



Promised Redemption

A 10-week Study of the Biblical Covenants

2011 Summer Staff
Bible Study



PINE
COVE



Dear Summer Staff:

It's a shame that we can tell a story about something amazing that happened to us while playing a game of ultimate Frisbee, but when we share the story of the Gospel we stumble over our words, stare at the ground, and muddy it over with clichés. The story of redemption is one that needs to be told! It needs to be told completely, accurately, and with conviction.

Hopefully throughout the course of studying the Biblical covenants this summer you will be better able to formulate the parts of that story so that you can tell it not just to your campers, but to your families, classmates and communities.

Remember, don't be the end user of this study. Re-invest what you have learned into the lives of the people you minister to back at home and school. It will not only be a blessing to those whom you choose to spend time with, it will further cement what you have learned this summer.

And don't forget – not only do you have the notes to this study, you also have access to the audio recordings as well! If you're not already subscribed to the podcast, you can find the feed and download the episodes by visiting the summer staff blog at www.pinecove.com/staffblog. There you can find the audio file for each week as well as the link to the podcast feed on iTunes.

I'll look forward to next summer when we'll get to do this all over again! In the meantime, don't forget about the opportunity you have at the Forge. If you are interested in applying, please give me a call – I'd love to speak with you about it.

Grace and peace be with you,

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Instructions for Teachers & Bibliography

How To Use This Study:

- Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the Text. These notes assume that you are already familiar with the passages being studied, so don't expect to be able to sit down with the note pack and easily walk through the study without a little prep work on your part.
- Step 2: Decide which parts of the passage are the ones you want to focus on. These lessons are NOT designed to teach the lesson for you. You have more things to teach here than you could/should possibly teach in a 30-45 minute lesson. You must decide which parts of the Text and notes are most pertinent to the group you're teaching.
- Step 3: Don't bore or insult your study group by reading the study to them point by point. Instead, have a general outline of thoughts and your own personal illustrations that make the study come alive. Think of these notes like the bone structure and skin. It is your job as the teacher to make the study come to life. Feel free to change the study as you like.
- Step 4: Look for opportunities for application. The thrust of this note pack is focused on helping you, the teacher, prepare well for your study. You will need to encourage application with your small group based on who they are and what your relationship is with them. Whatever the case, don't skip this step – otherwise this study will just be an exercise in information transfer.
- Step 5: Listen to the podcast. AFTER you have done your own personal prep work, you might want to listen to how I taught it so you can get an idea of how much to teach, illustrations, etc. Copy and paste this feed into iTunes to download it:
- Step 6: Copy these notes and distribute them each week to your small group. No need to give them lessons in advance – once per week will be good. Encourage them to use the notes as a guide for the rest of the week for their quiet times so they can dive deeper into the lesson if they would like to.

Remember: These notes are *mine*. You have to make them *yours*. Until the Text becomes something you are passionate about and familiar with you will have a lot to say and nothing to teach. Change this up as much as you want – add more quotes/references. *Make it your own.* The most inspiring and effective teachers are those who own what they teach.

Tough Questions:

It's hard to replace the value of a good question that will keep your students learning even after they leave your study. Each week there will be a question or two at the end of the study that is designed to make your students (and you!) think hard about the subject just discussed. Sometimes the questions aren't even answerable – but that's not the point. The point is that they are engaging the Word on their own (and they're motivated to do so!). Don't worry about your answers – there is more to be learned in the investigation of the question most of the time than in determining what the right answer is.

Sample Schedule for Summertime:

- 6:50am – Arrive before they do & make sure there is coffee!
- 7:00am – Start your Bible study promptly on time. No need to waste time asking “how was your week” or “how are you feeling.” They will get that in their small group time. Get straight to the meat – you'll need every minute!
- 7:40am – If you want to have time for Q&A at the end, plan on ending the study a little early. Then you can have some dialogue about the text or discuss the tough question from the week before.
- 7:45am – Dismiss the study *promptly*. Do not go over on time as it obstructs the flow of camp.

Bibliography:

There are not many single volumes out there about the covenants themselves. Most of my research has come from a few sources and then random commentaries. As I compiled my notes and thoughts, these were the resources that I found to be the most helpful. If you would like to study further, I would recommend these resources to you first as good entry points. So, to the degree you find this study helpful, you need to know it really comes from the wisdom of these brothers in Christ. I'm just the young guy standing on their shoulders.

Primary Sources:

- Constable, Tom. *Expository Notes on the Bible*. 2008 edition.
 - Dr. Constable, a seminary professor of mine, makes his expository notes on the entire Bible available online for free! You can download them at www.soniclight.com.
- Blaising, Craig A., Bock, Darrell L. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993.
 - I relied heavily on this volume not because I am an advocate of dispensationalism but because of its excellent overview and summary of each of the Biblical covenants. I have tried to use quotes that do not force a dispensational or covenant theology perspective. Nevertheless, when studying the covenants it is hard to avoid resources that focus on these theological frameworks.
- Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan from Paradise to Paradise*. The Biblical Studies Foundation, 2005. (obtained online at www.bible.org)
 - Dr. Ross' perspective on the Hebrew Bible is invaluable. This short overview of the story of Redemption was most helpful to me in organizing the outline of the study and how I would present the material.
- Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B. *The Bible knowledge commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
 - This is a must-have resource for any lay-leader's library. It is a concise commentary on the entire Bible and offers a thorough, conservative, evangelical interpretation of the Text. Most helpful in understanding the big picture of a book.

Secondary Resources:

- Precept Austin
 - www.preceptaustin.org is a fantastic online resource that has great exegetical bullet points verse by verse through every book of the Bible. Additionally, it is a great resource for quotations from well-known Christian leaders, pastors and authors. Highly recommended resource for your Bible study.

Special Thanks To. . .

. . . Jon Foreman, David Wilcox, Gungor, Andrew Peterson, and James Horner whose music helped to drown out all the distractions and keep me focused.

. . . Jon Easterhaus who originally wrote the outline for this study back in the summer of 2005 when I had the chance to teach it the first time. I still used that outline as a reference this time around.

. . . My pastor, Ross Strader, who preached through Genesis during the time I was writing the study. Your words helped to shape much of my thinking.

. . . My gorgeous, thoughtful and nurturing wife who put so much of her own wants and needs aside to help me write this study. Darcie, your love is a gift; I treasure it. You are precious to me.

It's not easy to admit that you don't know how to tell the story of the entire Bible – especially when you've been a Christian for a long time. Yet, that's the problem that most of us face: we cannot string together the stories of the Bible into THE story of the Bible. It is certainly important for believers to know how to understand the Greek meanings of words and study a book of the Bible word-for-word, but if we cannot also articulate the story that those books come together to make then we are missing the big picture.

The Bible is a story of redemption. It is a story. Stories must be told, but they also have to be told well. The high points of the story of redemption are the covenant promises God makes to His people. In studying each one it will give us a handy framework on with which we will be able to more completely, accurately, and excellently tell the story of God. Although it will help you most immediately as you talk with your campers, it is my hope that it will become such a part of your story-telling that you will share it with your family, your classmates, and your community.

God redeems all of humanity with a promise.

How?

. . . that's the story you need to be able to tell.

Promised Redemption

A Study of the Biblical Covenants

Week 1: Introduction & Ephesians 2: 11-22

Week 2: The Covenant(s) with Adam – Genesis 1-3

Week 3: The Covenant with Noah – Genesis 6-9

Week 4: The Covenant with Abraham– Genesis 12-17

Week 5: The Covenant with Moses – Exodus 19-20

Week 6: Review for Incoming 2nd Half Staff

Week 7: The Covenant with David – 2 Samuel 7

Week 8: The New Covenant in the Prophets – Jer. 31 & Ezk. 36

Week 9: The New Covenant in the Gospels – Matthew 26

Week 10: The New Covenant in the Pauline Epistles – 2 Corinthians 3

Week 11: The New Covenant in the General Epistles - Hebrews 7-10



Promised Redemption

Week 1: Introduction

Why Study the Covenants?

One can set out to do a survey of the Bible and be quickly overwhelmed. One can also attempt to summarize the entire narrative of Scripture only to find out that he or she is either dangerously flirting with heresy or dangerously over-simplifying the story. In any case, as important as deep, methodical and word-for-word Bible study is to our spiritual lives, it is equally as important for us to understand (and be able to articulate) the big picture of creation and redemption that God has revealed to us through the specific revelation of Scripture.

"The best way to focus on the divine plan of creation that is restored through redemption is to incorporate the covenants that the LORD made down through the ages. After all, it is through solemn covenant promises that God has *guaranteed* his plan to restore all of creation to Paradise-- but a greater and different Paradise than the one in the beginning."¹

Ideally our study of the covenants should not only give us a greater comprehension of the metanarrative of Scripture, it should also make us better story tellers. Our story-telling will be better not only in the accuracy of the story we tell (because, honestly, we make up parts that aren't there), but also the plot of the story we tell (rather than just telling the story of 'how' – we will better be able to tell the story of 'why' too).

Since our salvation is essentially based on the promise of God, a study of God's covenant promises will not only strengthen our faith in Him alone, but also give us greater faithfulness to the covenant promises we make to one another.

What is a Covenant?

