

WHAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW (#WCSK), PART VI: COVENANT

All Scriptures will be taken from The New American Standard Bible (NASB). Biblical references are examples and are in no way exhaustive. Also, the series What Christians Should Know is not a complete reference but is meant to provide basic beliefs, principles, and doctrines in the Christian faith. All of the lessons are best used as a general guide as you engage in your own Bible study.

“But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

Introduction

A covenant is an agreement that is imposed by God between Himself and human beings based upon a core ethos: “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”¹ Within the covenant are certain stipulations that specify covenantal obligations. If one remains faithful and keeps the commandments, that person will receive many blessings. If one does not obey the commandments, that person will face adverse consequences.

The reason God initiates covenants is for the purpose of relationship—He wants to have a connection with us, and a covenant is intended to strengthen the bond between two parties. A covenant is an undeserved, free gift from a loving Father for His children. In essence, God is showing us how we should act by Him first making promises about how He will act toward us—and those promises are trustworthy because God is unchangeable and cannot lie.² Therefore, all covenants are unalterable, and we cannot negotiate with God in order to change the terms of the agreement. We are free to either accept the terms or to reject them.

Covenants are built upon *mutual trust*, whereas contracts are built upon *mutual distrust*. In a covenant, God wants to give and wants to provide, and so He gives of Himself for our sake. On the other hand, you sign a contract in order to protect *your* interests, now that you are forced and *have* to do something. A contract also typically involves taking away: you give something up in order to get something. In a covenant, God gives us everything.

Let us all not forget that God needs nothing and therefore never had to make any covenant, but He did. Covenants are purely voluntary and initiated by Him out of the love

¹ Jeremiah 31:33

² For a complete lesson on God’s characteristics, please see [*What Christians Should Know Part II: Who God Is.*](#)

He has for creation. God essentially is “putting Himself out there” and invites us into relationship with Him, and that relationship bears the gift of many promises if we choose to obey and follow the conditions of the covenant. *We* can go back on our word and violate the terms of the covenant. In essence, we have everything to gain and God has everything to lose. Just think about the last time you came to an agreement with someone, and they did not keep up their end of the deal. How did you feel? Did you want to take revenge? Did you want to give them a piece of your mind? Now, imagine if that same person fails on their end over, and over, and over again. That’s how God feels, but *in spite of this*, He keeps on keeping on and remains faithful to what He said He would do.

In *Systematic Theology*, Wayne Grudem refers to covenants by writing, “The Greek translators of the Old Testament [and] the New Testament authors did not use the ordinary Greek word for contracts or agreements in which both parties were equal (*syntheke*), but rather chose a less common word, *diatheke*, which emphasized that the provisions of the covenant were laid down by one of the parties only.”³

In this lesson, we will discuss the covenants between God and human beings, but covenants also do exist between human beings as well. For example, marriage is considered a covenant when a man and a woman become one.⁴ The Biblical ideal of a marriage is two people loving and serving one another with a unified gaze on God. It is meant to be a selfless, other-serving, unbreakable bond. Parenting is another example, in which the mother and father continuously give to their children out of love. And the covenant of parenting is an ideal example of how God relates to us, because no matter how bad your children are, no matter what they do, they will always be your children, and you will always be their parent. Nothing can ever change that, and you will always pursue and care for them just as God will always pursue us, always love us, and is unable to turn His back on us.

A covenant is comprised of four specific criteria: (1) *Parties* who are involved in the covenant other than God. Typically, a person serves as a representative in the covenant for everyone else. (2) *Provisions and Conditions* that stipulate the terms of the relationship and consequences for violating the covenant. (3) *Promises* and blessings for obedience and how one can obtain those blessings. Some covenants also have a (4) *Picture*: a sign that represents the covenant. This sign can be external, internal, or both. The following covenants are presented in order as they appear in the Bible. They are not separate from one another but build atop one another.

