).

When we are walking on the “highway of holiness” and righteousness (Isaiah 35:8) we are walking under the covering of God’s blessing. This is not because of the Covenant of Law, but because of the better covenant, the New Covenant!

We cannot **earn** God’s blessings. However, our obedience from the heart to Christ **positions us** to receive what He gives by His grace (Matt 6:33).

THE COVENANT MEAL AS A MEMORIAL

Jesus said, “*This cup is the new covenant in My blood*” (Matt 26:28). What a powerful statement this is from Jesus!

Jesus first spoke these words as He celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples: “*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins’*” (Matt 26:26-29).

What makes this statement of Jesus even more remarkable is that He spoke these words **prophetically** – He had not yet gone to the Cross. His body had not yet been broken, nor His blood shed for us.

It is one thing to lose your life because of circumstances that cannot be avoided. It is quite another to know you are going to die a horrible death, but still choose to lay down your life. *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends”* (John 15:5). How wonderful it is to be considered a friend to Jesus! (See also John 10:14-18.)

COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

As His disciples, we are instructed to recreate the covenant meal as a remembrance and celebration of Jesus’ love for us. Paul the apostle relates the Last Supper events that took place in the upper room (1Cor11:23-26) by way of a personal revelation from Jesus (Gal 1:11,12).

The communion remembrance is also our reminder that **we are in a covenant relationship with Jesus**: *“And when He had given thanks, He broke the bread and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes”* (1Cor 11:24-26). Jesus carries the eternal scars (John 20:27) in His hands, and on His feet and His side as a memorial. These scars remind us of the fact that Jesus paid the price for us to enter the New Covenant. He also carries on His back the stripes or scars for our spiritual, physical and emotional healing (1Pet 2:24).

A MORE EXCELLENT WAY

Jesus is the **perfect sacrifice** (purifier). But He is also the **mediator** (intercessor) of that better Covenant. *“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us”* (Rom 8:34).

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises” (Heb 8:6).

Let us examine more closely these important terms found in this verse.

“MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY”

This speaks of service of a higher order or a more exalted nature. The ministry of the Levitical priest (Law) was just a shadow of the real thing. Jesus' ministry is the real and substantial service. The new ministry pertains to heavenly and eternal things, while the old was concerned with the earthly tabernacle (temple) that would eventually vanish (Heb 9:11,12).

“MEDIATOR”

Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and man, according to the arrangements of the New Covenant. By definition, a mediator can intercede, reconcile, even settle differences.

In the Old Testament, the imperfect Levitical priesthood mediated between God and man. In the New Covenant, Jesus Christ is in the highest position of representing the needs, requirements and desires of both parties – God and man – with equal zeal. His divinely-appointed position requires Him to be the ultimate Priest and Servant.

As the **eternal High Priest**, Jesus brought to us this new and better covenant. The heart of our loving heavenly Father is revealed to us when Jesus established God's unbreakable promises of salvation through grace by faith. Jesus accomplished all of this by being the **ultimate Servant**. He established these promises with His own blood (Heb 9:12,14) shed for us at the Cross. By this act, Jesus serves God's loving and age-old desire to reconcile man to Himself (2Cor 5:18,19). In the same act of sacrifice, Jesus also serves man (Matt 20:28) by opening the way of salvation and restored relationship to our almighty Creator and heavenly Father (1Tim 2:5,6).

Moses, as a mediator for Israel under the Old Covenant, gave the Law as God had commanded it (Gal 3:19). The temple priests mediated for Israel through the sacrifice of bulls and goats. The Old Covenant of the Law and the sacrifices were insufficient and inadequate to save man.

But we now have an eternal High Priest, Jesus, Who is sufficient! He can and will “*save to the uttermost*” all those who call upon Him as Lord and Savior (Heb 7:18-28).

“BETTER COVENANT”

The Old Covenant of Law was important and significant; but it was a covenant that could result only in death and not life (Rom 8:2). The Old Covenant proved this: that the Law was impossible for man to keep.

The commands of God are righteous and true (Matt 5:19; Gal 3:19-21). But the Law did not give man the power to obey! Rather, it only revealed how desperately we need a Savior (Gal 3:22-25). The Law, with its rules and sacrifices for sin, was not sufficient to deal with the source of man's problem – sin (Heb 10:1-10).

The Better Covenant is a covenant of life! *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”* (Gal 3:13,14).

“BETTER PROMISES”

The promises in the Old Covenant were primarily about the present life and material blessings. They were promises that included: long life; increase in numbers; seed time and harvest; national privileges; and extraordinary peace, abundance, and prosperity.