- Covenants are not exclusively a Biblical idea. Covenants have been used, especially in antiquity, throughout all cultures and religions. For purposes of our study, we will only be looking at what a Biblical covenant is; however, we must bear in mind that Biblical covenants often took the pattern of the cultural covenants of their day.
- Biblically, a covenant is a formal, binding, *agreement-promise* that defines relationships and responsibilities between two or more parties.²
 - A covenant is an agreement. When two or more parties agree to terms and ratify that agreement it becomes an entitlement. If it is an entitlement, then it becomes a matter of law. Thus, the agreement is a legal one.
 - Take checks for example: One person writes & signs a check for a specific item he/she wishes to purchase for an agreed upon amount. The other person signs the back of the check in agreement that the price offered is the price agreed upon and, thus, receives the funds. The agreement has been fulfilled.
 - A covenant is also a promise. Just as important as the terms are to the agreement is the character of the persons who are making the agreement. For both parties, the character of the other person involved in the agreement is the guarantee that the agreement will be fulfilled.
 - This is the typical 'handshake' agreement. Why would you get your best friend to sign a contract agreeing to share your lawnmower for the summer? You just shake on it because you know his character & he knows yours. What would forcing him to sign a contract insinuate about his character and/or your relationship with him?

¹ Ross, Dr. Allen. *The Divine Plan from Redemption to Paradise*. Biblical Studies Foundation. 2005. Emphasis mine.

² Grudem's definition is "an unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of their relationship." (see *Systematic Theology*).

- A covenant is not concerned with limiting liability or forcing the other party to keep their end of the agreement. It is also not an agreement that is made in suspicion where terms are set because one party or the other expects the agreement not to matriculate. Instead a covenant is the establishment of relationship between two or more parties where the goals and desires of both parties become mutual.
- Thus, a thorough study of the covenants will not only tell us about God's promise of redemption throughout human history, but they will also give us insight into God himself and the nature of His relationship with the humans He has created – which will undoubtedly inform us about ourselves as well.
 - "Covenants are not needed by God, for his word is sure and reliable. But God used covenants for our sake, that we might be convinced that when he swore on his own life that he would keep his promises. Even though people might be unfaithful, he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself--it is his nature to speak the truth and fulfill his promises."³
- There are **two types** of covenants in the Scriptures:
 - Conditional: A conditional covenant is an agreement between one party who requires specific action from the other party in exchange for a promised result. All conditions in the covenant must be met for the promised result to be delivered. (Example: suzerain/vassal treaty)
 - Unconditional: An unconditional covenant is an agreement between two parties where one promises a result apart from the faithfulness and response of the other party. (Example: Royal/Grant Covenant)
- There are **four basic elements** to a covenant between men (as illustrated in the Scriptures):⁴
 1. A statement of the **terms** agreed upon (Genesis 26:28-29; 31:50,52).
 2. An **oath** by each party to observe the terms, God being witness of the oath (Genesis 26:31; 31:48-53). The oath was such a characteristic feature that sometimes the term "oath" is used as the equivalent of covenant (see Ezekiel 17:13).
 3. A **curse** invoked by each one upon himself in case disregard of the agreement. In a sense this may be considered a part of the oath, adding emphasis to it. This curse is not explicitly stated in the case of human covenants, but may be inferred from the covenant with God (Deuteronomy 27:15-26). It is, of course, eliminated in covenants of an unconditional nature.
 4. The formal **ratification** of the covenant by some solemn external act.
- **Hebrew & Greek** meanings of "covenant":
 - Hebrew: *berith* which could mean treaty (1 Kings 15:19), business contract or pledge of friendship (1 Sam18:3), or as a constitution between a ruler and his subjects. In all cases of covenants between men, except Jeremiah 34:10 and Daniel 9:27, the technical phrase for making a covenant is *karath berith*, in which *karath* meant originally "to cut." Everything indicates that this verb is used with reference to the formal ceremony of ratification where animals are cut in pieces.⁵
 - Greek: The corresponding word in the New Testament Greek is *diatheke*, a term that closely follows the Hebrew usage and range of meaning. It communicates a disposition, arrangement, of any sort, which one wishes to be valid. It is translated as covenant or testament (as in last will & testament).
 - *Diatheke* is a less-common word for a contract or agreement. Typically the Greek word for such arrangements is *syntheke* where the terms of the covenant are laid down by both parties. *Diatheke* was used more often with a

³ Ross, Dr. Allen. *The Divine Plan from Redemption to Paradise*. Biblical Studies Foundation. 2005.

⁴ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)

⁵ ISBE

testament or a will because only one party stipulated the terms of the agreement.⁶

- As we study the Biblical covenants we must remember this one important and overarching principle:
 - **Each covenant is one initiated and established by God to which men respond. Man never initiates a covenant with God.**

The Six Major Covenants of Scripture:

- The Covenant with Adam (Edenic/Adamic Covenant): Genesis 1:26-28/2:16
- The Covenant with Noah (Noahic Covenant): Genesis 9:16
- The Covenant with Abraham (Abrahamic Covenant): Genesis 12:2
- The Covenant with Moses & Israel (Mosaic Covenant): Exodus 19:5
 - (Palestinian Covenant: Deuteronomy 30:1-10)
- The Covenant with David (Davidic Covenant): 2 Samuel 7:16
- The New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-33, Ezekiel 36, Heb 8:8
- There are many other covenants in the Scriptures, but these are the major ones. Some scholars will list as many as eight covenants as major, but we will be focusing our study on the six listed above.

Overview of the Entire Study: (Ephesians 2:11-22)

- Ephesians 2:1-10 is a familiar passage to most of us because it describes in general how God saves a sinner. Verses 11-22 are more specific with regard to how God saves a Gentile (which most of the people who will be reading this will be). These verses are not just a good reminder for us of our great salvation – they show us how central the covenants are to God's plan of redemption.
- **2:11-12 – Only One Covenant People: Israel**
 - Without...Christ, citizenship, covenants, hope, or God in the world.
 - God did not promise Brazil that through her all the nations would be blessed. God did not promise Germany that to her would come the Davidic King. God did not promise Ireland that they would be a blessing to all the nations. People of Nicaragua cannot trace their lineage back to Abraham & Sarah. As non-Jews, Gentiles were utterly lost and left up to their own wills and devices. We had nothing that would cause us to come back to God.
 - The covenants belong to Israel and to Israel alone. God did not make a covenant with Russia, Japan, or Egypt. He made his promise to Israel only. And, through this one nation, God promised that all the nations would be blessed.
- **2:13-22 – Still Only One Covenant People. But how are we now included?**
 - v.13: Messiah brought near those who were far off (Gentiles)⁷
 - v.14: Messiah made both groups (Jews & Gentiles) into one group
 - The "dividing wall" could likely be a reference to the *soreg* – a low wall or railing that separated the temple courts from the Court of the Gentiles in Herod's temple. It prevented Gentiles or non-purified Jews from entering the Temple Courts and defiling it. If a Gentile were to enter, he would be put to death. It was a structural feature of the Mosaic Covenant.
 - v.15: Messiah abolished the source of conflict: the Law.
 - v.15: Messiah made that one group into a new kind of humanity where there is "no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all."⁸

⁶ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan.

⁷ cf. 2:17 and Is. 57:19

- "The word 'new' (*kainon*) means new or fresh in character or quality rather than new in the sense of recent in time (*neos*). This 'new man' (Eph. 2:15), or 'new humanity,' is also called 'this one body' (v. 16), the church. In the church, Gentiles do not become Jews, nor do Jews become Gentiles. Instead believing Jews and Gentiles become Christians, a whole new single entity."⁹
- "Let us imagine that there are two statues, one of silver and the other of lead, and then that both shall be melted down, and the two shall come out gold. So thus He has made the two one."¹⁰
- "One new man—both races being now enabled to realize the true end of humanity; Gentile and Jew not so joined that old privilege is merely divided among them. The Gentile is not elevated to the position of the Jew—a position which he might have obtained by becoming a proselyte under the law; but Jew and Gentile together are both raised to a higher platform than the circumcision ever enjoyed. The Jew profits by the repeal of the law, as well as the Gentile. Now he needs to provide no sacrifice, for the One victim has bled; the fires of the altar may be smothered, for the Lamb of God has been offered; the priest, throwing off his sacred vestments, may retire to weep over a torn veil and shattered temple, for Jesus has passed through the heaven "into the presence of God for us;" the water of the "brazen sea" may be poured out, for believers enjoy the washing of regeneration; and the lamps of the golden candelabrum have flickered and died, for the church enjoys the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual blessing in itself, and not merely pictured in type, is possessed by the Jew as well as the Gentile."¹¹
- v.16-22: Messiah made a new body (the church) out of the new men in whom will dwell the Spirit of God.
 - "Paul sees the Gospel of Jesus Christ as rooted in this promise covenanted to the Patriarch (Gal 3:18, 16). He also sees that covenant as encompassing Gentiles in its prophetic scope (Gal 3:8). Gentiles who now believe in Jesus Christ are heirs of that covenant promise (Gal 3:28-29)."¹²
 - The church is a body that has never existed before. It is *not* simply a continuation of Israel. It is entirely distinct from anything that has come before it or will ever come after it. Within the church there are no identity statements such as Jew or Gentile. Neither has been replaced – both have been made into something completely new.