I. The Adamic Covenant

The Adamic Covenant reveals that since our beginning, God’s relationship to us has been defined by specific stipulations. The Adamic covenant is outlined in Genesis 1:27-30 and 2:16-17. Of note, the text in Genesis never refers to a “covenant,” but Hosea does refer to the sins of Israel and writes in 6:7, “But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant.”

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 515.

⁴ Genesis 2:24; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 19:3-6; Ephesians 5:33

In Genesis 1:27-30, the Bible says, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ Then God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food’; and it was so.”

Genesis 2:16-17 then says, “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”

Parties: Adam as a representative of all humankind.⁵

Provisions and Conditions: The text in Genesis tells us that God blessed Adam and provided him with the earth, the Garden of Eden, his wife, Eve, and dominion over the creatures of the earth. Through the Garden, He gave Adam free food and a place to live. These provisions came with the condition that no one was to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The consequence for this violation was death.

Promise: By implication, before the Fall, Adam and Eve would have had eternal life eating from the tree of life.⁶ After the Fall, God ultimately promised that Jesus would crush the serpent.⁷ Because of sin, Adam and Eve could not have remained in the Garden, because they would have then been able to eat from the tree of life and dwell eternally in their fallen state. The promise of Jesus is of so much importance because before Adam and Eve take one step outside of Eden, God has already laid the plans for Jesus to save everyone, which means everything in the Bible that is going to happen before the birth of Jesus points *directly* to Christ.

Picture: The “sign” for the Adamic covenant isn’t as clear cut as the other components. Essentially, in this covenant, God voluntarily enters into a relationship with Adam and gives him many gifts. Adam and God are now inseparably bound together, signified by the union of Adam and Eve (i.e., marriage) and two now becoming one.⁸ A more tangible sign would be the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, representing God’s promise of eternal life. In addition, in regards to the Sabbath, “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:3).

⁵ Romans 5:12-21

⁶ Genesis 3:22

⁷ Genesis 3:15

⁸ Genesis 2:24

Note also that God chose humans as the only part of creation with whom to have a covenant. For example, God did not initiate a covenant with plants or animals.

II. The Noahic Covenant

The setup: Many generations pass between Adam and Noah, and things aren't looking so good for humanity. Everyone on the face of the earth is doing evil, and the Bible says in Genesis 6:5-9 that humankind's wickedness grieved THE LORD. God had already made a promise to Adam to have dominion over creation, so God can't wipe all of creation out. Instead, He chooses Noah (who found favor in God's eyes)⁹ to build an ark to survive the flood that will blot out the corruption of humankind. God then makes this covenant with Noah after he, his family, and many kinds of animals leave the ark and are back on dry land.

In Genesis 9:8-17, it says, "Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, 'Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.' God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' And God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.'"

Parties: Noah and all his descendants along with every living thing on Earth. God initiated this covenant with Noah *as a function of God's grace*.

Provisions and Conditions: God blesses Noah and his sons, and He commands them all to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 9:1. God also says in 9:3 that "every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant." These provisions come with the condition that the value of life, especially human life, be honored. Anyone who does not value human life is held accountable to God.¹⁰

Promise: An unconditional, divine guarantee to never again destroy life on Earth with a flood. Jesus is the ultimate promise of the Noahic covenant, as He is the one who saves us from God's judgment through faith.

⁹ Genesis 6:8

¹⁰ Genesis 9:4-7

Picture: The rainbow. The symbolism, of course, of the bow being in the clouds is that if it is up there, it can't be used for war. By Noah *and his sons* being blessed, the image of a blessed community of family members begins to emerge.

III. The Abrahamic Covenant

The setup: Many generations pass between Noah and Abraham. The Bible introduces us to Abram in Genesis 11:26, and then in Genesis 12:1-3, God commands him, and he obeys. Once again, God chooses a human being based upon His divine initiative. In fact, the command that God gives Abram in 12:1-3 foreshadows the covenant.