In the New Covenant, however, the promise of *spiritual* blessings becomes the central benefit of our faith in Christ. Those spiritual blessings are available because of the free gift of the Holy Spirit living in us (1Cor 6:19), Who will teach us and lead us (John 16:13) in an overcoming life on earth (Rom 8:37). In the New Covenant, our Lord does promise to provide for our needs (Matt 6:25-34). But our hearts are also directed toward Heaven. We are reminded of the temporary nature of this life, and that this is not our eternal home. Our souls are at peace with the assurance of eternal life, the favor (grace) of God and the anticipation of Heaven.

THE KEYS TO THE NEW COVENANT

GRACE (GIFT) VS. WORKS (EFFORT)

Much of the Bible is prophetically portrayed and rooted in the Old Testament. And most of the Old Testament is about the Law. Thus, a common error

among church leaders is to blend the Old Covenant of Law (Mosaic Covenant) with the New Covenant of Grace found in the New Testament.

Here is the key: The Old Covenant is just a shadow or a type that points to the New Covenant. The Old Covenant points us to the ultimate Truth, the One Who fulfilled the Law and made possible the New Covenant – Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Salvation is a *gift of grace*; it cannot be earned. But many people still believe that their works or efforts are needed to “earn” salvation from God. You cannot have both salvation by grace *and* salvation by works. One will cancel out or nullify the other.

- *“And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work”* (Rom 11:6).
- God, *“who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began”* (2 Tim 1:9).

NEW WINE IN OLD WINESKINS

In three of the Gospels, Jesus cautions us to not put “new wine into old wineskins” (Matt 9:16-17; Mark 2:21-22; Luke 5:36-39). If we do, the results will be disastrous: *“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined”* (Luke 5:37).

Wine will expand as it ferments and matures. If you put new wine into an old, dry, stiff wineskin, it will rupture the old wineskin and the new wine will be lost.

Many people still try to live the New Covenant life under the Old Covenant’s requirements. The “wineskin” of the Old Covenant is not big enough or strong enough to contain the life, power and joy provided by the New Covenant!

OLD AND NEW

People, in their natural way of thinking, often cling to old ways of doing things because those ways are familiar and comfortable. The same can be true of learned traditions or religious beliefs that are not rooted in the New Covenant.

They are familiar, so it can be difficult to change them to fit the requirements of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant requires a radical change in thinking about life in God and salvation that is very different from the Law of the Old Covenant and the religious traditions of that day. Jesus often addressed this issue with the Pharisees.

In one encounter, Jesus confronted the Pharisees regarding their love of rituals and traditions as opposed to the truth (Luke 5:33-39). Sadly, many of the practices and beliefs of the Pharisees were not based on the Law as given by God, but were based on traditions developed over many years and considered equal to God's laws (Mk 7:1-8).

Today, as in Jesus' day, preferring the old rituals can keep people from embracing the New Covenant promises and the free salvation Jesus gives to us. Jesus understood that the old can often seem good enough because it is familiar: *"And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better'"* (Luke 5:39). The familiar can make one reluctant to let go of old ideas, traditions or beliefs.

But beliefs that are based on traditions of men and not on the Word of God become like chains of bondage. And, trying to serve the terms of the Old Covenant today can also be like chains of bondage, especially in light of the freedom Jesus purchased for us: *"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'"* (John 8:31,32). Jesus came *"full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14) to set His people free!

WHAT GRACE IS NOT

There are some who are suspicious of the message of grace. They see grace as weakness, or as "permission" to sin. Nothing could be further from the truth! *"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"* (Rom 6:1).

Grace is not a license, or liberty, or excuse to sin. As a matter of fact, Jesus makes clear that **grace demands even more of us than did the Law** (Matthew 5:20-48). For instance, the Law says to not murder; grace says to not even get angry at someone. The Law says to not commit adultery; grace says to not even *look* at a woman with lust in your heart.

Grace requires more because Jesus seeks to **transform our hearts**, to change us from the inside out (Matt 15:1-20; 23:25-28). We are not to be “actors” who know how to go through outward religious motions or just follow rules. We are to be *Christians* – those who follow Christ and His ways – who **from our hearts** do what He would do and say what He would say!

NO CONDEMNATION

Sin always has consequences; sin always places obstacles in our relationship with God. A significant change between Law and grace is that the **condemnation for sin has been removed** by the work of Jesus on the Cross. When we, as believers, stumble and sin, we are not cast away or rejected by God. We are still His sons and daughters! *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death”* (Rom 8:1,2).

Our walk to become more holy is a process that will continue throughout our lifetime on earth. When children are learning to walk, they stumble and fall. As parents, we do not reject or abandon our children because they fall down! In the same way, God will not abandon you if you fall as you are learning to walk with Him.