Paul covers in eleven verses what we will spend eleven weeks studying: how God brings humanity who was far off, alienated and hostile to God back to himself to live in peace and fellowship for all eternity. God will accomplish all of this simply by His word. He will accomplish it all in a promise.

Tough Questions:

1. Why does/would God choose covenants as the primary vehicle to bring about the redemption of the human race?
2. Why can't humanity initiate a covenant with God?

⁸ Colossians 3:11

⁹ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eph 2:15–16). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁰ Chrysostom, John. (Archbishop of Constantinople – one of the early church fathers circa 400 AD)

¹¹ John Eadie, D., LL.D. The Epistle of St Paul to the Ephesians - Online)

¹² Blaising, Craig A., Bock, Darrell L. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. Baker Books, 1993. p. 124. (cf. 3:6, Gal 3:17)

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Week 2: The Adamic/Edenic Covenant

Our relationship with God has its foundation in God's relationship with Adam. It is in the first few chapters of Genesis that we find God's original relationship with humanity and then watch it fly out of sync as a result of humanity's disobedience. God's initiation with us ever since has always been moving to restore that broken union until it is completely restored. The primary way God moves to create and restore relationships with humanity throughout history is by initiating covenants with His chosen people.

The first two that we will look at in our study are not universally considered covenants. Both the Edenic and Adamic Covenants are not described as covenants in the Text, but do have elements of a covenant within them. It will not be the purpose of this part of our study to argue whether or not these are covenants. Instead, for the sake of ease, we will refer to them as covenants as we have to call them something. As we do, we will focus more on how these two arrangements set the stage and necessity for the covenants that will follow.

Creation:

- What do Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26 all have in common? From the beginning of the creation account to the end of it – all of creation in its beauty, perfection, and magnificence results not from God's physical labor, but simply from his word. All of existence came into being through obedience to the command of God (Psalm 33:6-9; Hebrews 11:3).
- Humanity, the climax of creation, is chosen to bear the 'image of God.'
 - Genesis 2:7 informs us that man is the only creation that receives the 'breath of life' (*neshamah*) as a part of his creation. Since many of the other 'living' beings on the earth have air in their lungs, we must understand this 'breath of life' not only brings a heartbeat, but that it also brings a spiritual and intellectual capacity that the other created beings do not possess (Job 33:4).
 - Also, man is also the only created being that receives direct physical action from God to bring about his life. Instead of speaking man's life into being as God does with everything else, God physically touches and inserts himself into Adam to make him come to life. Since we share in his nature, we also have the capacity for relationship with Him.
 - God's work in Adam's life causes him to not just become alive, but to become a 'living being' or 'soul' (*nephesh*). Even though all the other created animals are alive, man is the only 'living being.' The language here seems to indicate not that we have a *nephesh* within our physical bodies, but rather that we are a *nephesh*.
 - Thus, bearing the image of God is a pre-requisite for being able to perform the duties that God is about to ask humanity to perform as His vice-regents on the earth. Possessing the image of God is not only part of our identity, it is also indicative of our capacity as ones who are to fill the earth & subdue it.¹

The Edenic Covenant:

- God did not create humanity as a trophy or for display. As soon as God created humanity he immediately gave them purpose and intention upon the earth. We do not bear the image of God for nothing. He gives us His image so that we have the capacity to respond to God appropriately.
- In the garden we have the first definition of relationship between God and humanity: the Edenic Covenant (Genesis 1:28). God defines the terms of the covenant using three

¹ Peter's comment in 2 Peter 1:4 indicate that some part of the divine nature in us was marred by the fall and held in repose until Christ's work on the cross. In many ways this study will be a close look at how God restores us to our original image bearing state prior to the fall.

components that, as we shall see, are core elements of every covenant that God will make with humanity:²

- **Seed** – “God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’”
 - We will use the word ‘seed’ here (and for the remainder of our study) to describe offspring and descendants because it is the primary word used in Hebrew Bible for such purpose. The Hebrew word for seed (*zera*) is used in Gen 1:11-12, 29 as well as Genesis 3:15 and 22:17. The primary purpose of a seed is to reproduce itself. Thus, its usage is appropriate in Hebrew Bible as a word to describe both agricultural and human reproduction.
 - Thus, the command to be fruitful is a parallel to Genesis 1:11-12. Just as the plants and other vegetation bear fruit (the seed is always found in the fruit) so also is humanity to propagate and cover the earth. As that happens, there will be no place on the earth where the image of God will not be present.³
 - Furthermore, what God has ‘planted’ on the earth in humanity will mimic that from which it originates (like any seed will do). Since God is a creator of life so also, in a much lesser degree, will humanity also be able to participate in the creation of life on the earth.⁴
- **Dominion** – “and subdue it [the earth]; 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.”
 - The Hebrew for ‘subdue’ is *kabash*. It is a strong term often used of military efforts that can be translated as ‘enslave’ or ‘conquer’. It is rendered as ‘subdue’ here because creation did not need to be conquered or enslaved as much as it needed to be ruled & mastered. Creation is put in its proper place: it is to serve mankind. Mankind is not to serve creation.
 - Just as God has called us to create life as He has, so also does He give us authority and responsibility to rule as He does (and as He would) over all the earth. So, as God’s image is fruitful and multiplies – filling the earth – so also should his rule and authority as carried out by His vice-regents.
 - God gives man sovereignty over things *on the earth*. God does not make man sovereign over all things. Man’s sovereignty extends only to that which has been created (an important point that is quickly forgotten later). Man’s sovereignty also only extends as far as God’s image. Man must rule as God would rule if God were man.
- **Land** – In addition to the fact that Genesis 1:28 necessitates land in which to do those things, Genesis 2:15 also says, “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”
 - Land, in this case the Garden of Eden, provided the environment for humanity to keep God’s terms of the covenant. The land was a specific place that was prepared by God for His people to carry out His commands.
 - Land is always the place of rest and reward for the individual who is obedient. In this case, God has set Adam in Paradise and to the extent he is obedient, Adam will have the opportunity to remain where he has been planted. To the

² Ross, Dr. Alan. *The Divine Plan: from Paradise to Paradise*. 2005. I owe much of the outline of this study to Dr. Ross’ excellent article. His outline of the covenants was most helpful in organizing this study.

³ Yes, I think it is entirely appropriate to think that Jesus’ words in John 15:1-11 have the words of the Edenic covenant in view. Jesus, by his immanent death & resurrection, is just about to restore what was eventually lost by Adam in Eden: the capacity to bear good fruit. Consider especially verses 5, 8, and 10.

⁴ It should fascinate us that God didn’t create millions of people right off the bat like he could have. Instead, He still fills the earth as He would have, but instead of doing it Himself, He gives the pleasure & privilege to humanity to steward. Why would He do such a thing? Doesn’t he know we will mess it up?

extent he is disobedient he will lose his place in the land and be cursed with work.⁵

The Adamic Covenant:

- God's relationship with Adam changes slightly in Genesis 2: 15-17 from what it initially was in Genesis 1: 29-31. At the first, God gives Adam a command to be fruitful and multiply, but no threat of consequence for disobedience. In Genesis 2, God gives Adam a command as well as a strong warning against disobedience.⁶
- Disobedience, however, quickly became the problem. Whether this was a covenant that was broken or simply a command that was disobeyed, the ramifications of this single event create the need and reason for all the other covenants we will study.
- The first chapter of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* provides an excellent explanation of why this event was so devastating to the human race. As we talk about sin and its effects on the story of the Gospel, the accurate telling of this particular part of the story is most important to the way we share the rest of the story. Here is how Bonhoeffer puts it⁷:
 - Prior to the fall, man only knows one thing: God. And only from this union does he have knowledge of other things, other men and even himself.
 - The eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil severs this union with God and gives man a source of knowledge apart from God.
 - God is no longer the source of knowledge – man is. Man is an origin of knowledge and therefore considers himself to be the origin of good and evil, &, thus, a judge of what is good and evil.
 - As a result, man no longer has any need for knowledge of God in any form. In fact, he will always reject God. He is dead to him.
 - Man has become a "god against God." = sinful nature/fallen/lost
 - No god will ever resign his position as god to some other God. Ever. Never.
 - "Man knows good and evil, against God, against his origin, godlessly and of his own choice, understanding himself according to his own contrary possibilities; and he is cut off from the unifying, reconciling life in God, and is delivered over to death. The secret which man has stolen from God is bringing about man's downfall. Man's life is now disunion with God, with men, with things, and with himself."
- Satan tempted Adam and Eve to become like God by challenging His authority (just as he himself had done previously). As Proverbs teaches us, though, the fear of the Lord is the only way we become wise, obedient, and, thus, godly.
- Thus, God's promises and paradise for Adam were derailed by Adam's sin. Life would never be the same for Adam & Eve or for humanity. The world had been corrupted & God announced to everyone how the corruption would affect the world (Genesis 3: 14-19):
 - **Seed:** No longer would life be as simple as "Be fruitful and multiply."
 - Prior to the fall, there was life in God's command to be fruitful and to multiply. Afterwards the command still exists, but the new reality of death will mar the joy of life. Man lived in paradise and abundance, now he must live with pain, toil and have only what he can produce from the ground. Instead of peace and union with God now man lives in constant shame and disunion with God, other men and himself.
 - Even though mankind has placed itself in a horrible position, God begins the work of redemption and restoration immediately. As God is describing the way the world will now be as a result of sin, God also includes verse 15

⁵ Genesis 2:15 could also be translated, "God took the man and set him to rest in the Garden..."