There are two parts to the Abrahamic Covenant from Genesis 15:9-21 and chapter 17.

Genesis 15:18 says, “On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.’”

Genesis 17:7 says, “‘I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.’”

Parties: Abraham (God renames him this from Abram in this covenant). God chose Abraham, and Abraham had faith, and that faith was reckoned to him as righteousness.¹¹

Promises, Provisions, and Conditions: A divine guarantee to grant Abraham land, sons, and to be the father of a “multitude of nations.”¹² (The land is Canaan.) God also promises to conditionally be the God of Abraham if he and his descendants are obedient to THE LORD. God requires that Abraham be “blameless”¹³ and that all of his descendants also keep the covenant that God has made with him. God specifically tells Abraham that his wife, Sarah, will bear a child whom he will call Isaac, and God will continue His covenant through him and his descendants. Through the seed of Abraham, blessings will subsequently come to the entire world, and this was based upon total consecration to God. Jesus is the ultimate promise of the Abrahamic covenant as the one Man who brings blessings to the entire world for all those who have faith in Him.

Picture: The external sign was circumcision. The text further stipulates that any male who was not circumcised would be “cut off from the people.”¹⁴ The internal sign was faith. By Abraham *and his sons* being blessed, the image of a blessed nation begins to emerge.

¹¹ Genesis 15:6

¹² Genesis 17:4

¹³ Genesis 17:1

¹⁴ Genesis 17:14

IV. The Mosaic Covenant (or the Sinaitic Covenant)

The setup: Abraham has a son, Isaac. Isaac has a son, Jacob. Jacob has 12 sons and number 11 is named Joseph. Joseph becomes a very big deal in Egypt, and the family that was living in Canaan moves to Egypt. Many generations pass and what was a family of less than 100 turns into “Israel,” an Egyptian subclass but soon-to-be nation of many, many people. God calls Moses and says, “You’re up. Time to set My people free.” Moses obeys, and he tells Pharaoh, “Let my people go.” Ten plagues hit Egypt, and then finally Pharaoh lets the people go after the tenth plague, when all the firstborn in Egypt die, except those in houses marked with the blood of an unblemished lamb on the doorposts and lintel. God *passed over* those houses. Now, Moses is leading all the Egyptian exiles in the wilderness. God then visits Mount Sinai and speaks directly to Moses and gives him “the Law,” including the 10 Commandments. In total, the Mosaic Law has over 600 commandments.

The source for this covenant comes from Exodus 19-24.

Exodus 20:1-3 says, “Then God spoke all these words, saying, ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.’”

Exodus 24:1-8 says, “Then He said to Moses, ‘Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance. Moses alone, however, shall come near to the LORD, but they shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him.’ Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!’ Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. Moses took half of the blood and put *it* in basins, and the *other* half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read *it* in the hearing of the people; and they said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!’ So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.’”

Parties: Moses serves as the mediator between God and the people of Israel. Israel is comprised of all those God freed from Egyptian bondage, who are the descendants of Abraham. It becomes clear then, how this covenant stacks on top of the Abrahamic covenant. Note that God frees the people *first* and then invites them to enter into covenant with Him.

Provisions and Conditions: God makes a conditional divine pledge to be the God of Israel, to protect her and to safeguard her blessings so long as the people execute total consecration to God, serve Him, and obey His commandments. These conditions are

specifically laid out as the Mosaic Law, and the first part of the Law are the 10 Commandments written by God Himself on two stone tablets. By obeying and keeping the Law, the people will maintain their freedom from earthly powers.

Promise: Jesus is the ultimate promise of the Mosaic covenant as the One who mediates for us to deliver us from bondage, the One who ultimately fulfills the law, and the One whose atoning blood saves us from wrath and judgment. In other words, Christ's blood causes God to pass over us.