This is a wonderful gift of grace from God. But, **it is never to become an excuse** to live a fleshly life or ignore the teachings of Scripture. Our goal should always be to do our best to live in a manner that is obedient and pleasing to God. We might fall into a pit along the way; but we should not return to or stay in that sinful pit!

God expects us to **mature** as Christians. As we learn and grow in the Word of God, and mature in following Christ, we should no longer be stumbling or falling into temptations or sin. *“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things”* (1Cor 13:11,12).

Immature children may stumble. But the things we stumble over in our immaturity should not still cause us to stumble when we are more mature.

WHEN WE STUMBLE

Now, as a Christian, if I do sin, the Holy Spirit will convict me of my sin. I will feel “a godly sorrow” and a need to **repent**. If instead I feel like running away from God and trying to hide my sin, that is “worldly sorrow” (2Cor 7:8-10) and leads only to death.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1John 1:9). Our confession and genuine repentance is the process to receive God’s forgiveness when we stumble.

When we repent, and ask God to forgive us, three things happen:

1. We face our sin and take responsibility for it.
2. The feelings of guilt, shame or fear are removed as we confess our sin to God.
3. Our open relationship with God is restored, and the sin no longer separates us from Him.

Repentance has the added benefit of helping us admit our weaknesses to God. This will teach us to ask for God’s help and to rely on the Holy Spirit for the strength to avoid that sin in the future.

DEADLY PRESUMPTION

The grace of God does not permit us to presume on God’s forgiveness. If we are practicing a life of sin as a believer, we are in terrible danger! (See the warnings in Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31.)

The Bible reveals that if we are truly born of God (born again) we will not actively pursue a sinful life (1John 3:4-9). That does not mean a born-again person will never again stumble and sin (1John 1:10). But for a Christ-follower, an act of sin should be the *exception*. Sin should never be passively allowed or intentionally practiced (1John 3:1-3).

GRACE IS GOD’S IDEA

If you have any ideas about what grace is (or is not) – and those ideas are contrary to what is in God’s Word – you must abandon those ideas! Embrace God’s Word, embrace His grace: *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the*

Father, full of grace and truth... For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:14, 17).

A UNIVERSAL PROBLEM

The Law clearly reveals the human problem that is common through all of the covenants: man is unwilling and unable to completely obey God. Mankind often chooses to do what they want or what is right in their own eyes, rather than what God says is right.

God desires our obedience as an expression of love for Him (John 14:15,21,23; 15:10; 1John 2:4-6). Some people may obey God, but sadly it is often out of fear of punishment. Human nature resists obeying God from a heart of love for Him. *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:6-8).*

THE HOLY SPIRIT

But the New Covenant introduces to mankind something entirely new. The New Covenant gives us the “Helper, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth” – Who is the Holy Spirit – to live within us (John 14:16,17).

In Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit would “come upon” or “be with” someone. But in the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit lives “within” the believer. Christ-followers are a temple for the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19).

The Holy Spirit comes with power and authority over the devil (1John 4:4). As we surrender our lives to God, we have the Holy Spirit’s power to conquer our selfish will. He helps us live the Christian life as we learn to be led (guided, directed) by the Spirit. *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom 8:11).*

NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Our new life in the Spirit is what Jesus addressed when speaking with Nicodemus (John 3:1-17). As we learn to walk in the Spirit, we will overcome the desires of the flesh: *“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the*

things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Gal 5:16-18).

This new life in the Spirit requires a new way of thinking and doing things. The Bible instructs us to *“be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:23,24).*

We also have the following promise: *“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom 8:13,14).* The word “led” is present tense in the Greek, and therefore means we are to be *continually led.*

OLD COVENANT TERMS IN A NEW COVENANT SETTING

Let us now study some familiar terms as they apply to the New Covenant. This will help us understand what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.

GRACE

Grace is an attribute of God that is foreign to our natural experience, because God’s grace is perfectly selfless and motivated by love. The trials and tribulations of life can make us wary of expressions of perfect love. We may not know how to react or respond.

- Some feel unworthy of God’s grace and try to run away and hide from God.
- Others try to understand God’s grace by attempting to intellectually comprehend Him; the result is a very small concept of God.
- Still others try to earn the right to “deserve” God’s grace by being “good.”
- Finally, there are those who set up rules and regulations, and make sacrifices, so that they might “earn” God’s grace.

God’s grace is an **unconditional promise**. It is His free-will gift motivated by pure love. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).*

The availability of this kind of grace depends entirely on the one who offers it. God offers His grace to all of mankind (the world), the just and the unjust alike. Grace is not offered on the basis of merit or deeds, but only upon God's divine decision to love and bless His creation.