⁶ Many commentators suggest that this is a stronger case for a covenant because the essential parts of a covenant are all there: clear definition of parties involved, legally binding set of provisions that stipulates the relationship, promise of blessings for obedience, condition for obtaining those blessings. Furthermore Hosea 6:7 seems to suggest there was one.

⁷ My paraphrase of Bonhoeffer's argument from the first chapter of *Ethics*. Read Romans 5 for Paul's take on the same idea.

(known by scholars as the first glimpse of the gospel message, the *protoevangelium*). This single verse is the foundation for the promised redemption that will be the only hope for the human race.

- 4 Key points about Genesis 3:15...⁸
 - **It is a prophecy:** Notice that the prophecy is addressed to the serpent – not Eve. The serpent has made himself an enemy of God and man. And though here we find hope for deliverance from our enemy, it is more accurately a prophecy of his future judgment and destruction. He will not triumph or prevail.
 - **It is a warning.** The serpent will not go down without a fight. Enmity (*eybah*) is the word for hatred. There will be great conflict between mankind and this serpent. This is not the last time humanity will be tempted by him.
 - **It is a promise.** Here we have reference to another man besides Adam. Eve will not bruise the serpent. Adam is completely ignored here. Instead, the seed of Eve will crush the serpent's head after himself being bruised on the heel. This is the promise of a deliverer who will suffer a wound, but ultimately be victorious.
 - **It is a foundation.** It is a demonstration of God's immediate commitment to restore and redeem humanity while we were still dead in our trespasses and sins.
- **Dominion:** God told Adam that it was mankind's role to "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" (1:28). Since both Adam and Eve were ruled by the serpent instead ruling over him, mankind now must still subdue and rule over the earth – but it will come at much more difficult a price.
- **Land:** Prior to the fall man had to work. However, prior to the fall his work was never described as sorrowful toil or painful labor (same word as 'pain' in 3:16) as it would be known afterwards. Adam and Eve were kicked out of a place of abundance & placed in a place where abundance was only the measure of one's work. They were to work the ground from which they were originally formed and created.
- "And what happened to the image of God? The Bible says that the presence of sin in ordinary humans (unbelievers) means they are spiritually dead, even though physically living, that their spiritual understanding is darkened, and their consciences are seared and not working right. It will take a new creation to restore the image. And we call that regeneration."⁹

At the end of Genesis 3, man's relationship with God has no definition or responsibility. He has become a complete free-agent, no longer needing God to define reality for him. The result: the downward-spiraling of all of humanity into being permanently out of sync with God and living by and for his own will (in direct opposition to God's). The necessity of a covenant relationship to restore the original union is obvious – but if Adam cannot keep a covenant, what sinful man possibly could?

Tough Questions:

1. Why was death the consequence for eating from the tree?
2. Why didn't Adam & Eve die 'in the day' they ate from the tree? Was the serpent right?

⁸ Keathley III, J. Hampton. *Prophecies of the Birth of Christ*.

⁹ Ross, Alan P. *The Divine Plan*.

Promised Redemption

Week 3: The Noachian Covenant

The fallout from Adam & Eve's estrangement from God contaminates the entire human race to such a degree that "every intent of the thoughts of [mankind's] heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Humanity had become so out of sync with God that "the LORD was sorry that He had made [man] on the earth, and he was grieved in his heart" (Genesis 6:6).¹ And so the story goes, right? Throughout the history of humanity and the nation of Israel in particular we begin to see a cycle:

[God creates]→[Man fails/rebels]→[God brings judgment]→[God re-creates]→ etc, etc, etc.

We see this pattern make its first full circle in the story of Noah. Adam and Eve fail and their sin snowballs into further rebellion. God pronounces his impending judgment in Genesis 6:5-7 by saying, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land." Yet, in verse eight we hear of this man, Noah, with whom God will establish a covenant that will save the human race.

Setting:

While there is some debate as to whether or not there was an actual covenant with Adam and Eve in the garden, there is no question that God's covenant with Noah is the first instance where the actual word is used to describe the event (6:18, 9:9, 11-13, 15-17).

Noah & the World he Lived in (5:29, 6:1-9)

We first meet Noah in Genesis 5:29 as the son of Lamech (cf. 4:19-24). Lamech was longing for comfort (*naham*) from the painful toil under the curse God had levied against humanity in 3:17-19. Upon the birth of his son, he named him Noah (*nuakh*) which simply means 'rest.'

Noah grew up in a world that was corrupt, evil, and wicked. It was a world of complete licentiousness where men and women indulged their flesh as if they were their own god (Genesis 6:1-7). In fact, it was a world much like we can expect before the coming of the son of Man (cf. Matt. 24:37). Genesis 6:8 gives us the first description of Noah in the Bible as one who "found favor in the eyes of the LORD." However, until verse 8, there is little evidence to support the idea that Noah would have been any different than the other pagans who were indulging themselves.

Finding favor with God is never meritorious; it is always a gift (cf. Genesis 19:19, Exodus 33:19, Luke 1:30). In fact, the word for 'favor' could also be translated 'grace.' "The fact that Noah 'found grace' means that he was no better than the rest of them. It defies the meaning of 'grace' to say Noah was a righteous man and so God decided to extend grace to him. No, Genesis 6:9 comes after Genesis 6:8."²

Three qualities of Noah:

1. He was a righteous man (cf. Gen 7:1, Heb 11:7, 2 Peter 2:5): Only after Noah 'finds favor' with God is he spoken of as a righteous man. God called Noah out of the darkness and wickedness of his culture to be His man and Noah *believed* God. In direct connection with this belief, Noah responded obediently to all the LORD's instructions (Genesis 6:13-22).
2. Blameless in his time: Undoubtedly Noah's obedience to God garnered him mocking and jeering from his friends and those who watched him build a massive ark. Nevertheless, he did not depart from obeying God and did not behave unrighteously.

¹ This is a very strong statement about how sin affects the heart of God. This point alone is well worth some meditation. In addition it is also evidence that we, as humans, will not get better with time. There is a humanistic myth that asserts that humanity is evolving into something better than it currently is and as we do that as individuals, so also will the race itself. This story alone is enough to refute that idea completely. Humanity cannot fix herself either. She needs a Savior.

² Ross, Dr. Alan. *The Divine Plan: From Paradise to Paradise*

3. Walked with God (cf. 5:22-24, 17:1): Day in and day out Noah did all that the LORD commanded him to do. As God gave him commandments, Noah didn't make short cuts or decide for himself which commands he should obey or not (cf. 6:22, 7:5, 9, 16, 18, 21).

These three qualities should not highlight Noah's goodness as much as they should highlight God's graciousness. As a recipient of God's grace, Noah walked with God, was a righteous man, and blameless in his time. To whatever degree we find ourselves like Noah we should also remember they highlight God's goodness – not our own.

The Flood (7:11-12, 17-24)

This single event could be one of the most horrific events in all of the Biblical record. The recent tsunami in Japan should provide us with an *understated* picture of what must have happened over those 150 days when water prevailed upon the earth. Death would have been everywhere. Men, women, children, plants, animals – everything died...except what was in the ark (1 Peter 3:20-22).

This event was so epic in proportion that Jesus uses it to illustrate the end of the world in Matthew 24:37-39 and Peter refers to it for the same reason in 2 Peter 3:3-7, 10. The point of their message? Judgment is coming again – this time a final one. Believe in God's word (just as Noah did) and you will be saved. If you continue to live your life to indulge yourself, you will perish.

"The theme of "rest" seems to be quite strong throughout the story. The ark rested (v. 4); at first the dove could find no place to set its feet (v. 9; lit., "could not find a resting place for its feet"). When the ark came to rest on Ararat, this was more than a physical landing on dry ground. It was a new beginning; the world was clean and at rest."³

According to the chronology we have in the text (and a few logical guesses) Noah and his family spent 377 days in the ark before they set foot on land again.⁴

The Noachian Covenant: (Genesis 6:18, 8:20-22, 9:8-17)

8:20-22 Immediately following God's judgment upon the earth, Noah emerged from the ark in worship to God with the best of what he had for burnt offerings (8:20-22). Those who have escaped the wrath of God have the greatest reason to worship Him. So it shall be at the end of the age when the final judgment comes upon the wicked of the earth. After it is finished, the worship will begin.

The reference to the soothing aroma in v. 21 should indeed point us to the sacrificial system of Leviticus. However, we should recognize that this is the first time since Genesis 2 that God has been pleased with anything that humanity has done (compare Genesis 8:21 with 6:6). The flood was the manifestation of God's judgment upon the earth. Noah's sacrifice was for purification of himself and the new earth he was about to populate.

9:1-7 The cycle we mentioned at the beginning of the lesson has reached its first ending. God, in effort to redeem his initial creation after the judgment of the flood, re-creates the world and humanity. Though the creation will be similar to the story of Adam and Eve in the garden, there will be one major difference: the presence of human sin. God re-creates the world knowing that the heart of man has not changed from what it was in Genesis 6. So, he makes a few changes to the creation order so that his promise from Genesis 3:17 will still come to pass. What is to prevent him from destroying the world over and over again? His promise...

³ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Ge 8:4-19). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* has a helpful table of Scripture references & time estimates to this point.

