

## **Tenets of the Faith - Week 9**

### **Covenants and the Kingdom of Heaven**

”As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,  
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.”  
Zechariah 9:11

#### **Introduction: A Bond in Blood Sovereignly Administered**

To have a correct understanding of the importance of God’s Covenant with man as it is expressed from Genesis through Revelation is critical in our walk as Disciples of Jesus Christ. So many issues can be resolved and questions answered by studying each of the respective covenants and by recognizing how they are all intimately connected and form a perfect picture of God’s grace and love for mankind. The goal is that by the end of this study each of us may have a better realization of God’s incredible plan of salvation and how His Covenant with man resides at the center of His will for humanity.

Throughout the pages of the Scriptures we see six distinct yet paradoxically united covenants between God and man. These are the Adamic, the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, the Davidic and the New Covenant. It is important to understand that these six covenants oftentimes overlap but there are specific decrees and signs that differentiate them as well. (Each of the covenants has a specific sign associated with it, some are explicit like circumcision being the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, others are implicit like the tree being the sign of the Adamic Covenant.) Most importantly we will focus on Christ and his work to bring about the “New Covenant in His Blood” and how the New Covenant connects to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Before we go into more detail on the covenants, let’s take time to define what a covenant is, especially in the context of the Biblical narrative. One definition of a Biblical Covenant by O. Palmer Robertson is; “a bond in blood sovereignly administered.” This definition highlights that God takes the initiative in the covenant relationship and that promises are made through the taking of oaths that are confirmed by the shedding of blood. Furthermore, the word used for making a covenant in the Old Testament means “to cut.” Cutting is related very closely with the concept of covenants. Animals were ritually cut in covenant ceremonies as in Genesis 15 and this symbolizes a pledge to the death. “The dis-membering of animals represents the curse that the covenant maker calls down on himself if he should violate the commitment which he has made.” - O. Palmer Robertson Finally, a covenant is also referred to as a “statute” or “fixed order”: Jer. 31:35, I Kings 11:11; II Kings 17:15; Ps. 50:16; 105:10. Jer. 31 and 33 also refer to God’s original covenant marked by “day” and “night” and “sun” and “moon.”

Again, a covenant is a bond in blood, a bond of life and death. Hebrews 9:22 - “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” And in Lev. 17:11 - “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.” The life is in the blood! Shedding of blood represents a judgment on life. Once the covenant relationship has been

entered, nothing less than the shedding of blood may relieve the obligations incurred in the event of covenantal violation. The representation of death by blood being shed is essential to the commencement of a covenant. It is in the context of the shedding of blood to establish covenants that the death of Jesus Christ is to be understood. Christ's death was a substitutionary sacrifice; Christ died as a substitute for the covenant breaker.

Although the covenants are initiated by God there is always a responsibility on the part of the human to uphold the covenant in order to receive the blessings and if that responsibility is not realized there is a curse. The element of the blessing and the curse can be seen in every covenant culminating with Christ receiving the ultimate punishment as he takes on the sins of the world and is crucified and bears the full wrath of God in our stead.

There are five key aspects of covenants: 1) covenants assume at least two separate parties; 2) covenants have conditions; 3) covenants have blessings and curses; 4) covenants operate on the basis of a representation principle so that the actions of the covenant representative affect others who are part of the covenant relationship. In every covenant this principle includes descendants. 5) covenants have signs that point to the blessings of the covenant relationship.

<b>Covenant</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Sign</b>
Adamic	Creation	Tree
Noahic	Preservation	Rainbow
Abrahamic	Promise	Circumcision
Mosaic	Law	Tablets
Davidic	Kingdom	Throne
New	Consummation	Communion & Baptism

The covenants of God with man extend from Adam to Noah then to Moses and through Israel's rise and fall then to the Messiah and finally the consummation of the age and the Kingdom of Heaven (the New Heaven and the New Earth): Jer. 31:31; Ezek. 37:2; Luke 22:20; II Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8; 9:15; 10:15-18; 12:24; Rev. 21:1.

**The Adamic Covenant: The Covenant of Creation (Sign: Tree)**

Gen. 2:15-17 - "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.'" There was a bond of life and death established by God with mankind at the very beginning of our existence. Gen. 3:7-24 gives us the sobering story of the impact of Adam and Eve's decision to break the covenant first established between them and God, the covenant in which God gave them free

reign with one solitary prohibition to not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This first covenant was a covenant based on trust and had one simple condition. It was up to Adam and Eve to obey God's command and the covenant of life and prosperity would be upheld.

But, as we all know, along came the serpent and the rest is history! Hos. 6:7 - "...like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me." Despite the fall of man there is still hope as God's perfect plan comes into focus in Gen. 3:15 - "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." God's covenant bond with fallen man resulted in life for the seed of the woman and ultimate death and destruction for the seed of Satan! God bound Himself to man in covenantal relationship. After man's fall into sin, the God of all creation graciously bound Himself to man again by committing to redeem a people to Himself from lost humanity. From creation to consummation the covenantal bond has determined the relation of God to His people. The extent of the Divine covenant reaches from the beginning of the world to the end of the age.

The Adamic Covenant is a test of man's willingness to choose obedience for the sake of obedience alone. The raw word of God in itself must become the basis of man's action. This is a most radical test of the original man's willingness to submit to the specific word of the Creator or not. The consequences of Adam and Eve breaking this first covenant through their sin of disobedience is staggering and far reaching. First, sin affected and infected all human nature. The Westminster Confession of Faith puts it this way: "By this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body." (6.2) As Paul says in Romans 1:21 - "for although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened." Sin darkened and distorted the hearts and minds of humanity. Sin also resulted in the death of the human body, Romans 6:23 - "The wages of sin is death." God had threatened Adam with that punishment for disobedience in Gen. 2:16-17 and it came to pass in Gen. 5:5 - "Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died."