DIVINE ENABLEMENT

God is sovereign and, in His wisdom, knows that man cannot save himself. The failure of mankind to keep all of God's past covenants both reveals and proves this point. So, in the "new and better covenant," God makes His grace available to humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ. As we believe on Christ for salvation, it is by His grace we are saved (Eph 2:8.9).

The grace of God in Christ becomes our *divine enablement* by which we can live victorious, overcoming lives (Rom 5:1,2). This divine grace also gives us the means of escape from the righteous judgment of God upon all sin (Rom 5:8-10).

The only thing one must do to receive this grace is to believe that it is available in Christ, and act upon it. This believing and acting upon the grace that is offered is called **faith**. The focus of our faith is on the One Who gives us the free gift of grace – Jesus!

THE FIERY SERPENT

The Old Testament gives an example of God's grace and faith working together (Num 21:4-9). While Moses was leading the people in the wilderness, they began to again complain about their circumstances – as they had often done before. God had provided all that was needed for them, but the people still complained and rebelled.

As a consequence of their rebellion, God sent fiery serpents to bite them as punishment. Some people began to die from the bites of the serpents. Others, when witnessing God's wrath, began to **repent** and ask Moses to **intercede** before God on their behalf.

God responded: "*Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.'* So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived" (Num 21:8-9).

Moses interceded and God relented. Though the people were unworthy, God made a provision for escape from His wrath. God provided grace or favor in this situation and instructed Moses to make the bronze serpent. This act of grace from God *required the people to respond* and do what was necessary to receive it.

FAITH IN ACTION

Suppose you were bitten by one of these serpents and dying. What would you do? You might think, “A serpent on a stick, how can that save me? What a foolish idea!”

But, *if you believed what God said* about the bronze serpent on a pole, you would drag yourself to that location and place your gaze on it. That is just what faith is! **Faith is believing in what God says and acting in response to that belief.**

Those who believed in what God provided, and who acted upon that belief, were saved from death. “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*” (John 3:14-16).

Today, those who **believe upon Jesus** for salvation, and who act upon that belief **in faith** by receiving and following Him, are saved!

FAITH AND GRACE

The Scriptures tell us that it is impossible to please God without faith (Heb 11:6). Obviously faith is important to God! But, what is faith? Faith is believing – but not just believing in anything. Biblical **faith is belief in what God says** or reveals.

The Bible defines faith like this: “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb 11:1). By God’s definition, His kind of faith goes beyond the natural realm into the “invisible realm,” or the spiritual realm. God is spirit (John 4:24); His Word, the Bible, is spiritual (2Tim 3:16); and His Holy Spirit lives in us (John 14:16,17).

FAITH AND SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP

1 Corinthians Chapter 2 is a beautiful passage about **spiritual communication** between God and man. This entire chapter reveals that God has given us spiritual eyes to see, spiritual ears to hear and a heart to comprehend spiritual things. He has given us the “*mind of Christ*” (v16).

God has always sought a spiritual relationship and fellowship with mankind. We were created by Him and for Him (Rev 4:11). But to have a relationship requires communication, a two-way communication or dialogue.

- Too often when we pray (talk to God), we get up when we have finished praying and go our way. We do not take the time to wait on the Lord and listen to what He would say to us.
- We study God’s Word in the Bible, but we may not take the time to ask, “Lord what are you saying to me today through Your Word?”
- We may desire an obvious “burning bush” experience, but may not be willing to wait for the “still small voice” of the Master (1 Kings 19:12).

NOT WISHING, BUT KNOWING!

Faith is not just a hope or wish using our natural, earthly thoughts. Genuine faith in God is ***a spiritual hope based upon knowing the will of God***. We can know God’s will! God has communicated His will to us through the Scriptures, and leads us by His Holy Spirit.

Paul the apostle said of Abraham (who at the time had been given an unfulfilled promise of a son from God): “*He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness’*” (Rom 4:20-22). Someone once said, “Faith is impossible unless the will of God is known.” Herein we see an important key: *Grace is activated by our faith when we do the will of God*. In other words, when we step out in faith to do God’s will, our action will be accompanied by God’s grace (divine enablement) to perform all that He has called us to do.

WORKS

The word “works” in Paul’s writings (and James’ too) has a unique and specific meaning. In these contexts, “works” refers to deeds of the law performed in order to be accepted by God.

Works of this kind are in direct contrast to faith in Christ. Faith in Christ is the only way the sinner is saved (justified). There are **no human works possible that can accomplish salvation**.