The Specifics of the Covenant

9:8-11 – The recipients of the covenant are Noah, his sons, his seed (descendants), and every living creature that came out of the ark.⁵ Notice that Noah doesn't initiate this agreement with God. God initiates the agreement with Noah. It is an agreement that is without condition. It is God's promise to Noah and to us: even though "the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; I will never destroy every living thing as I have done" (8:21).

This is an important promise to make if you are a God who earnestly desires to redeem the world unto yourself.

9:12-17 – All covenants typically have a sign to help the parties involved remember their commitments to each other. In today's culture we don't give signs, we give something similar: a guarantee. The sign that God will give *to himself* that will also help to reassure Noah is a bow (*qeshet*) in the sky.

- The bow is an interesting sign for this covenant because the word *qeshet* is the same word for a battle bow. Elsewhere in Scripture, God's judgment is often compared to a bow and arrow (Job 6:4, Psalm 18:14, 64:7, 77:17, Zech 9:14).
- The fact that God sets his bow in the clouds is up for interpretation. Some suggest that the bow is put up after being used & will not be used again. Others think that the bow is set up to protect what is behind it. Even others suggest that the bow is pointed upwards (toward God) whose own Son will eventually receive the arrow of judgment for the sin of all humanity.
- No matter what your interpretation of the sign, there is one point that is clear: it is a sign of peace, safety and security. Can you imagine what Noah and his family must have thought the first time it rained *after* the flood? The first time it rains in the Bible it comes as an act of judgment.⁶ From Genesis 9 on forward, rain is seen as a blessing.

The Big Picture:

How does God's covenant with Noah fit into the greater story of Redemption?

"This covenant was designed to show that God was a *covenant God*, a *God of grace*. Covenants are not needed by God, for his word is sure and reliable. But God used covenants for our sake, that we might be convinced that when he swore on his own life that he would keep his promises. Even though people might be unfaithful, he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself--it is his nature to speak the truth and fulfill his promises."⁷

SEED: As with Adam, God elected and blessed Noah and gave him the same command as Adam to be fruitful and to multiply (8:17, 9:1-2, 7). The seed of Noah was also given a promise that they would never again be wiped out by a flood (9:9).

DOMINION: Like Adam, God enabled Noah to rule as His vice-regent on the earth (9:2-3). This time, however, God puts the fear and terror of man into the hearts of the animals whereas that was not needed in Genesis 2. God also arranges for mankind to govern and judge sinful behavior (9:4-6).⁸

LAND: Also like Adam, humanity could once again enjoy the bounty of God's creation. This time, however, they would have painful toil as they worked the land.

⁵ No other Biblical covenant has a wider group of recipients than God's covenant with Noah.

⁶ Genesis 2:5 is the only mention of rain prior to Genesis 9 – and it says that it had not rained yet.

⁷ Ross, Dr. Alan. *The Divine Plan: From Paradise to Paradise*.

⁸ Notice also that just as Adam had one thing he was commanded not to do (eat of the tree), so also Noah receives one command to not eat flesh with its life blood.

"These promises confirm the divine intention expressed in creation that there be an earth inhabited by life, filled with a humanity in communion with God. Furthermore, the formal nature of the covenant emphasizes that intent, pointing the way for a plan of redemption in which it will be accomplished."⁹

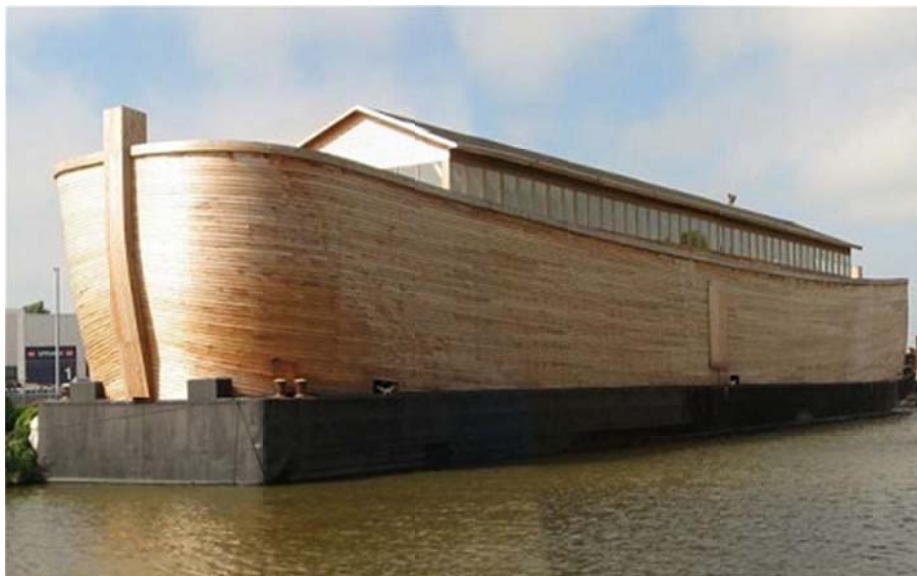
Why, given the sinfulness of the old world, would God make an unconditional covenant with a people he knows will continue to sin in the new world to come (8:21, 9:20-28)? This is the question that the Noachian covenant answers with clarity. God is obviously not done with humanity – even when she is at her worst. In fact, it looks like He is up to something much bigger: He means to completely redeem us.

The message of the covenant story with Noah is three-fold:¹⁰

1. *First*, the wickedness of man is very great and his heart is full of evil continually.
2. *Second*, God's patience does come to an end and he destroys unrepentant sinners in judgment.
3. *Third*, nevertheless, God does not surrender his purpose in creating man. Even in judgment God does not leave off building his highway. His counsel shall stand and he shall accomplish all his purpose: "All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numbers 14:21). Judgment is real and horrible, but it will not be the last word. The story points forward to an unknown remedy.

Tough Questions:

1. How did Noah get two of every animal to meet him at the ark?
2. How can God promise to not destroy the world with a flood again when it is exactly what we deserve? Isn't that unjust of Him?
3. Are there any similarities between Noah & Jesus? How many can you find?



A life-size reconstruction of Noah's Ark by Dutch creationist Johan Huibers. It is 450' long, & 75' wide. Huibers who is 60 years old started construction 3 years ago and it has cost him over £1,000,000. Huibers hopes to have it in the River Thames during the 2012 Olympics in London.¹¹

⁹ Bock, Darrell L., Blaising, Craig A. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. Baker Books, 1993.

¹⁰ Piper, John. Sermon: *God's Covenant with Noah*. © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org

¹¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/8549395/Noahs-Ark-could-arrive-in-London-for-Olympics.html>

Noah's Ark

God chose Noah to build the ark, and for his family to survive the flood and then repopulate the earth. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation.

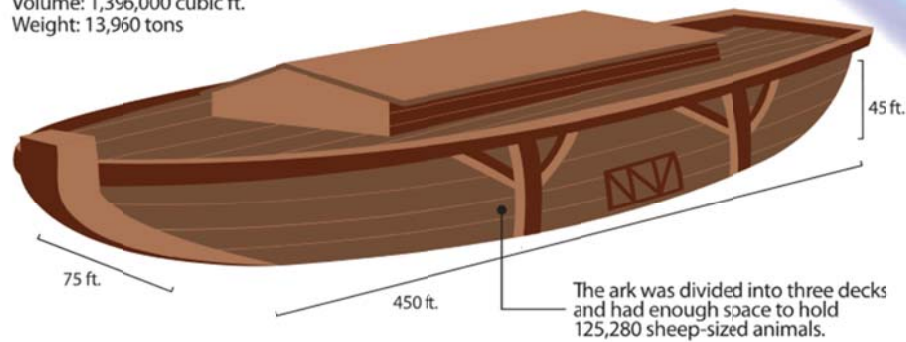
About the Ark

Estimates for completing the ark range from 70 to 120 years.

Capacity: 522 railroad stock cars

Volume: 1,396,000 cubic ft.

Weight: 13,960 tons



Size Comparison

A vessel of ancient history, the ark was not much smaller than modern ocean liners.



Building Materials

Made of "gopher wood," the ark was sealed with pitch.

"Gopher wood" is likely similar to modern cypress.



Ark Passengers

Noah's family, along with many pairs of land animals and birds of the sky stayed in the ark during the flood until the waters subsided enough for them to disembark.



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Promised Redemption

Week 4: The Abrahamic Covenant

What happens after the flood parallels exactly what happened before the flood. The cycle has started over again. Once the human race populated the earth after the flood sin became an ever-increasing problem just as it was in Genesis 6 before the flood. This time the human race reveled in pride and acted in **rebellion** by building the tower of Babel in Genesis 11. God remembers his covenant and instead of wiping out all life again, his **judgment** against the people is to scatter them and confuse their language. Since all the nations were alienated from each other, there was no nation God could employ to bring his redemption to humanity. God **re-creates** a nation from one man, Abraham, through whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed.¹

[God creates]→[Man fails/rebels]→[God brings judgment]→[God re-creates]

"The Abrahamic covenant is the beginning announcement of the coming of the kingdom. The declarations made by God in this covenant represent promises that He will surely bring to pass. These kingdom promises will accrue only to those individuals who manifest a true and living faith, expecting their fulfillment in the manifestation of God's kingdom. Thus the first aspect is found in this covenant to Abraham. God promised him a land, a seed, to make of him a great blessing, and to make his name great."² (see Galatians 3: 16, 18, 29)

Unlike most of the rest of the Biblical covenants, the Abrahamic covenant spans 3 chapters in Genesis. Genesis 12 is the promise, Genesis 15 is the inauguration and Genesis 17 is the ratification and sign of the promise.