Covenants are communal and generational so when our first parents revolted against the first covenant, that rebellion negatively impacted all of humanity from that point forward. In Eden, Adam was the covenant representative for all mankind. When he broke the covenant, he brought a curse down on all those he represented. Because of Adam's sin, all people are born sinners and are held accountable for Adam's original sin. As David tells us clearly in Psalm 51:5 - "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Mankind's relationship to everything around him and within him has been affected by sin. Man has been alienated from God; he hides from God because of shame and guilt. The man and woman have also been alienated from one another. Immediately after sinning, they both cover their nakedness. The coverings they manufacture are symbols of a breakdown of their unity. They even go further and blame shift upon being confronted by God; Adam blames Eve and Eve in turn blames the serpent. Because of

their great sin they are both driven from the garden and are thus alienated from their original, perfect physical environment. Paul is clear about the effects of sin on creation: “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” - Romans 8:20-21. Truly, the universe is now in an unending cycle of birth, growth, death and decay; nature itself is in a state of deterioration and decay.

Finally, mankind is alienated from eternal life as God banishes them from the garden (Gen. 3:20-24). God then sets two guardian angels at the eastern entrance of Eden so that mankind cannot re-enter and take from the Tree of Life. He not only posted the Cherubim at the entrance but also a rotating flaming sword to serve as a warning to mankind against attempting to return to the garden. Gen. 3:7-24 demonstrates that mankind’s violation of and disobedience to the covenant of works produces dire outcomes not only for themselves but for all reality and all humans that come after them.

**The Noahic Covenant: The Covenant of Preservation (Sign: Rainbow)**

There are two lineages stressed in Genesis; the line of Seth leading ultimately to the Messiah, and the line of the seed of the serpent (Cain) leading to destruction. The covenant with Noah appears in the context of the unfolding of these two lines and shows God’s attitude toward both. Total and absolute destruction shall be heaped on the seed of Satan, while free and unmerited grace shall be given to the seed of the woman. As we progress in our study of the Noahic covenant and the proceeding covenants between God and man, this theme will continue but not until the consummation of the age will we ever see it acted out to the degree it is manifested in the Noahic covenant through the flood and utter destruction of man and beast alike and the preservation of Noah, his family and selected animals. This is a prefigure of the final consummation when God will destroy Satan, his angels and demons and the rebellious humans who have refused God’s gift of salvation and instead chose to break the Covenant to satisfy their own desires.

There are primarily four passages that present the nature of the covenant established with Noah: Gen. 6:17-22; 8:20-22; 9:1-7; 9:8-17. The following characteristics can be noted based on these passages:

- 1) These passages show the interrelation of God’s original covenant with Adam and Noahic covenant. The Noahic covenant is a renewal of God’s original covenant and reflects much of the same language:

Description	Adamic Covenant	Noahic Covenant
“Birds, cattle and creeping things...”	Gen. 1:24,25	Gen. 6:20; 8:17
“Be fruitful and multiply...”	Gen 1:28	Gen. 9:1,7
“Subdue the earth...”	Gen. 1:28	Gen. 9:2

Since the same categories describing the universe are found in God's original ordering of the world (Gen. 1:20, 24-26, 28,30); God's covenant with Noah emphasizes that the present continuation of the order of creation rests on the covenantal word spoken to Noah. The covenant of God with man is essential not only to the universe but to the order of our very existence.

- 2) These passages show the particularity of God's redemptive grace. God showed grace to Noah and his family. Gen. 6:8 - "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." When describing God's response to fallen man, "grace" depicts a merciful attitude to an undeserving sinner. God extends His mercy to whom he chooses by His grace.
- 3) These passages show God's intention to deal with families in His covenantal relationships. Gen. 6:18 - "But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you" and Gen. 7:1 - "Then the Lord said to Noah, 'Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.'" Because Noah is righteous his entire family experiences deliverance from the flood.
- 4) This is a covenant of preservation. Gen. 8:21-22 - "And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.'" By this decree God binds Himself to preserve the earth in its present world-order until the time of the consummation. Although man is totally depraved, inclined toward self-destruction and worthy of judgment, God's grace and mercy determines to preserve the life of man and promotes the multiplication of his descendants. God's commitment to preserve man subsequent to the flood also becomes evident in Gen. 9:3 - "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything." [ADDITIONAL NOTE: The regularity of the seasons derives directly from God's determination to preserve the earth until deliverance from sin can be accomplished.]
- 5) This covenant possesses a universal aspect; the whole of the created universe including the totality of humanity, benefits from the covenant. Gen. 9:9-10 - "And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth." Every living creature lives under the sign of the rainbow. And as we see in Rom. 8:22 - " For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now" - not only man, but the entire universe shall experience ultimate deliverance from the curse. God desires to make known the testimony of His goodness throughout the universe. The world-wide scope of the testimony of creation provides the foundation for the universal proclamation of the Gospel. By the provisions of the Noahic

covenant God committed Himself to a course of universal testimony... 1 Tim. 2:3,4 - "...This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

- 6) The seal of the Noahic covenant emphasizes the gracious character of this covenant. Rev. 4:3 - "And He who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald." The throne of God also has a rainbow around it, surely this is not a coincidence! From the covenant with Noah it becomes quite obvious that God's being "with us" involves not only an outpouring of His grace on His people, it involves also an outpouring of His wrath on the seed of Satan. This latter part is what most Christians (at least in America) like to avoid and instead the focus is on God's grace. Certainly, God's grace is a wonderful thing and something we should magnify yet we need to remember the terrible aspect of God's covenant with man and that is that death is the only final outcome for those who continually break the covenant with God.

### **The Abrahamic Covenant: Covenant of Promise (Sign: Circumcision)**

Gen. 12:1 - "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'" The Lord sovereignly dictates the terms of His covenant with Abraham. This is not an agreement or contract that can be negotiated. God is making it abundantly clear to Abraham that he has been chosen by God and as we proceed in Genesis the covenant God is making with him becomes clear.

We must take a step back and look at the context of chapter 12 in Genesis. The previous chapter is the infamous Tower of Babel story in which Nimrod incited a world-wide rebellion against God in seeking to "build a tower to heaven," a plan which was thwarted by God ushering in confusion by scrambling man's language and dispersing the people far and wide (as He had originally commanded them to do). There is evidence in other portions of scripture that God divided the nations and allotted rulers (some say angelic, others say human) but chose Israel as His own. It is directly after this dividing of the nations that God calls out Abraham and begins to establish His covenant with him.