- *“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law”* (Rom 3:27,28).
- *“...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified”* (Gal 2:16).

Works are man’s attempt to make us acceptable to God. But God has made it clear that faith in Him is the only way to His heart: *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (Heb 11:6).

OBEDIENCE IN LOVE

James speaks of justification by “works” **and** “faith” (James 2:14-26). However, in this case, James is referring to works that *demonstrate* or show a faith that is real and vital. In other words, because we believe in God, we do what He instructs us to do. Our works then demonstrate our faith in God.

Works cannot make us acceptable or approved of by God. Only faith in Christ can do that. But if we have true faith in Christ, it will be revealed and validated by our actions, words, attitudes, thoughts and conduct.

Obedience to the Lordship of Christ and the Father’s will in our lives is *essential*, and is the direct fruit of our genuine faith in and love for the Lord (John 14:15,21; 15:10; Heb 5:8,9).

The term “dead works” refers to those works that are not motivated by faith and therefore do not originate with God.

GOD AND MAN RECONCILED

Reconciliation (or atonement) is the process by which God and man are restored to relationship. The Bible teaches that God and man are alienated from one another because of man’s sinfulness, which is not compatible with

God's holiness. This alienation started in the Garden of Eden and continues to this day.

Although God loves the sinner, His righteousness and holiness cannot be compromised. Thus, God must and will judge all sin (Rom 1:18; 1Pet 4:5). But thanks be to God for His mercy and love! For His Word reveals to us the reason for our hope: "*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Rom 5:8).

Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, man's sin is reconciled or atoned for and God's judgment and wrath upon sin are appeased. Thus, a broken relationship of enmity, alienation and judgment can be changed into one of peace and fellowship for those who believe on Christ for salvation.

GOD MOVED FIRST

God *took the initiative* in reconciling with mankind. His plan to restore mankind to relationship with Him was put in motion when man first rebelled and rejected Him (Gen 3:1-7). Then, while we were still sinners and enemies of God, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8,10). Therefore, reconciliation is God's own completed act. God moved toward us first, and what He has done is the groundwork that allows the human actions of confession and repentance to follow. "*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled*" (Col 1:21). God Himself "*has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ*" (2Cor 5:18).

DECLARED INNOCENT

Christianity is unique among all religions because of its teaching of justification by faith through grace: "*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Rom 3:24). In essence, an individual is declared innocent when identified with Christ (Rom 6:1-14; Gal 2:20). Justification is God's declaration that the demands of His Law have been fulfilled in the righteousness of His Son. Jesus is righteous; so, if we are in Christ, we too are found righteous! Paul reveals that, "*...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation*" (2Cor 5:19).

God's justification covers **all** sin: "*For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified*" (Heb 10:14). Justification is based on the work

of Christ, accomplished through His blood (Rom 5:9) and brought to His people through His resurrection (Rom 4:25).

THE EXCHANGE

When God justifies, He charges the sins of mankind to Christ and credits the righteousness of Christ to the believer (2Cor 5:21). Thus, there is **an exchange**: *“through one Man’s righteous act, the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life”* (Rom 5:18). Christ takes our sin and unrighteousness, and gives us His righteousness. What a glorious and free gift our great God has bestowed upon us!

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

The Lord Jesus has paid the price for our justification. But it is through **our faith** in Him that we receive Him, and experience and enjoy His righteousness (Rom 3:25-30).

As a result of God’s justification, we are **saved from** condemnation and the experience of His wrath (Rom 5:9). We are **saved to**:

- Experience His glory (Rom 8:30).
- Experience His peace (Rom 5:1).
- Experience His purpose (1Cor 10:3; Col 3:17).
- Experience continued access to God’s grace (Rom 5:2).
- Experience the redemption of the body (Rom 8:23).
- Experience an eternal inheritance (Rom 8:17; 1Pet 1:4).

SANCTIFICATION

The Old Covenant could not change or transform man’s essential sinfulness. But in the glorious New Covenant, we are **being changed** from “glory to glory” (2Cor 3:18). This process is called **sanctification**.

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to produce holiness and righteousness. It is more than a moral rehabilitation of character brought about by the power of the truth. Sanctification **is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit** that brings our entire nature more and more into conformity to the image of Jesus (Rom 8:29).

The process of sanctification will result in separating us from sin, and helping us become more dedicated to God's holiness and righteousness.

- *“And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Rom 6:13,14).*
- *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:1).*
- *“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1Cor 6:11).*
- *“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2Thess 2:13).*

Perfect holiness is God's command and purpose (1Thess 4:7; 1Pet 1:15,16). As Paul prayed: *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely”* (1Thess 5:23). Sanctification is a process that is **continual throughout our lifetime** as believers (Phil 1:6; Heb 10:14). Only after death are the saints referred to as “perfect” or wholly, completely mature (Heb 12:23).