Genesis 12:1-7

Who was Abraham? (11:31-12:1)

- Genesis 11: 31 says that Abraham was from Ur of the Chaldeans (about 186 miles southeast of modern Baghdad). Ur was a prominent city located on the Euphrates River.
- The Chaldeans, also known as Babylonians³, were a polytheistic people. They worshiped a hierarchy of gods (similar to the Egyptians) and were at first a nomadic tribal people before embracing the ideal of the city-state. So, not only was Abraham a polytheist, he was also, technically, a Gentile. The father of the Jewish nation was a Gentile!
- God commands (he does not ask) Abraham to leave his country, people and his household. God is asking Abraham to leave everything that has made him who he is & to completely start over.
 - "Like the Noahic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant stands in contrast to the judgments of God on human sin and presents anew the plan of creation. This can be seen in the way that important elements in the creation of humankind are repeated in the blessing to Abraham: the multiplication of human beings, the provision of a special dwelling place on the earth (a land of blessing), and a peaceful relationship between God and humanity."⁴
- By the time Abraham makes it to Haran where Terah dies (11: 32) and begins his journey south toward the land of Canaan, Abraham was 75 years old.

¹ Ross, Dr. Alan. *The Divine Plan*.

² Cox, S. L., & Easley, K. H. (2007). *Holman Christian Standard Bible: Harmony of the Gospels* (308). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

³ Since Babylon was at this time under a Chaldean king, 'Chaldean' is used as a synonym for Babylonian (Is. 13:19; 47:1, 5; 48:14, 20), a use later extended by Ezekiel to cover all the Babylonian dominions (23:23). [from *New Bible Dictionary*]

⁴ Blaising, Craig. Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p.130.

God's Promises To Abraham: (12:2-7)

The verbs in these verses are important to notice. They are in the future tense (what is promised hasn't happened yet) and they are active in voice (God is the one performing the action). Abraham will do nothing to bring about these promises. God is making a promise to Abraham that He will do each of these things *prior* to Abraham's belief or obedience. These promises should look familiar:

- **SEED** (v.2): Although the Hebrew word for 'seed' is not used in Genesis 12, it is obvious that God is promising a great multitude of descendants to Abraham – enough for him to be considered his own nation. It is not until Genesis 15:5 that the word for 'seed' is actually used in God's covenant promise to Abraham. There God says that Abraham's 'seed' will outnumber the stars in the sky. Needless to say, Abraham will experience fruitfulness and begin to multiply and fill the earth – just as Noah did.
- **DOMINION** (v.2): Previously with Adam and with Noah, God promised dominion over the earth itself and the animal kingdom. Here, God promises Abraham (and his seed) a great name among the nations of the earth. "Great" is a word that implies size & influence – not simply notoriety or celebrity. However, it is not until Genesis 17:6 that we see God's promise come to mean political dominion as well ("kings will come forth from you"). The point is further emphasized in Jacob's blessing to Judah in Genesis 49:10, where he says, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh⁵ comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."
- **Blessing** (v.3): The element of blessing is unique to the covenant with Abraham. The last time anything was blessed was all the way back with Noah in Genesis 9. Blessing was a rarity indeed, so the fact that it is included as one of the promises of the covenant is significant.
 - The word "bless" is *barakh* and is used 86 times in Genesis alone. When used to describe God's actions towards man (or between men), blessing is an action that benefits the recipient – typically with no strings attached. The recipient is completely passive in the reception of the blessing. When used to describe man's actions towards God, it is an act of adoration rather than one of benefit for man can do nothing to benefit God.⁶
 - Notice that it is God's blessing that will make Abraham's name great and Abraham's great name will be the means of blessing to all the families of the earth. God does not give dominion to Abraham so that he can lord it over all the people. The direct result of dominion is blessing.
 - It is also worthwhile to observe that up till now, God had always been the source of blessing and the one who bestowed blessings upon people. Here we see that Abraham and his descendants will have the opportunity to be a source of blessing to all the people – simply by living obediently to His word.
- **LAND** (v.1, 7): God placed Adam in the Garden. God brought Noah through the flood and made the dry land appear again and there re-planted Noah. Land, once again, is an important facet of the covenant, but this time it plays its most prominent role. God promises Abraham a land that will be the seedbed for his descendants. It is promised in general here as the land of Canaan, but as we shall see in studying the latter covenants, God will specifically mark out the boundaries of this land for his people.

Genesis 15:1-8:

⁵ Many English Bibles leave the word as a name, "Shiloh"--until Shiloh comes. The Hebrew word is a combination of little short words; translated it means "who to him." In other words there would be kings in Judah until the one comes to whom the scepter belongs--the Messiah. [from *The Divine Plan* by Alan Ross]

⁶ Strong, J., S.T.D., LL.D. (2009). *Vol. 2: A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (24). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Much happens between Genesis 12 and Genesis 15. Abraham goes to Egypt because there was a famine in the land, he grows wealthy enough that he needs to separate from his nephew, Lot, there are a series of wars throughout the land in which Lot is taken prisoner, he whoops up on these kings of the land with only 318 men and rescues Lot, *and* he is honored by some guy named Melchizekek – who *blesses God* because of Abraham. Don't forget he was 75 years old.

After all of the events of Genesis 12-14, Abraham, for good reason, remains skeptical and afraid that God's promise wasn't going to come to pass (15:1-3). God, in his graciousness to Abraham, reassures him by making the promise over again – telling him his descendants will outnumber the stars of the sky (15:4-5).

The result? The most important verse in the entire Bible: Genesis 15:6 "And Abraham believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." Abraham placed his faith in God's sovereign promise. It is important to emphasize that Abraham's righteousness was not meritorious (just like Noah's was not). Instead, it was 'reckoned' or 'credited' to him by God – it was not earned.⁷

- "Trust in God's promise is what results in justification in any age. The promises of God (content of faith) vary, but the object of faith does not. It is always God. Technically Abram trusted in a Person and hoped in a promise. To justify someone means to *declare* that person righteous, not to *make* him or her righteous (cf. Deut. 25:1). Justification expresses a legal verdict."⁸
- Genesis 15:6 provides an important note, but it does not pinpoint Abram's conversion. That occurred years earlier when he left Ur. (The form of the Heb. word for "believed" shows that his faith did not begin after the events recorded in vv. 1-5.) Abram's faith is recorded here because it is foundational for making the covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant did not give Abram redemption; it was a covenant made with Abram who had already believed and to whom righteousness had already been imputed. The Bible clearly teaches that in all ages imputed righteousness (i.e., salvation) comes by faith."⁹

The Ratification ('cutting') of the Covenant (15:9-21)

- The Blood Path (15:9-11): "This rite (the sacrifice of animals) normally involved two parties dividing an animal into two equal parts, joining hands, and passing between the two parts (cf. Jer. 34:18-19). On this occasion, however, God alone passed between the parts indicating that Abram had no obligations to fulfill to receive the covenant promises (v. 17)."¹⁰
- The Smoking Firepot with the Blazing Torch (15:17-21): "This act is . . . a promise that God will be with Abraham's descendants. Indeed the description of the theophany as a furnace of smoke and 'a torch of fire' invites comparison with the pillar of cloud and fire that was a feature of the wilderness wanderings, and especially with the smoke, fire and torches (Exod. 19:18; 20:18) that marked the law-giving at Sinai. These were visible tokens of God's presence with his people, that he was walking among them and that they were his people."¹¹
- "Then after sunset God revealed Himself in connection with the image of an oven (smoking fire pot) and a torch, two elements that were connected with sacrificial ritual in the ancient world. These images are part of the "burning" motif that describes God's zeal and judgment in the world. Fire represents the consuming, cleansing zeal of Yahweh as well as His

⁷ This is a pivotal argument in Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul wants to make clear that salvation comes through faith in God's promise (in his case, the promised Messiah: Jesus Christ) and not works of the Law. (see especially Romans 4-5).

⁸ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Expository Notes on Genesis*, 2005. p. 136

⁹ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Ge 15:4-6). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁰ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Expository Notes on Genesis*. 2005, p.136

¹¹ Wenham, Gordon J. "The Symbolism of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15: A Response to G. F. Hasel, JSOT 19 (1981):61-78." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 22 (1982):134-37.

unapproachable holiness, which are interrelated (cf. Isa. 6:3-7). In the darkness (Gen. 15:17) Abram saw nothing else in the vision except these fiery elements that passed between the pieces of the slaughtered animals. Thus the holy God was zealous to judge the nations and to fulfill His covenantal promises to Israel. He came down and made (lit, "cut") a formal treaty (a covenant) with Abram (the Abrahamic Covenant). Since God could "swear" (confirm the covenant) by none greater, "He swore by Himself" (Heb. 6:13). In other words this was a unilateral covenant. So its promises are absolutely sure."¹²

- The covenant is an unconditional one: Abraham received God's promises by grace. Abraham was a passive recipient of the promises that came to him through the covenant. It was a covenant that God initiated in his sovereignty and ratified by assuming the responsibility to be faithful to His promises contained in the covenant.