In Gen. 15:5-8 "And He brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then He said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' And he (Abraham) believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness. And He said to him, 'I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.' But he said, 'O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?'" Here God begins to establish His covenant with Abraham and Abraham expresses his wish to be certain of God's covenant.

In Gen. 15:8-20 God responds by instructing Abraham to carry out a traditional "cutting" of the covenant ceremony in which the animals were cut in two and Abraham falls into a deep sleep and God Himself walks between the animals effectively sealing His covenant with Abraham. By dividing animals and passing between the pieces, participants in a covenant pledged themselves to life and death. These

actions established an oath of self-malediction. If they should break the commitment involved in the covenant, they were asking that their own bodies be torn in pieces just as the animals had been divided ceremonially.

By the inherent pledge to death of the covenant procedure, a “bond in blood” is established. Both parties of the covenant commit themselves for life and for death in the covenantal relationship. “In the case of the Abrahamic covenant, God the Creator binds himself to man the creature by a solemn blood-oath. The Almighty chooses to commit himself to the fulfillment of promises spoken to Abraham. By this divine commitment, Abraham’s doubts are to be expelled. God has solemnly promised, and has sealed that promise with a self-maledictory oath! The realization of the divine word is assured to Abraham.” (Robertson, O. Palmer, The Christ of the Covenants. p. 139)

It is important to recognize that the covenants have both a blessing and a curse. God makes it abundantly clear through His prophets that Israel will pay a severe penalty of death and destruction if they do not hold up to their end of the covenant. We see this clearly in Jeremiah 34. In the beginning of the chapter God proclaims that Judah will be overtaken by Babylon so the people repent and re-affirm the Mosaic covenant by setting the slaves free but then shortly thereafter they reclaim the slaves. God declares His righteous anger and the punishment for not following through with the covenant oath in Jer. 34:17-22:

“Therefore, thus says the Lord: You have not obeyed me by proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and to his neighbor; behold, I proclaim to you liberty to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine, declares the Lord. I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts - the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf. And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth. And Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials I will give into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives, into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon which has withdrawn from you. Behold, I will command, declares the Lord, and will bring them back to this city. And they will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire. I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.” Here God references the original Abrahamic covenant and declaring the curse on Judah for breaking not only the Mosaic covenant but also the Abrahamic covenant.

We have seen the importance of the blood ceremony of “passing between the pieces” but there is another important aspect of the Abrahamic covenant; that is the seal of this covenant, which is circumcision. This seal is to be a permanent sign to remind God’s chosen people of the surety of the covenant promises. This demand of God to Abraham is seen in Gen. 17:1-14. In verses 1 through 9, God renews His promises to Abraham and also changes his name from Abram to Abraham. Then from verses 10 through 14 God initiates the seal of circumcision as a requirement for all the descendants of

Abraham. In verse 13b God says, "My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." Not only is the seal a requirement of the covenant, the seal is the covenant! In v. 11: "It shall be for a sign of the covenant," A sign gives a witness. It testifies to the reality of the relationship that has been established, it is a perpetual witness to the reality of the covenantal bond. And in v. 12b - "The one who is born in your house and the one bought from any stranger which is not of your seed shall be circumcised." From the day of its original inception as a covenant sign, circumcision was open to the Gentiles. It was not intended exclusively as a racial badge and this also shows that God's covenants have always been open to the entire human race.

The following point may be emphasized in respect to the importance of circumcision:

- Circumcision symbolizes inclusion in the covenant community established by the initiative of God's grace.
- Circumcision indicated the need for cleansing as it symbolized the purification necessary for the establishment of a covenant relation between a holy God and an unholy people.
- Not only does circumcision indicate that man by nature is impure, it also represents the removal of defilement essential for the achievement of purity.
- The "cutting away" of a natural part of the human body as a symbol of religious cleansing suggests the necessity of the execution of judgment as an act essential for purification.
- Circumcision reiterates the importance of the propagation of the race as it has to do with the male reproductive organ. It also implies that the race is sinful and in need of cleansing. Sin is not merely a matter of the individual but of the race. From the point of its original institution, circumcision implies the guilt of the human race.

God's intention from the beginning by the rite of circumcision was to symbolize the inner purification necessary for the establishment of a proper relation between the holy Creator and the unholy creature. By the rite of circumcision men were identified before the world as God's holy people.

In Ex. 12:43-49 requirements are presented that non-Israelites must be circumcised to participate in the Passover. Any Gentile might participate in the highest privilege of Judaism, if he should indicate a willingness to meet the same requirement laid on the Jew. The circumcised Gentile "becomes an Israelite." Since this is the case "Israel" cannot be defined simply in terms of racial distinctives. This participation in the Passover on the part of the circumcised Gentile cannot be reduced merely to involvement in an ethnic or national experience. Communion with God and His people in so rich a context requires appropriate preparation. The Gentile and Jew alike must be circumcised in advance of this privilege. He must receive the cleansing from the defilement of his sinful condition.

There is also a metaphorical/spiritual component of the seal of circumcision that points to the New Covenant. In Jer. 4:4, the men of Judah are admonished to circumcise themselves before the Lord, and to remove the foreskins of their hearts. They are already Israelites and have been physically circumcised but the transformation of their lives from unrighteousness to righteousness has not been accomplished. The essence of the purification symbolized by circumcision must also be realized in their



lives. The seal of the Abrahamic covenant is finally fulfilled in the New Testament in a symbolic way in the life of the New Covenant believers. It is significant to note that Jesus, who did not require purification, was also circumcised. His cleansing is not for His own sake, but for the sake of the sinful people He has come to save!

The formal rite of circumcision ends with the advent of the Holy Spirit who enters both Jew and Gentile, circumcised and uncircumcised alike. Acts 10:44-48 - "And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 'Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." In Acts 15:8-9 - "And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith." Again in Gal. 5:2 - "If you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you." There can be no question that the formal rite of circumcision has come to its end so far as its significance for redemption is concerned.