HOLY FOR GOD'S USE

In the Bible, Christians are regularly called “holy” or “saints.” Most often, these words are used in a moral and spiritual sense – to describe the life and conduct that is taught by the Scriptures.

However, another important concept for the word “holy” is **a separation** from the world and **a consecration** unto God. Just as Israel (under the Old Covenant) was a chosen race, so the Christian Church (under the New Covenant) becomes a holy nation (1Pet 2:9). And, the Christian individual, as one of the elect (chosen) people, is to become a holy man or woman (Col 3:12).

SENT WITH A PURPOSE

To be holy and separated from the world does not mean that we are to run away or hide from the world. It is true that we are not to participate in the sinful

attitudes or behavior **of** the world. However, the Lord has a purpose for each one of us as we live out our life of faith and grace **in** this world.

Just as Jesus was sent from the Father with a purpose, in like manner Jesus sends each one of us out with a purpose: *“As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world”* (John 17:18).

We are to be a holy people with a holy purpose, which includes:

- To fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:44-48);
- To be light and salt (Matt 5:13-15);
- To heal the sick and cast out demons (Mark 16:17-18);
- To preach the Good News (Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-20);
- To be a witness to Jesus (Acts 1:8);
- To serve the less fortunate (Matt 25:31-46; James 1:27);
- To be more like Jesus every day (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18).

A WORK IN PROGRESS

Paul used the words “holy” or “saints” to describe believers. But that did not mean the believers were walking in perfect, godly character. As a matter of fact, the first letter to the Corinthian church was written to address their carnal and un-Christlike behavior.

Yet even then, Paul addressed them this way: *“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours”* (1Cor 1:2).

Paul was not ignoring or making excuses for bad behavior. But Paul understood that holiness (sanctification) is a *process*. We have been sanctified and made righteous before God through Christ Jesus, and His work is complete. But becoming holy is a work of the Holy Spirit throughout our lifetime, moving us toward completion.

We are all on a spiritual journey in this life. Our ultimate *goal* is “perfection” (complete maturity) – a goal we will realize only when we get to Heaven. *“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet*

now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight” (Col 1:21,22).

The Holy Spirit lives within all born-again believers. The work of the Holy Spirit is continual within each of us. We also have the sure expectation in the New Covenant that God makes us able, by His Spirit, to live up to the moral qualities that a holy God requires of His people. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1).*

RIGHTEOUSNESS

The word *righteousness* comes from a root word that means “straightness” This conveys the idea of aligning with a fixed or unchanging standard. This certainly describes God’s standard as revealed in the Scriptures.

Righteousness involves both thinking and doing the things that please God, out of a motivation of love for Him. Some would define righteousness as holy and upright living in accordance with God’s standards.

Righteousness is a moral concept that is defined by God’s character. Therefore, man’s righteousness is defined in terms of God’s righteousness. In practical terms, righteousness is thoughts and deeds that are right in God’s eyes (1Ki 15:51; 2Ki 15:11; 2Chron 14:2).

The following are three examples to consider:

- For Adam and Eve, what was right in God’s eyes was their obedience to His command: Do not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. His commands were the standard for their behavior. Thus, Adam and Eve would have acted righteously if they had obeyed God.
- The Ten Commandments and related laws given by God defined Israel’s relationship with Him and all people. To obey God’s Law was to act righteously. Such obedience maintained the covenant relationship between God and His people.
- The cross of Jesus is a public demonstration of God’s righteousness. God puts to our account, or transfers to us, the righteousness of Christ when we trust in Him for salvation (Rom 4:3-22; Gal 3:5-7; Phil 3:9). We do not

become righteous because of our inherent goodness; God sees us as righteous only through our identification by faith with His Son, Jesus Christ.

When a person receives God's grace by faith in Christ, and not by works, he/she is:

- reconciled with God;
- justified by faith in Jesus;
- sanctified by the Holy Spirit;
- continually being made holy and righteous.

This is what it means to be “saved” or born-again (John 3:3-7) in the New Covenant of grace. What no prior covenant could do, God did for us through the New Covenant. Jesus accomplished this for us, once and for all! Hallelujah!

SURVEY OF THE NEW COVENANT

The New Covenant is the fifth and last of the *theocratic covenants* – those that are unconditional in nature. This means that God will keep His word even if man does not (2Tim 2:13). Jeremiah prophesied the New Covenant and spoke of it as a future event. The fulfillment of that prophecy came when Jesus gave His life on the cross of Calvary.