"So when God said to Abraham 4,000 years ago, "Behold, my covenant is with you and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations," he opened the way for anyone of us, no matter what nation we belong to, to become a child of Abraham and an heir of God's promises. All we have to do is share the faith of Abraham—that is, bank our hope on God's promises, so much so that if obedience requires it, we could give up our dearest possession like Abraham gave up Isaac. We don't become heirs of Abraham's promises by working for God but by being confident that God works for us."¹³

The Sign of the Covenant (Genesis 17:1-22):

So, Abraham was 75 when he left for Canaan (12:4). He settled there for 10 years (16:3) and turned 86 years old just after Ishmael was born (16:16). At 99 years old, God commands Abraham to become circumcised (17:1). But now, almost 25 years later, Abraham was still without this 'seed' that God had promised him. It wouldn't be until Abraham turned 100 years old that Isaac would be born (21:5).

Just as the rainbow was the sign (what helped God to remember His promise) of His covenant promise with Noah, circumcision would now become the sign of God's promise with Abraham.

Why Circumcision?

A rainbow makes sense for a sign of a covenant promise to not destroy the world by a flood. But how is circumcision a logical and reasonable sign for God's covenant with Abraham?

1. **A Sign of Commitment** – Abraham has been waiting for an heir for 25 years. At 99 years old God puts another requirement upon him before he will receive his son: cut the foreskin off of the body part that will make a descendant possible. Not only had circumcision not been done before, they didn't have the nice surgical tools we have today. What if he made a mistake? How well would he heal at 99 years old? Abraham's immediate and costly obedience is a demonstration of his continued faith in God's promise. It is a sign to God as well as to Abraham.
2. **A Sign of Permanence** – Circumcision cannot be undone just like God's promise cannot be taken back or augmented. Every time reproduction happened between Abraham and Sarah (or any of Abraham's descendants), they would have a reminder of God's promise to them ("...an everlasting covenant to you and your descendants after you..." 17:7).
3. **A Sign of Identity** – Abraham and his descendants would be marked men and distinguished from all other men on the planet. They would be identified as children of Abraham by this physical feature. When fathers circumcise their sons, other boys watching will ask, "Father, why are we cutting him?" The question will prompt the Father to tell the younger boy who the sons of Abraham are and remind him of the God whom they all serve.

¹² Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Ge 15:17–21). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹³ Piper, John. *God's Covenant with Abraham*. © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org.

4. A Sign of Accountability – As Israel entered the Promised Land they were confronted with pagan idol worship at every turn. Baal and Asherah worship were very sexual in nature – involving cult prostitutes for both sexes. What would happen when a Jewish man was lured to a pagan temple and joined with a prostitute to worship? The prostitute would certainly ask a question about why his male parts didn't look like all the other male parts. He would be immediately reminded of his identity.

Conditional or Unconditional?

The language in Genesis 17 is firm: anyone who is not circumcised, "that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant" (17:14). This has led many scholars to suggest that the Abrahamic covenant is a conditional one (or was conditional until Genesis 22:17 & then became unconditional).

Even though we have the requirement of circumcision, I believe the covenant itself remains unconditional. God's declaration of righteousness is given to Abraham 25 years before the requirement of circumcision. Paul, in Romans 4:1-12, emphasizes that God graciously credits righteousness to Abraham by virtue of faith *before* circumcision was required. Nevertheless, how should we understand the language of 'being cut off' if the covenant is broken? Some helpful quotes on this point:

- "Abraham's obedience to God's commandments does function as *the means* by which he experiences God's blessing on a day to day basis. These commandments function as *conditions* for Abraham's *historical experience* of divine blessing, for as he obeys God, God blesses him more and more. But these obligations do not condition the fundamental intention to bless Abraham. They condition the *how* and the *when* of the blessing."¹⁴ (cf. especially Genesis 18:18-19)
- "A grant covenant does not, however, exclude obligations from the overall relationship of a recipient to his master. Disobedience or disloyalty are punishable offenses. The punishment may take away the enjoyment of the grant temporarily (as in the case of imprisonment) or permanently (through capital punishment). Yet the unconditional nature of the grant covenant guarantees the legal possession of the gift even during the period of such punishment. In the case of capital punishment, the grant covenant guarantees the inheritance of the gift by the recipient's heirs." (PD, 132)
- "*Faith* in God's promises—or today we would say, faith in *Christ*, who is the confirmation of God's promises—is the way to become a child of Abraham; *obedience* is the evidence that faith is genuine (Genesis 22:12–19); therefore Jesus says in John 8:39, "If you were Abraham's children you would *do* what Abraham *did*."¹⁵
- "The promises of the Abrahamic Covenant are therefore certain and unconditional--they will be fulfilled. But, participation in the blessings of the covenant is conditioned upon faith and obedience."¹⁶

Believers in Jesus are Children of Abraham. But How?

- "The language of the covenant promise, 'I will bless you . . . and in you all families of the earth will be blessed' (Genesis 12:2-3), has come to mean that God blesses Christ, the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, and all those of Abraham and of the nations of the earth who are *in Him*."¹⁷
- "From the very beginning, God had in view that Jesus Christ would be the descendant of Abraham and that everyone who trusts in Christ would become an heir of Abraham's promise. So it says in Galatians 3:29, "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise." Or as Romans 4:16–17 says, "The promise is according to grace in order to be guaranteed to all Abraham's descendants, not only to [the Jews] but also to

¹⁴ Blaising, Craig, Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p. 133

¹⁵ Piper, John. *God's Covenant with Abraham*. © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org.

¹⁶ Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan*.

¹⁷ Blaising, Bock. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p. 190.

[Gentiles] who share the faith of Abraham, who is father of us all, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations.'"¹⁸

In Summary:

"Concerning God's covenant with Abraham, this morning I want you to take away three things: First, then, you who hope in Christ are the descendants of Abraham and heirs of the covenant promises. Second, the covenant promise that God will be your God is spectacular beyond imagination. It means that God engages all his omnipotence and all his omniscience all the time to do good to you in all the circumstances of your life with all his heart and with all his soul. These promises are sure, rooted in God's unchanging truthfulness and confirmed by Christ's coming."¹⁹

"The Abrahamic covenant clarifies the way in which God will fulfill for humanity the blessing promised to Noah for all flesh. A principle of mediation has been introduced, beginning with Abraham and transferring to his descendants who are selected and accepted by God. From the mediator(s), the blessing passes to others. The blessing is not fully detailed in the Genesis narratives but subject to further revelation."²⁰

"The only candidates for the blessing of Abraham are sinners. That's why Jesus had to come to confirm the covenant. Not even Abraham could have enjoyed the blessing of Abraham if Jesus hadn't come. Abraham, too, was a sinner. While Mary carried the Lord Jesus in her womb, she sang a song and said, "The Lord has shown strength with his arm . . . He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his *mercy*, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever" (Luke 1:51, 54–55). The child in her womb was the remembrance of God's *mercy* as he had promised it to Abraham. *Mercy*, mind you! Christ confirms the covenant because in his life of obedience and innocent suffering he settles the accounts of the children of Abraham, so that God can be just and yet say to me a sinner: "I am your God." "If he did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not with him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). That spectacular promise cannot be bought or earned. *But it can be believed.* And if you believe it, everything changes."²¹

The Scope of the Story so far:

Even after the fall of humanity, God still desires a relationship with mankind and makes the foundational promise in Genesis 3:15 that he will do so. Sin, however, becomes an ever-increasing problem. God brings judgment upon the earth through which He saves a righteous remnant of eight people through whom He plans on orchestrating his plan of redemption. From Noah's descendants, God selects a man, Abraham, to be a father of a nation that will bear God's name and be a blessing to all. The catch is, we don't know how any of these promises are actually going to come to fruition. . .yet.

Tough Questions:

1. Has God kept his promise he made to Abraham?
2. How many parallels can you find between the life of Abraham and the story of the Nation of Israel?

¹⁸ Piper, John. *God's Covenant with Abraham*. © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org.

¹⁹ Piper, John. Sermon: *God's Covenant with Abraham*. © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org

²⁰ Blaising, Craig. Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p. 139

²¹ Piper, John. *God's Covenant with Abraham*. © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org. Italics mine.

Promised Redemption

Week 5: The Mosaic Covenant

"The covenant that God made with Abraham was renewed with his son Isaac. In Genesis 26:3 God says to Isaac, "To you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath which I swore to Abraham your father." And then to Isaac's son, Jacob, God appeared at Bethel and confirmed the covenant to him: "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants; and your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth . . . and by you and your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go." At the time Jacob may not have known that he would be going to Egypt and that for four hundred years his descendants would be slaves and that the promise would lie dormant until God confirmed it afresh with Moses."¹

Background & Overview of the Covenant (Exodus 19-24:11)

"At Mount Sinai God established a covenant with Israel that formed them into the nation, the people of God. The purpose was to form a nation that would be holy, so that it could be a priestly nation. This recalls the intent of the Abrahamic Covenant promises that the seed would be the means of blessing to the world."²

Just as God called Noah and Abraham out of their homeland to become his representatives, now God has called an entire nation of people out of Egypt to become His sole possession and representatives on the earth. What God had been accomplishing in the story of redemption through singular men (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob), God would now accomplish through a singular nation of people. Though we call this the Mosaic Covenant, the covenant itself isn't technically made with Moses. It is made with the entire Nation of Israel. This, then, is the first covenant that is made with a collective people rather than an individual.³

The inauguration of this covenant is the single most important event in the life of the Nation of Israel – even to this very day.