Although the formal rite has been abolished, the reality of cleaning from impurity and incorporation into the covenant community symbolized by circumcision certainly has significance for the New Covenant believer. As we see in Romans 4:3 and 9 - "For what does Scripture say? 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to Him as righteousness.' ... and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them..." The circumcision-symbol of the Old Covenant is related to the essence of the Old Covenant. Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of faith and in like manner only the true circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit accomplishes the cleansing which is sufficient to make a man acceptable to God. Rom. 2:28,29 - "For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God." Finally, in Phil. 3:3 Paul goes so far as to say that "we are the circumcision... for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh..." He finishes the statement with, "...put no confidence in the flesh," reiterating that the old physical circumcision rite is no longer the sign of the covenant relationship between God and man.

Since the physical rite has passed away a new seal is required. This new seal is to be applied to the believer's heart by the Holy Spirit: II Cor. 1:22 - "and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" ; Eph. 1:13 - "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit..." ; Eph. 4:30 - "...and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." The application of the same terminology to circumcision and spirit-possession binds the two concepts together. THE COVENANT RITUAL OF SEALING FINDS ITS FULFILLMENT IN THE NEW COVENANT REALITY OF SEALING!

### **The Mosaic Covenant: The Covenant of Law (Sign: Tablets of the Law)**

The covenant established with Moses on Mount Sinai is not meant to annul or replace the previous covenants. It is clear throughout the scriptures that all God's covenants are established for all time and do not expire nor are they replaced or annulled. That being said, the Mosaic Covenant is an advancement beyond all that preceded it. By presenting a summation of the will of God; the Mosaic Covenant advances the purpose of God's plan for His people. There are four primary ways in which the Mosaic Covenant advances God's plan and further reveals His will:

- 1) God previously dealt with man at the level of a family in Adam, Noah and Abraham. With Moses and the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, God is now covenanting with a nation. Such a national covenant would be impossible without externally codified law. Ex. 19:5,6 - "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." Essential to God making the nation of Israel His own was the definitive revelation of His will for the conduct of His people in the form of the law.
- 2) The Covenant of Law represents an advancement in the comprehensiveness of the revelation of God's will. The "ten words" (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13) contain a complete summation of the will of God. Since sin will always be present in the life of God's people until the consummation it is far better for the people of God to be fully aware of the precise nature of their particular sin rather than continuing to sin in ignorance. God's law serves as an essential tool in making His people understand the nature of their sin.
- 3) The Covenant of Law humbles us and prepares us for the riches of Christ's grace in the New Covenant. In Gal. 3:19 Paul notes that the law was added "because of transgressions, until the seed should come..." As a revealer of sin, the law supplies a vital service to the Abrahamic covenant of promise. By revealing man's inadequacy to establish righteousness by law-keeping, the Mosaic Covenant has contributed to the cause of redemptive grace.
- 4) The Covenant of Law establishes the pattern of life desired for God's people. They are to be characterized by a life that reflects the holiness of the God of the covenant.

Although the Mosaic is an advancement over the previous covenants, it reveals much less of the truth of God than the Davidic or the New Covenant. With the anointing of David, law began to be administered in Israel by the "man after God's own heart." The localization of God's throne in the Temple at Jerusalem also represents an advancement beyond the preceding revelations of God's law in Israel. The mobile sanctuary of Moses was replaced by a more stabilized situation. Under David, God's rule in righteousness was established in permanency. The New Covenant takes this progression to its conclusion by establishing the law in the heart of man through the cross work of Jesus Christ. This is

prophesied by Jeremiah in Jer. 31:33-34 - "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." The Mosaic Covenant's writing on tables of stone cannot compare with the glories of the New Covenant.

We see additional evidence of the superiority of the New Covenant over the Covenant of Law in II Cor. 3. In this passage Paul shows three symbols which appeared in connection with the institution of the Mosaic covenant and each of these symbols embodies a primary truth concerning the Old Covenant, and at the same time provides a basis of comparison with the New Covenant:

- 1) The symbol of the glory of Moses' face in II Cor. 3:7 - "... so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face ..." The fact that Moses' face radiated the glory of God at the time of the giving of the law clearly symbolized the greatness of the Old Covenant. Paul, however, proceeds to point out that the glory of the New Covenant exceeds the glory of the Old Covenant. II Cor. 3:10 - "Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it." Although the Old Covenant had its glory, it could not be compared to the glory of the New Covenant.
- 2) The symbol of the fading of the glory of Moses' face. In II Cor. 3:7,13, Paul notes that the glory of Moses' face faded. In II Cor. 3:11 Paul compares the fading of the glory of Moses' face to the fading of the entire Mosaic Covenant of the Law. This fading character of the Mosaic administration contrasts with the permanence of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is "that which remains" (II Cor. 3:11).
- 3) The symbol of the veiling of Moses' face. II Cor. 3:12-15 - "Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the Old Covenant, that same veil remains un-lifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts." A veil keeps something from being revealed. What does this symbolic veil of Moses keep from being revealed to Israel even today? This is answered in v. 14: "The same veil remains, it not being revealed ... that it (the old administration of the law) is done away in Christ." Judaism rightly understood the glory of the Old Covenant but it did not (and does not) grasp the fading character of its glory. They could not see the fulfillment of the law as it was to be realized in Christ. Even today, this same veil remains. Whenever Moses is read, Israel is blind to the transitoriness of the law (II Cor. 3:15). They are so impressed with the glories of the revelation of God's law that they have become blinded to the temporary character of the Mosaic administration of law.

The participant of the New Covenant passes from glory to glory. Because the Lord, who is the Spirit, lives within the believer, His glory never fades. The Old Covenant may have come with glory, but its fading glory does not compare to the eternal glory of the New Covenant. The Covenant of Law finds its consummation in Jesus Christ. According to Matt. 5:17, Christ indicated that He did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. By His coming He consummated all of God's purposes in the giving of the law.