Let us look more closely at Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the New Covenant. It is found in **Jeremiah 31:31-34**:

Verse 31: *“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”*

- The New Covenant is “new” in contrast to the former covenant with Moses, which is called “old.” *“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second”* (Heb 8:7).

Verse 32: *“...not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.”*

- The New Covenant fulfilled (Matt 5:17,18) – and thus eliminated the need for – the Old Covenant: *“In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made*

the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Heb 8:13).

- The New Covenant will not be like the Old Covenant (Mosaic). Man will no longer live by the letter of the Law. Instead, man can live by both the power and leading of God’s Holy Spirit: “...*who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2Cor 3:6; see also Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18).*

Verse 33: *“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*

- The New Covenant will provide for a supernatural regeneration: a new nature as a result of a new birth (Titus 3:5).
- *Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’” John 3:3.*
- *“Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’” (John 3:5,6).*
- God will put His law in their innermost being and write it in their hearts. No longer will a walk with God be founded upon external commandments and rules; now the commandments will be written on the heart.
- *“Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart” (2Cor 3:3).*

Verse 34: *“No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

- The New Covenant will release the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit; people will be taught, guided and led by the Holy Spirit (God).
- *“For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12:12).*

- *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26).*
- *“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13).*
- *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom 8:14).*
- The New Covenant provides for full justification; the sins of people will be forgiven and completely removed, and they will be declared innocent by God.
 1. *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1).*
 2. *“To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).*
 3. *“And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39).*
 4. *“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col 2:13).*
 5. *“I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake” (1John 2:12).*

CONCLUSION: THE STUDY OF COVENANTS

A FRAMEWORK

One reason for studying the covenants of God is to gain a framework for the entire Bible. Key biblical figures serve as signposts in the Old Testament: Figures such as Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. These are the people through whom God chose to deliver His covenants, and they are significant characters to study. As we look at their lives, we can learn much about the history of man, the nation of Israel and, most importantly, the character of our God.

CONTRASTING THE OLD AND NEW

Another reason for studying the covenants is to contrast the Old Testament (Old Covenant) with the New Testament (New Covenant). A majority of the Old Testament is about the Law, especially from Exodus to Malachi. In contrast, the entire New Testament is generally about God's grace.

For us as believers in Christ, the covenant in which we now live is the New Testament/Covenant. As pastors and leaders, we should make it our priority to study and teach from the New Testament. The Old Testament, through its frequent foreshadows and types, points to the New Testament.

The Old Testament contains many illustrations and examples from which we can learn; we can use them in our preaching and teaching. But we need to be preachers and teachers of truths found in our covenant of today, the covenant of grace.

Please understand: The Old Testament is **God's eternal Word** and it is true and trustworthy (Isa 40:8). But we no longer live under the Law or the old sacrificial system of the Old Covenant. We now live under the Covenant of Grace and the Lordship of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Hallelujah! Pastors and teachers, you should study **all** of the Scriptures. But learn to interpret the Old Covenant through the truths and the Spirit of the New Covenant.

COVENANTS BROKEN

A dominant theme in each of the Old Testament covenants is man's failure to fulfill the covenant conditions. God, in His foreknowledge, gave each one of these covenants knowing the outcome: that man would break His covenant and fail. You might ask, "Why would God do that?" The answer is clear:

1. Man needed to experience the failure that his own "works" would bring, so that man would have no excuse for his sin. Innocence (Edenic), conscience (Adamic), human government (Noahic), promise (Abrahamic) and the Law (Mosaic) were all insufficient to overcome the sin nature of man (Gal 2:21; 3:21).
2. In the case of the Law, man would learn that laws and rules actually brought to the surface the rebellion in his heart; man wanted his own way and it was impossible for man to keep the Law (Rom 7:13-24).

3. Ultimately, these failures would bring man to the realization that **man needs a Savior** (Gal 4:4-7).

NEW COVENANT OF GRACE

These covenant “failures,” step by step, pointed to the only possible way mankind could be saved and restored to relationship with a holy God: The way of grace that was mediated by a Savior, Jesus Christ. The promise of a “new and living way” (Heb 10:20) was given to men by God when He spoke through the prophet Jeremiah of the coming New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The New Covenant has been paid for and established by the blood that Jesus shed on the Cross of Calvary. His shed blood provides forgiveness of all sins for **every** person who believes in Christ for salvation. Jesus’ payment for sin is *more than enough* to cancel out the sins of all who believe in Him.

There is no person who is so evil, or whose sins are so numerous, as to exclude him from the forgiveness Christ gives. ALL are forgiven when they repent of their sin and believe on Jesus Christ for salvation!