Picture: The external sign of this covenant was the Passover in Egypt (Exodus 12). This is why God begins in Exodus 20 saying (I will summarize and paraphrase), "Hey guys, remember how I saved all your firstborn from death in Egypt? That was me. That was me giving you a friendly reminder that I am God and you are my people." Of course, the people and Moses had to believe (faith) in God in order to follow His law. By Israel being set apart and blessed, the image emerges of a holy nation, separated from the rest, who serve God alone.

V. The Davidic Covenant

The setup: Israel wanders in the desert some more and eventually enters the Promised Land. The people face constant enemies and skirmishes, but over time they grow into a nation. Yet, for quite some time, they have no king to rule over all of Israel. The people chose the first king, Saul, and things would end very poorly for him. But God had already called the prophet Samuel to anoint the young shepherd boy, David, to be Israel's next king. In II Samuel 7, David is ruling from Jerusalem (the capital) and is experiencing a rare time of rest in his kingship. David *thinks* he should build a house in which God could "dwell," but THE LORD responds in one of the most beautiful passages in the entire Bible.

II Samuel 7:5-16 says, "Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle. Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'''" Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son

to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.””””

Parties: David, referred to as a “servant” of THE LORD (also by implication the people).

Provisions and Conditions: God will finally give the people rest and locate the people in their “own place.” He will also make David great and a ruler over God’s people. The conditions of the covenant are that sin has consequences, and when sin is committed, the rod of correction will be used.

Promises: Essentially, the promise is a King of Kings who shall have an eternal kingdom. The Davidic Covenant is an unconditional divine pledge to establish and maintain the dynasty of king David forever, and to bring the dynasty into rest inside the Promised Land. It becomes clear that Jesus is the ultimate promise of the Davidic covenant as the One who will have an eternal dynasty.¹⁵

Picture: David had faith (internal sign) in God. That commitment was externalized as a Temple that would be built not by David, but by his son, Solomon. Symbolically, a kingdom that David’s line rules over serves as a metaphor for the covenant.

A bit more on the Davidic Covenant: This covenant follows the Ancient Near East tradition of a “royal grant.” Royal grants were normally initiated by a king toward a servant in reward for some form of outstanding service. Such grants typically were ongoing and unconditional, and the heirs of the faithful servant also reaped the benefits of the grant so long as they remained in service, loyal, and faithful. This form of covenant is promissory and not obligatory.

King David is described at a time of peace when he was “settled in his house” and “the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him.” From this imperial sense of peace, and perhaps inspired by political might, the king declares *his* own initiative to build a temple to honor God. While the intent is honorable, one must also recognize the self-interest present in this declaration: at the time, one of the most potent symbols to define, legitimize, and solidify rule was to build a temple. Hence, by creating a place where God would “live,” David also acts to solidify his crown. God subsequently responds to the human gesture by asking, “Are you the one to build me a house to live in?” (Notably, the same Hebrew word, *yasab* (meaning to sit down, to dwell) is used *both* to refer to David and to THE LORD). As Walter Brueggeman says, “Whereas the ark articulates God’s freedom and mobility, the temple removes the danger and possibility that God might depart ... the temple guarantees God’s presence but at the same time

¹⁵ Luke 1:33

militates against God's freedom."¹⁶ In short, God excels past the boundaries of the material world, and even a "house of cedar" is not luxurious enough to contain His majesty. The prophet Nathan responds to David by encouraging him to do all that he has said, but notably at this point in chapter 7, *God* has not yet spoken.

When God does respond, THE LORD does not rebuke or chastise His servant for self-interest or self-directed building projects. Rather, through Nathan, the Lord reminds the king of God's gracious favor and all that has been done for Israel, starting with liberation from Egyptian bondage to the present, and raising up David from humble shepherd beginnings to sit on the throne of Israel. Then, after this reminder of a gracious past, THE LORD establishes the continuity of grace from then to the future. God begins in verse 8 by saying "I took you," highlighting the divine hand in David's rise and emphasizing that it is Him, not David, who is the ultimate first cause of *all* things.