In Summary, the Mosaic Covenant brought additional revelation concerning God:

- God is holy, He cannot be approached without a mediator. God's holiness is also seen in that He demands moral uprightness by His people and gives them a moral code by which to live.
- God is immanent in that He cares for His people and dwells with them.
- Blood is important in the worship of a holy God. Blood is necessary as an expiation (atonement) of sin, and without blood it is impossible to approach God.
- The mediatorial work of the Levitical priesthood points ahead to the Mediator who will once for all reconcile sinful man to a holy God.
- God has covenanted Himself to a special people, Israel. In the Old Testament era God rules over Israel in this prototypical kingdom through established mediators.

(Source: The Moody Handbook of Theology, pg. 63)

### **The Davidic Covenant: The Covenant of the Kingdom (Sign: Throne)**

It is in this covenant that God's purposes to redeem a people to Himself is revealed so far as the Old Testament is concerned. Under David the kingdom finally arrives as God formally establishes the manner by which He shall rule among His people. God firmly establishes His throne in a single locality in Jerusalem. God Himself associates His Kingship with the throne of David in Ps. 78:60-72. God's covenant with David centers on the coming of the Kingdom of God and the Everlasting Covenant and serves as the body by which God's Kingdom arrives among His people. This covenant is the prototype for the New Heavens and New Earth promised at the consummation of the age. (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1)

To initiate the Davidic Covenant three major events take place in II Sam chapter 5 through 7:

- 1) David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites and established the permanent locality of the throne (II Sam. 5). David had ruled from Hebron for 7 years but then he moved to capture Jerusalem, a city not yet taken by Israel, and more centralized with respect to the whole nation of Israel.
- 2) David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6). In so doing, he publicly displayed his desire to see his own rule in Israel related immediately to the throne of God. This was the fullest expression possible of the concept of the theocracy.
- 3) God gave David rest from all his enemies in II Sam. 7:1 - "Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies." For the first time Israel had become secure as a national entity.

“Now the context is prepared for the formal inauguration of the Davidic Covenant. The interconnection between David’s throne and God’s throne, between David’s son and God’s son finds an appropriate framework in this historical context. A situation of rest from oppressing enemies anticipates appropriately the eschatological Kingdom of Peace (Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God).” (Robertson, O. Palmer, The Christ of the Covenants. p. 231)

As we study the covenants, we see how God chooses to identify Himself with His people. II Sam. 7:6 - “I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling,” and I Chron. 17:5 - “ For I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up Israel to this day, but I have gone from tent to tent and from dwelling to dwelling” show us how God relates to His chosen people. While the people of the covenant lived a vagabond life, traveling from one temporary dwelling to another, the God of the covenant displayed His readiness to travel with them. As the Israelites become established under the kingship of David it becomes apparent that their days as sojourners are over.

In II Sam. chapter 7, David proposes to Yahweh that he would like to make a house (temple) for His Lord. Yahweh responds and denies David’s request. Instead, He announces to David that He is going to make an eternal dynasty of David’s bloodline, a dynasty that we now know produced the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus Christ. II Sam 7:11b - 16 - “And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, 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 to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”

“The relationship between the kingdom, the temple and this son born to David is important. David, the man of war, is not allowed to build the temple, which is reserved for his son, Solomon, the man of peace. The early reign of Solomon reflects this peace, which is the proper setting for the building of the temple, because the temple, as the symbolic representation of the kingdom, is to correspond to the nature of that kingdom (the Kingdom of God). God grants this peace by His grace in first establishing David’s dynasty and then allowing that dynasty to establish the Lord’s temple. This binds David’s rule to God’s rule and vice versa. God will maintain His permanent dwelling place as King in Israel through the kingship of the Davidic line.” - (Belcher, Richard P. Jr. Covenant Theology. Pg. 176) We see the connection between “dynasty” and “dwelling-place;” although, it is David who offers to make a dwelling place for the Lord, it is God who build’s David’s “house,” his dynasty, and it is the dynasty that God would use through Solomon to build the Temple. Again, God shows His grace and mercy, infinite wisdom and perfect timing through the covenantal relationship He enjoys with His people.

Perhaps, the most striking aspect of all in the Davidic Covenant is the establishment of God's throne through the line of David. I Chron. 29:22 - "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king..." The throne of David's descendants is nothing less than the throne of God itself. Here is where we begin to see the connection between earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Zion, the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of Heaven. In God's perfect plan of redemption we see a progression that started with the fall and the Adamic Covenant through the destruction of the flood and the establishment of the Noahic Covenant, then to the fall of Babel and God choosing Israel to be His own through Abraham's descendants to the revealing of the law through Moses and finally with the establishment of God's throne on earth in Jerusalem as well as the promise of the Messiah through the dynasty of David! The Davidic Covenant is the culmination of all the Old Testament covenants and sets the stage for the New Covenant - the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. He shall sit on the throne of David forever; He shall rule the whole world in righteousness at the culmination of the age!

### **The New Covenant: Covenant of Consummation**

Although Israel failed to uphold their responsibilities to God as part of the covenant, the Lord God of Israel would not fail in His purpose to establish a great people and a great nation to glorify His name. The Lord's ultimate intention to redeem a people to Himself would come to pass regardless of the failure of the Israelite nation. Towards the end of Israel's Old Testament existence, the prophets spoke frequently of a return to the land of promise, of a restoration of acceptable worship and of a renewal of the Messianic line. There was much anticipation of a New Covenant relationship between God and man. This New Covenant is embodied by and in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who came as the culmination of the covenant journey of redemption.

After the exile of the Israelites due to their failure to abide by the covenant responsibilities, a remnant returned to the promised land to attempt to rebuild the former glorious Temple and re-establish the once mighty people of God. But the returning contingent was merely a shadow of what it once was and the older members literally cried in grief when the 2nd Temple foundation was laid (Ezra 3:10-13). Because of numerous prophecies of a Messiah coming to restore Israel's former glory (Is. 9:6-7; 11:1,10) the people were in anticipation of a returning king who would be a warrior throwing off the bondage of the various masters under which the Jewish people served. The people of Israel watched and waited for their deliverer. This helps to put in context the fervor of the people during John the Baptist's ministry and then the incredible excitement as Jesus was baptized and then began His ministry of preaching and healing. The people and especially the religious zealots were looking for a king to lead them against the oppression of Rome.