Praise the Lord! This is a message of rejoicing for us all! That is why the salvation message is called the Gospel, which means **Good News**.

FREE INDEED

Grace has a very personal meaning for each one of us. We were all at one time in bondage to the Law and sin, which results in death. But in Christ, we are FREE! We are free from sin and death, and able to live for Jesus! We are forgiven and the power of sin is broken (Rom 6:18).

Freedom is the heart of the message of the Gospel. We need to embrace and live in the freedom that Christ died to give us. When we do, we can then effectively present that message of freedom to others.

But our freedom is **a unique type of freedom**. It is not a freedom to do what we *want*. That is the way of the unredeemed world. Rather, in Christ our freedom is to do as we *ought* to do – to obey the living God and walk in daily relationship with Him.

Jesus says very clearly that if we live in Him, and He in us, we will be free! *“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed’”* (John 8:31-32, 36).

FREEDOM WITH PURPOSE

A Christian living in bondage to guilt, shame and fear is a very ineffective Christian. These chains of sin and bondage do not belong in the life of a minister of God! Nor should they ever be used by any leader as tools to manipulate or control others.

Jesus came to give life and life more abundantly to all (John 10:10). We must seek the Lord for His wisdom and deliverance in our own lives, and lead others to freedom in Christ.

- *“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, Father”* (Rom 8:15).
- *“Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”* (Rom 8:21).
- *“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”* (2Cor 3:17).
- *“And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)”* (Gal 2:4).

This new freedom in Christ was bought with His priceless and precious blood (1Pet 1:18,19). We have been set free! But free to do what? Christ has a purpose for each one of us. He **set** us free so that we can be **sent** by Him (John 17:18; 20:21).

Every person has a mission to fulfill. Our Lord has a purpose for each and every person who, in faith, follows Him. Pastor, every person in your church has a mission. It may be in their current job or position; or the Lord may want to send them somewhere else. What is their mission? What is *your* mission?

MISSION STATEMENTS

A *mission statement* is a statement of how one fulfills a vision or a call upon his/her life. Both Jesus and Paul the apostle had mission statements that guided their lives in ministry. The same principles that guided their ministries should guide us as well.

Jesus has a mission statement: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”* (Luke 4:18,19).

To sum up the preceding scriptures in a phrase, “Jesus came to set the captives free!” How can we do anything less? That is our mission; that is our message!

DARKNESS TO LIGHT

Paul the apostle was called and commanded by Jesus after Paul had been saved: *“But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me”* (Acts 26:16-18).

Stop and meditate on those words Jesus spoke to Paul. Allow them to sink into your spirit. Paul was sent to open spiritual eyes so that the people might:

- see the truth;
- have the power of Satan broken;
- receive forgiveness of all of their sins;
- gain a present and eternal reward;
- have sanctification by the Holy Spirit by faith.

Hallelujah! This truly is a message of freedom!

IMITATE CHRIST

Let us all, as ministers of the Gospel, imitate Paul – and, in so doing, imitate our Lord Jesus. *“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”* (1Cor 11:1). Their mission statements can be our mission statements!

You have been bought with a price (1Cor 6:20; 7:23) and set free to serve the living God. Your mission from God may take you across the street or across the sea. But wherever you go, preach the Gospel to the unsaved! *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching”* (2Tim 4:2,3).

You have a mission – now let your faith rise and go fulfill it!

ONE FINAL POINT

In each of the seven covenants of the Old Testament, there were always two covenant heads. One, of course, was God; the other was a man – beginning with Adam, then Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua and David. The result of the Old Testament covenants was the realization that man was unable to fulfill his side of the covenant.

The New Covenant also has two covenant heads, God and Jesus. We know that God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three Gods, but One. The mystery, then, is that God made a covenant with Himself!

As a result, **the New Covenant can never fail or be broken**. As a person I may fail, but my God will never fail. And even if I do fail, that failure can never nullify the New Covenant (2Tim 2:11-13; Heb 6:13-20).

FOR HIS GLORY

Rest assured that we serve a **GREAT** God! God knows exactly what He is doing. He still sits on His Throne as King and Ruler over all. God has given us everything that we need for life and godliness (2Pet 1:3).

God desires relationship with you. He wants your fellowship, and He wants you to have the blessing and freedom that comes from living life on His terms. He desires your obedience to His ways from a heart of love for Him. And He has made all of that possible through the provisions of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.

But this message is not for you alone. God also wants you to live in, and to be a minister of, the New Covenant, of whom Jesus is the Mediator (Heb 8:6). Take this message of salvation and hope to others, for the blessing of God's people, and for His glory!

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope”
Jeremiah 29:11.