THE LORD builds upon history by then offering unwarranted, unmerited promises: "I will make for you a great name ... I will appoint a place ... I will give you rest."

The promise of God comes to a peak in verse 11, when the Lord declares that "the LORD will make you a house." This is a play on words: the Hebrew word *baiyt*, can refer to a physical family house but is also used in a broader sense to refer to a dynasty.¹⁷ David had used the same term in order to build God a *baiyt*, yet in spite of this, God responds to David's inability to fashion a container (temple) for The Almighty by promising an even greater free gift that cannot be contained (a dynasty). In essence, God responds to David's temporary solution by offering a permanent, everlasting social reality that will be enjoyed by generations to come.

Arguably, these verses in II Samuel 7 lay the foundation of Biblical faith for the entire Bible—that God has provided an unconditional promise and free gift to all, and our faith is contingent upon that unmerited favor; no matter what we as human beings do, and no matter how we turn away from Him, the Lord will continually pour out His steadfast love over us.

With prior *conditional* covenants, violation of the stipulations could result in forfeiture of God's promise. Now, God has put Himself on the line and made His promise *unconditional*, typified by the use of the word "but" (as in, "but, *in spite of this*") in verse 15, and the now permanent obligation never to "take my steadfast love from him." No longer are we held in bondage by the law and the myriad of conditional "if" requirements set forth in the Mosaic Covenant. And it is God, though Christ (eventually), that will ultimately fulfill the law so that nothing any human can ever do will make God turn His back on us.

¹⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: First and Second Samuel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 254.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 255.

VI. The New Covenant

The setup: David and Solomon rule over a united Israel, but once Solomon dies, the kingdom falls apart and is split into two: Israel is in the North and Judah is in the South. For the most part, the successive kings that rule over each half of the nation are evil and apostate, and countless prophets basically tell the people, “If you don’t shape up, God is going to deal with you.” The people do not listen, and as a result, the Assyrians conquer Israel and the people are exiled. Judah is conquered by the Babylonians and the people are exiled. Jeremiah is a prophet who speaks about the impending Babylonian crisis.

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 it says, “‘Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD. ‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’”

Parties: Ultimately, the mediator of this covenant is Jesus.

Provisions and Conditions: God provides the apostate Israel with this covenant on the verge of the people being exiled from the Promised Land for covenantal violation.¹⁸ Essentially, this covenant offers endless provision, because it’s the covenant that keeps on giving. From the forgiveness of sins, humanity derives salvation, regeneration, eternal life, fellowship with God, sanctification, and illumination, just to name a few perks. The condition for this covenant is having faith in Jesus and to follow the law written on one’s heart.

Promise: An unconditional divine pledge of pure grace. Because Israel was continually unfaithful, God makes the decision to forgive her sins and establish a new relationship where the law is no longer external but written on their hearts. God will forgive sins and remember them no more. As a result, the apex of the new promise is that everyone who has faith and obeys will have eternal life and fellowship with God.¹⁹ This promise is only possible through Jesus.

Picture: The internal sign of the New Covenant is faith. The external signs are baptism and communion. Baptism, then, represents the *start* of the covenant. Communion represents the *continuance* of the covenant.

¹⁸ Leviticus 26:27-39; Deuteronomy 28:36-37, 45-68

¹⁹ John 3:15, 5:24

In order to put the New Covenant in context, let us look to the New Testament in Matthew 26:26-29: “While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; *for this is My blood of the covenant*, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom’” (italics mine).

Jesus said these words to His disciples as they ate the Passover meal.²⁰ And this passage is located in the book of Matthew, written by a disciple largely concerned with how Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, where all of the prior covenants are recorded.

Essentially, since the beginning in Genesis, humans were unable to obtain the blessings offered in all of the covenants because they were incapable of meeting the conditions. So, it became necessary for God to graciously give more in order to save His creation. As is always the case, humans can’t do, so God does and provides. The entire impetus behind covenants is revealed as God miraculously working out a plan of redemption for sinful people. It is God’s *hesed*, or unmerited grace, that makes all of this possible.