You can imagine the confusion as Jesus began to teach a different doctrine of the kingdom, a doctrine which He called the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God:

**Matthew 6:33** - "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

**Romans 14:17** - "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

**John 18:36** - "Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.'"

**Mark 1:15** - "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

**Luke 17:20-21** - "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

**Mark 9:1** - "And he said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'"

**Matthew 5:3** - "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

**John 3:5** - "Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

**Matthew 4:23** - "And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people."

**Matthew 13:11** - "And he answered them, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.'"

**John 3:3** - "Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"

**Matthew 19:14** - "But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

**Matthew 13:33** - "He told them another parable. 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three me.'"

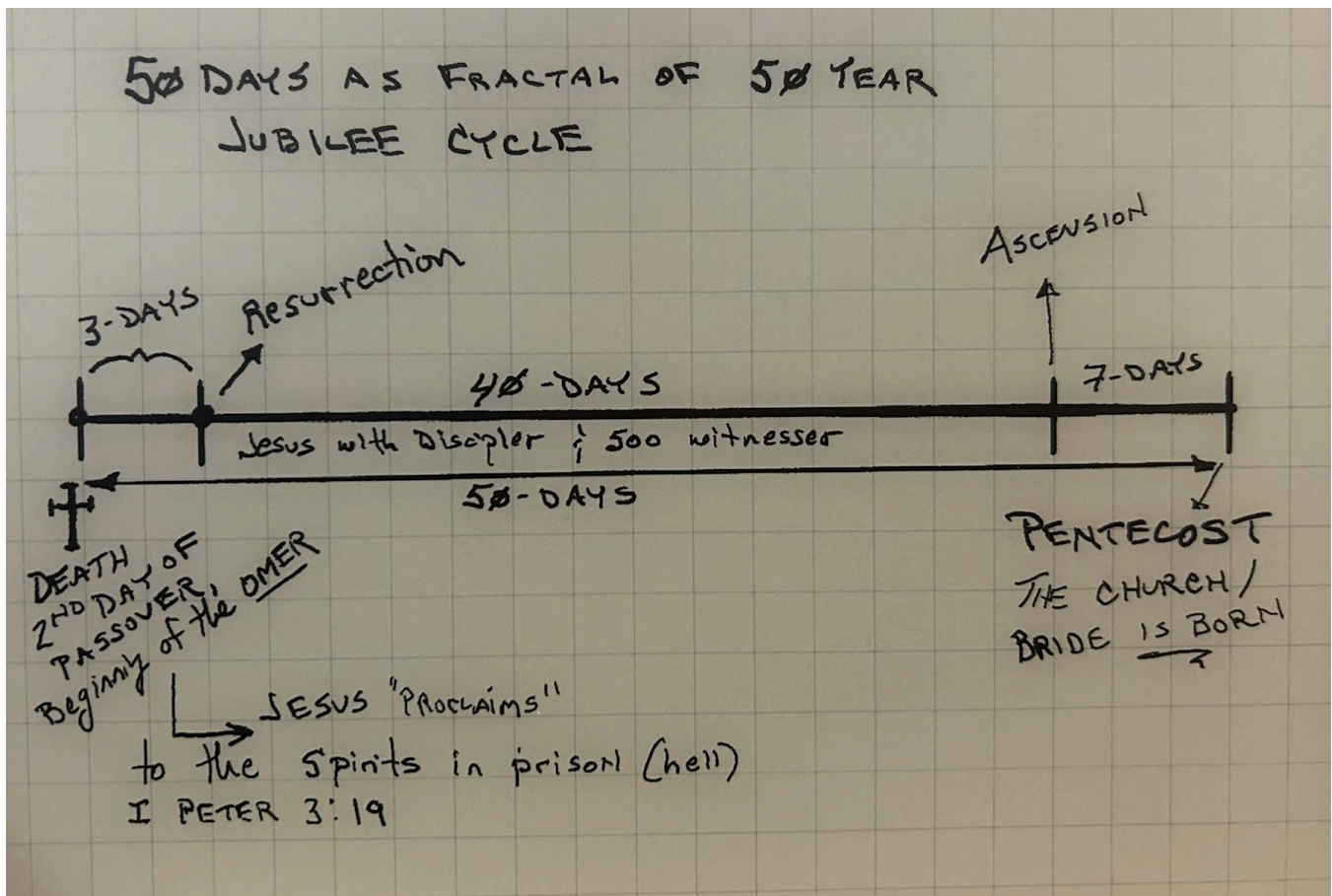
**Mark 4:30-32** - "And he said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'"

As we see by these verses, Jesus had no interest in conquering Rome, He was laser focused on teaching and proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven and its mysteries to those whose eyes and ears had been opened. Why is this relevant to our current study of the covenants? The covenants between God and man have always been about the Kingdom of Heaven and the redemption of man. The entire Bible is the story of God's love for His people and how that has played out and will continue to play out until the fulfillment of time at the end of the age.

"It is finished!" As Jesus breathed His last and uttered this timeless cry we must wonder, what is finished? There are many possible answers and one of them is the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant. The ongoing sacrifices are no longer needed, Jesus Himself was the last legitimate sacrifice. The Old Covenant had been fulfilled and now the New Covenant has been ratified with the very blood of the Savior: "This is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:20; I Cor. 11:25) What was the purpose of the covenant in the first place? To reconcile man with God, giving man a path back to being in God's presence as he was in Eden before the fall. Although man sinned, God in His infinite grace and mercy provided a way of redemption through His covenants culminating with the arrival of the long-prophesied Messiah and His death on the cross.

Christ announced to His disciples the evening before His crucifixion that He was initiating a new and better covenant, an "everlasting covenant", which is the "covenant in My blood." This New Covenant was sealed less than 24 hours later as our Lord and Savior was crucified, His blood being shed as a propitiation for the sins of man and the ultimate (and final) sacrifice opening the path to reconciliation between God and man. As Jesus died - immediately after proclaiming, "It is finished" - the curtain in the Temple was torn from top to bottom, further ratifying the New Covenant and symbolizing the completion of the Old Covenant sacrificial system and ending for all time the divide between God and man. The final inception of the New Covenant takes place 50 days after Jesus' death and 7 days after the ascension, at Pentecost when the church is born and the new relationship between God and man is realized with the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.





The church or Bride of Christ is born and has been living out the “last days” ever since as we await the final consummation of the age with the return of Jesus as conqueror and judge. Just as the Old Covenant was between God and His chosen people so the New Covenant remains between God and His chosen people. The major difference - we now have the full revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and although we still “see in a mirror dimly,” we have full access to God through the Holy Spirit and by the work of Christ on the cross. This is the beauty and wonder of the New Covenant!

### The Unity of Divine Covenants

The first covenant describes God’s relation to man before the fall and serves as the prototype for the following six covenants, the final being the New Covenant of Christ’s blood sacrifice leading to the possibility of mankind re-entering the heavenly state that was originally experienced in Eden:

- 1) God with Adam/mankind before the fall. Sign: Sun & Moon/Day & Night (the natural order of creation)

The following five covenants describe God’s relationship to His people after the fall:

- 2) God with Adam/mankind after the fall. Sign: Seed & Serpent (the prophecy of the advent of Christ, the ultimate destruction of Satan and the consummation of the age leading to a New Heaven and a New Earth: The Kingdom of God)
- 3) God with Noah. Sign: The Rainbow (a covenant of preservation)

- 4) God with Abraham. Sign: Circumcision (a covenant of promise)
- 5) God with Moses. Sign: Tablets of the Law (a covenant of the law)
- 6) God with David. Sign: Crown, scepter and the Temple (a covenant of the kingdom)

With the incarnation of Christ, the older covenants find their consummation. Christ's ministry, death, resurrection and ascension leads to the seal of the Holy Spirit being given to all the redeemed and the Bride of Christ inherits the covenantal blessings that culminate during the second coming and the initiation of the Kingdom of Heaven at the end of this age:

- 7) Christ with the Bride: The Lord's Supper and Baptism (a covenant of consummation)

Obedience is the keynote of all the covenants. Adam through his disobedience loses the blessings of the original covenant and Christ through his obedience restores the blessing to the redeemed (Rom. 5:18,19). Noah, Abraham, Moses and David are called to obey the word of the Lord and in so doing were used to establish each successive covenant between God and man. None of these men were perfect in their obedience but they did follow God's instructions in establishing the covenants. Only Jesus displayed perfect obedience leading to the fulfillment of the covenantal promises and the advent of the Kingdom of Heaven prepared for the Bride of Christ.

As we look at the progression of the various covenants between God and man we notice an element of newness that emerges each time the Lord constitutes a distinct relationship to His people. The questions arise: "Is there some underlying unity binding together the covenants? Does each successive covenant replace the prior covenant(s) or do they build upon each other? The evidence of Scripture points to a unified character of the Divine covenants. God's multiple covenant bonds with His people ultimately unite into a single relationship. The covenants of God are ONE! How?

Starting with the unity of the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants, each successive covenant builds on the previous relationship, continuing the basic emphasis which has been established earlier. The unity is seen with Abraham's descendants advancing the original purposes of God to a higher level of realization. For example, God delivers Israel from bondage and brings them to the land of promise as a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham in Ex. 6:4-8 - "I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.'"

In Ex. 24:4 - "And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel." Moses builds an altar with 12 pillars for the 12 tribes of Israel. In Exodus 32:13,14 when the people worship the

calf Moses pleads for God to remember His covenant with Abraham and not destroy the Israelites for their rebellion. In Gen. 15:13,14,18 Abraham is told it will be 400 years before the promise of the covenant is realized. In I Kings 2:3 - "... and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn." David references the covenant with Moses. And in II Kings 17:13 - "Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.'" Under the Davidic covenant, Israel was still judged according to the Mosaic covenant. David sings of God's covenant with Abraham and Moses in I Chron. 16:15-18 - "Remember his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan, as your portion for an inheritance.'"

The Mosaic covenant did not annul or interrupt the Abrahamic covenant. The Abrahamic covenant continued to function actively after the institution of the Mosaic covenant. The Davidic covenant did not annul or interrupt the Mosaic covenant. His triumphs and tragedies are an outworking of the stipulations of the Mosaic covenant. The covenant of God to redeem a remnant to Himself is indeed a unified whole.

The "grafting" of the people of God also points to a unified covenant between God and man enduring through the ages. Gen. 17:12 - "He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring..." Here the in-grafting of those not born into the covenant is made possible. People of any nation could become Israelites in the fullest sense! Any definition of the Biblical significance of "Israel" must not fail to include this dimension. "Israel" cannot be restricted in its essence to an ethnic community. Israel must include the proselyte who does not belong to "Israel" according to the flesh, but is absorbed into Israel by the process of in-grafting. This is confirmed in the New Testament in passages such as 1 Tim 2:4 - "... (God) who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." and Romans 11:17,19 - "But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree... then you will say, 'Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.'" And in Gal. 3:29 - "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." By the process of "in-grafting" Gentiles become an "Israelite" in the fullest possible sense.

We have looked at the unity that is evident from the Scriptures in the Old Testament but does this same unity continue into the New Testament? The New Covenant is not a distinct, unrelated covenant rather it is the fulfillment of the earlier covenants. Jer. 31:31-33 - "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this

is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” This clearly relates the new covenant to its predecessors. The Law of God (Mosaic Covenant) will be written on the heart! The form has changed (from tablets of stone to hearts of flesh) but the essence remains the same.

In Jeremiah 32:39-41 God relates this New Covenant to the Abrahamic Covenant. And in Ezek. 34:20,23,24 the New Covenant is related to previous covenants including the Davidic Covenant: “I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken.” Then in Ezek. 37:24-26 the New Covenant is related to the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic Covenants: “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. (*Davidic*) They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. (*Mosaic*) They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, (*Abrahamic*) and David my servant shall be their prince forever (*Davidic and New Covenant*). I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. (*New Covenant*) And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore (*Abrahamic and New Covenant*).” The ancient covenants combine into a single divine ordering. By the New Covenant, all the promises of God find their consummation.