So in the New Covenant, Christ now becomes a mediator²¹ for us *between* humanity and the Father, because in the past, a covenant directly between God and humans failed. Just as in every other covenant, in order to participate in this covenant, one ought to have faith²² and believe in Christ as the One who redeems humanity. This models every other covenant in the Bible, because in order for it to work, the person had to believe in and trust in God. Also, in prior covenants, the people involved were incapable of obedience because they lacked the redemption and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who now frees us from the bondage of sin,²³ which prevents us from obeying God. With the New Covenant, faith produces obedience,²⁴ and thus we become participants in the promise.²⁵ And this covenantal promise is *everlasting* with *everyone* who believes, so that God will be your God, you shall be His,²⁶ the Holy Spirit works in us to bring about New Covenant power,²⁷ and God is subsequently revealed to us in full.²⁸

A valid question to ask is if there is a “new covenant,” then what is the “old covenant”? The new *is the replacement*²⁹ of the old Mosaic covenant and is the fulfillment of every

²⁰ Matthew 26:17-19

²¹ Hebrews 8:6, 9:15, 12:24

²² Romans 1:17, 5:1

²³ Romans 8:2

²⁴ James 2:17

²⁵ I John 2:4-6

²⁶ Jeremiah 32:38-40; Ezekiel 34:30-31, 36:28; II Corinthians 6:16; I Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 21:3

²⁷ Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 12:13; II Corinthians 3:4-18

²⁸ John 1:14; Hebrews 1:1-3

²⁹ Luke 22:20; I Corinthians 11:25; II Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8, 13, 9:15, 12:24

other Old Testament covenant.³⁰ In some instances, writers of the New Testament refer to the Mosaic Covenant as the “old,”³¹ and the reason this old covenant existed in the first place was to point people toward Christ.³² Galatians 3:24 says, “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.” Furthermore, the book of Hebrews makes it clear that because the Mosaic Covenant does not take away sins,³³ it points directly toward Christ, who is the perfect high priest and the ultimate atoning sacrifice.³⁴ The Mosaic Covenant frustrates people and forces them to say, “This is too hard. I can’t do it by myself. There must be a better way.” That better way is Jesus. If the Mosaic Covenant *could* yield righteousness and could give eternal life, then Christ would not be necessary.³⁵

Christ fulfills the Adamic Covenant by fully obeying God’s commands, and through Him (instead of eating from a tree), all who have faith will have eternal life. Christ fulfills the Noahic Covenant in that He is the One who is righteous and saves us from the judgment of God due to sin. He is the ark that protects us and keeps us safe. The flood, or the baptism of the world, re-creates creation in order to reconcile us back to God, and Christ mediates this process. Christ fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant as He is the blessed descendant of Abraham.³⁶ Jesus was also circumcised in the Jewish tradition and fully obeyed all of God’s commands, thus fulfilling the Mosaic Covenant. And because of His total consecration to God, blessings come to the entire world. Christ fulfills the Davidic Covenant as the eternal King whose dynasty and kingdom shall endure forever.

It’s all about Jesus, all the time.

Questions? E-mail us at dlcfchurch@gmail.com. Be sure to put WCSK (yes, all caps) in the subject line. We hope to hear from you!

Join us in a few weeks for Part VII: Stewardship, Faith & Grace ...

God Bless.

Dr. C. H. E. Sadaphal

³⁰ Luke 1:72-73; Romans 4; Galatians 3:6-18, 29; Hebrews 2:16, 6:13-20

³¹ II Corinthians 3:14; Hebrews 8:6,13

³² Galatians 3:19

³³ Hebrews 10:1-4

³⁴ Hebrews 9:11-28

³⁵ Galatians 3:21

³⁶ Matthew 1:1-17

For Further Study

Walter Brueggemann and Tod Linafelt. *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).