It is not until the advent of Christ that the Old Testament covenants are finally brought to fruition. Jesus Christ formally initiates the New Covenant at the Lord's Supper in Luke 22:20 - “And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’” No longer is the covenant a promise to be anticipated but a reality to be enjoyed! This is the commencement of the Kingdom of Heaven, although it will not be fully realized until the Kingdom of God is re-established in the New Heavens and the New Earth promised to the redeemed in Isaiah 65:17 - “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” And in Rev. 21:1 - “Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.”

It is so important to remember that we celebrate the New Covenant and the coming Kingdom of God (the New Heaven and the New Earth) every time we participate in communion. I Cor. 11:25 - “In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’” Not only are we remembering the salvific work Christ accomplished on the cross by the shedding of His precious blood but we are also remembering the everlasting covenant God has established with His redeemed. Isaiah 59:21 - “‘And as for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the Lord: ‘My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,’ says the Lord, ‘*from this time forth and forevermore.*’” And again, in Psalm

105:8-10 - "He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant..." and Duet. 7:9 - "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations."

It may be concluded that the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants find fulfillment in the reality of the New Covenant of the present day; God's covenants throughout the ages are ONE!

Not only is there an underlying structural unity, as we have just witnessed, there is a *thematic unity*. The overarching theme of the covenants of God are, "I shall be your God, and you shall be my people," otherwise known as the "Immanuel Principle" of the unity of the covenants: "God with us." ***The very purpose of God's covenant with man consists of God's intention to make a people to be His own.*** Ultimately, God dwells with His people, and He moves from the tabernacle to the temple and finally to the City of God, the New Heaven and the New Earth, the Kingdom of God! His dwelling in our midst seals the fact that He shall be our God and we shall be His people.

Ezek. 34:24 - "And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken." As the "covenantal representative" David substitutes for the whole of the people. Because he belongs to the Lord, all the people belong to the Lord. He is a pre-figure of Christ. This theme, "I am your God, and you are My people," reaches its climax through its embodiment in a single person, Jesus Christ. The anticipation of the future focuses on a single individual who shall embody in Himself the essence of the covenant, while at the same time functioning as the Messianic Head. (Robertson, p. 51) He fulfills this role or embodiment of the covenant through suffering on behalf of others. He is God's special instrument, appointed to be in Himself a covenant to the people, and a light to the Nations." Isaiah 42:6; 49:8; 55:3,4. In this single person, Jesus Christ, all God's purposes find climatic fulfillment. ***He is the head of God's Kingdom and the embodiment of God's covenant.*** Because all the hope for redemption converges on Christ, He becomes the unifying focus of all scripture. Both Kingdom and Covenant unite under Immanuel. "... this is My blood of the Covenant." - Matt. 26:28, Luke 22:20 "As Kingly Covenant mediator, He does not administer merely the law of the Kingdom. It is Himself that He administers to the people." (Robertson, O. Palmer. The Christ of the Covenant, p. 52)

In the person of Jesus Christ, the Covenants of God achieve unity. Because Jesus, as Son of God; mediator of the Covenant, cannot be divided, the covenants cannot be divided. He Himself guarantees the unity of the covenants, because He Himself is the heart of each of the various covenants. The coming of Christ, and His position as the object of our faith, has altered the entire course of history. God's dealings with men cannot return to the old patterns once Christ has come. We see in Gal. 3:8 - "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.'" It is along with Abraham the believer that the Christian today can claim the blessings of the covenants. From one perspective there

is an absolute antithesis between the periods of history before and after Christ but from another perspective a single way of salvation always has been present.

### **Conclusion: Christ's Proclamation of Victory**

**I Peter 3:18-22** - "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."

The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Peter, gives us much food for thought in this passage! It begins with a proclamation of the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, and as we have seen this is the culmination of 4,000 years of a covenantal relationship between God and His people beginning with the fall of Adam and the first blood sacrifice (the animal slain to provide the clothing as covering of Adam and Eve's shame) and finishing with the final blood sacrifice of the Lamb of God. We are then confronted with a strange statement: "... in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison..." What are we to make of this statement and how does it relate to the covenants we have been studying?

To better understand, we must look at the context; not only at this verse but at the time in which Peter was writing and at other clues given to us in Genesis, 2 Peter and Jude. In Genesis 6:4 we have one of the strangest verses in the entire Bible - "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God (*Benei Elohim*) came into the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown." Who are these Nephilim and what do they have to do with I Peter 3:18? For further clarity, we have to go to 2 Peter 2:4-6 - "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly..." and Jude 6 - "And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day..."

To bring it all together, we must go back to Adam and Eve in the garden and there we see the master manipulator and deceiver, Satan aka Lucifer. It was his cunning and deception that led Adam and Eve towards disobedience and the necessity for the blood covenants that were to follow. Shortly thereafter, God proclaims a curse on Satan and a prophecy of the coming Messiah who would crush the head of the serpent and from that point it was all out war as Satan knew his time was limited and he must do everything in his power to stop the Messiah from coming to crush him. We see throughout the

Scriptures the two-pronged attack that Satan employs - attempting to destroy the bloodline of Seth that was designated to produce the promised one and an attempt to pollute the race of mankind. But all to no avail!

We see repeatedly in the scriptures Satan's attempts are thwarted and God always prevails. Finally, we return to our passage and ask once again, what does this have to do with the covenant between God and man? As Jesus speaks His final words on the cross, "...it is finished!" and breaths His last He is not dragged down into the depths of hell by the minions of Satan, as some would have us believe... No! He enters hell as a victorious conquering Savior of the chosen sons of God and proclaims (Greek work *kérussó*) His victory to those very fallen angels who did all in their power to stop the Lord of Hosts, the King of kings, the Prince of peace from fulfilling His blood covenant with man and offering redemption to those who would receive. It was a victory parade in power and might into the very depths of hell and then to resurrect, ascend and sit at the right hand of God the Father "with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him." This is the glorious hope we have as sons and daughters of God that has been given to us through the Covenant of the Lamb, the Everlasting Covenant that was established before the foundation of the world...

**1 Peter 1:3-5; 10-12; 15-21** - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ... Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look... but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **but with the precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. **He was foreknown before the foundation of the world** but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." Amen.

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