Where is it found?

The Mosaic covenant begins in Exodus 19 when the Nation of Israel arrives at Mount Sinai after a three-month journey from Egypt. The story of the giving, ratification and inauguration of the covenant spans all the way through the middle of chapter 24. It is also repeated just before the nation enters the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 4-5.

The Ten Commandments are certainly the hallmark of the Mosaic Covenant, but they are not the entirety of it. There were additional terms to the covenant that were further specified to Moses in Exodus 21-23.

Is the Mosaic Covenant conditional or unconditional?

The Mosaic covenant is in the form of a common day Suzerain-Vassal Treaty (King-Subjects). This was a bilateral agreement between the king and the nation subject to him in which the king promised to allow his subjects to enjoy life under his beneficent reign in return for their loyal service to him. This offered the recipients of the Mosaic covenant the opportunity to experience some of the blessings that God promised Abraham if they obeyed the law, but would no longer be protected by their "King" if they did not. Thus, it is a conditional covenant.

¹ Piper, John. *God's Covenant with Moses*. © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org.

² Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan*.

³ It is important to notice here that God is making a covenant with a large number of people (the seed of Abraham) through the mediation of one man, Moses. Jesus, like Moses, mediates a New Covenant with all of God's people. It is important to consider all of the parallels between the person and role of Moses and the person and role of Jesus.

Due to its conditional nature, the New Testament authors will often refer to the terms of the Mosaic Covenant as the Law of Moses or, more simply, the Law. If you obey the Law, you receive blessing. If you disobey the Law, you receive a curse.

“Because the nation was a theocracy, then God’s word was Law--hence, the LAW. The Law was never given as--never intended to be--a means of salvation. Spiritual salvation has always been by God’s grace through faith, and not by works.⁴ The Law was given to a nation of believers (largely) who had come out of Egypt by faith through the application of the blood of the lamb. No one was ever redeemed by the works of the Law.”

What relationship does the Mosaic Covenant have with the Abrahamic Covenant?

God made a promise that Abraham’s descendants would become a great nation and be a blessing to all other nations. Yet, here they were just out of slavery to perhaps the greatest nation in the world at that time, Egypt. Abraham and Isaac were long gone & it appeared that God’s promise wasn’t worth all that much. It would be easy to assume that God makes this covenant with Moses to re-invent the promise He made with Abraham – thereby replacing it.

However, we learn from Deuteronomy 4 and 5 that it was not God’s intention to replace the Abrahamic promise with the Mosaic. Instead, the Mosaic covenant would be an expansion and a development of the promises made to Abraham (see Deuteronomy 4: 35-38, 5: 2-5). With Abraham the patriarch, God opened the door for relationship with Himself through faith – with blessing promised (but not realized) for all his descendants and all nations. In covenanting with Israel through Moses, God makes it possible for the nation to experience at least some of the blessings promised to Abram. Hence, the Mosaic covenant is a part of the Abrahamic covenant and also serves to give the nation an identity and geography:

SEED (Ex. 19:3): The “seed” is Israel (“the house of Jacob, the sons of Israel”). God had taken Jacob/Israel’s son, Joseph, and *planted* him in Goshen in Egypt. There the family of Jacob (around 70 people) grew into a nation of over 600K men by the time of the Exodus just 400 years later. God is transplanting the seed from Goshen to Canaan. From there they would be able to fulfill the purpose of God’s promise to Abraham.

LAND (Ex. 23:20-33): While the promise of the land is not the main focus of the Mosaic Covenant, it is a necessary part of becoming a nation (what nation is there that doesn’t have its own political borders and boundaries?). God is going to lead the nation of Israel (the sons of Jacob) back to the land Jacob had come from. Jacob left it as it was dying in famine and the nation would return to find it lush and fruitful. However, the guarantee of land was contingent upon obedience. The possession of land under the Mosaic Covenant is not unilateral. It would be conquered and possessed by faith and obedience or it would not be conquered at all.

DOMINION (Ex 19:5-6, 23:20-33, Deut 4:38): Dominion has two facets in the Mosaic Covenant. First, in God’s claiming of the Nation as His own possession, God is declaring that the Nation should be a theocracy with God as King. He would look for suitable men to rule on His behalf. The other facet of dominion is the dominion the nation would have not just over plants, animals and birds, but over all of the other nations they would encounter. If they were obedient, God would always grant them victory.

⁴ Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan*. He goes on to say, “In Romans 4 Paul makes this point by showing that Abraham was justified by faith long before the Law was even revealed. An Israelite came to faith the same way we do--believing the word of God, trusting in God’s provision of forgiveness and atonement, and demonstrating his faith by living a righteous life. He just did not know how it was all going to work out--who would eventually pay for the sins once and for all. But God could grant them forgiveness and eternal life on the basis of the blood of Christ, for God knew how the sins were to be paid, from the foundations of the world.”

Promises & Conditions of the Covenant

Because the covenant is spread out over such a wide area of text, a summary of the promises and conditions is most helpful:

Promises of the Covenant

1. Israel will be God's own possession among all the peoples (19:5)
2. Israel will be a kingdom of priests (19:6)
3. Israel will be a holy nation (19:6)
4. God will defend Israel from all her enemies (23:22)
5. God will be merciful and gracious and forgiving (34:6-7)
6. God will bring Israel into the Promised Land of Canaan (23:23)
7. Israel will become fruitful and multiply in the Land (23:30)

Conditions of the Covenant

1. Israel must obey God's word completely & totally.

The same promises made to Abraham are re-confirmed in the Mosaic Covenant:

1. God will bless them (Deut 7:13-15; 28:3-12)
2. God will multiply them (Deut 6:3; 8:1; 28:11)
3. God will give them this land (Deut 6:3; 8:1; 9:4; 28:11)
4. God will make them a great nation (Deut 7:14; 28:1, 3)
5. God will be their God and they will be his people (Deut 7:6-10; 28:9-10)

". . . it is fitting that in many respects the account should foreshadow the making of the covenant at Sinai. The opening statement in 15:7: 'I am the LORD, who brought you up out of Ur of the Chaldeans,' is virtually identical to the opening statement of the Sinai covenant in Exodus 20:2: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.' The expression 'Ur of the Chaldeans' refers back to Genesis 11:28, 31 and grounds the present covenant in a past act of divine salvation from 'Babylon,' just as Exodus 20:2 grounds the Sinai covenant in an act of divine salvation from Egypt. The coming of God's presence in the awesome fire and darkness of Mount Sinai (Ex 19:18; 20:18; Dt 4:11) appears to be intentionally reflected in Abraham's pyrotechnic vision (Ge 15:12, 17). In the Lord's words to Abraham (15:13-16) the connection between Abraham's covenant and the Sinai covenant is explicitly made by means of the reference to the four hundred years of bondage of Abraham's seed and their subsequent 'exodus' ('and after this they will go out,' v. 14). Such considerations lead to the conclusion that the author intends to draw the reader's attention to the events at Sinai in his depiction of the covenant with Abraham.

"If we ask why the author has sought to bring the picture of Sinai here, the answer lies in the purpose of the book. It is part of the overall strategy of the book to show that what God did at Sinai was part of a larger plan which had already been put into action with the patriarchs. Thus, the exodus and the Sinai covenant serve as reminders not only of God's power and grace but also of God's faithfulness. What he sets out to accomplish with his people, he will carry through to the end."⁵

"The Law of Moses was given to the people of God to direct them in the way of obedience so that they could enjoy the blessings of God on their life and fulfill their calling to be a kingdom of priests. To do this the Law regulated the life and the ritual of the people, and in the process it revealed sin as it revealed the holiness of the LORD who was the king. Ultimately, it was God's intent that the Law be a tutor, a pedagogue (Gal. 3) to bring us to Christ."⁶

⁵ Sailhamer, John H. *The Pentateuch as Narrative*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992. p. 152

⁶ Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan*.

Implications & Fulfillment of the Covenant

1. The Mosaic Covenant was NOT a means of Salvation – it's a means of sanctification:

- a. We must remember that the Nation of Israel was 'saved' by the mighty hand and outstretched arm of God and the blood of the Lamb. By the time they reach Sinai, they are already a 'saved' people.
- b. "The law did not change the provisions or abrogate the promises that God gave in the Abrahamic Covenant. God *did not give it as a means of justification for unbelievers* (Acts 15:10-11; Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:3-9, 14, 17, 24-25) but as a means of sanctification, rules for living, for a redeemed people. It clarified for them that purity and holiness should characterize their lives as the people of God. It was "child training" through disciplinary restriction and correction designed to prepare them for the coming of Christ when they as a people would "come of age" (Deut. 6:24; Gal. 3:24, 26; 4:1-7; Titus 2:11-12). The Israelites, however, misinterpreted the purpose of the law and sought to obtain righteousness by their good deeds and ceremonial ordinances (Acts 15:1; Rom. 9:31—10:3; 1 Tim. 1:8-10). Israel's history was one long record of violating the law even to rejecting their own Messiah."⁷
- c. "It is important to remember that the Abrahamic covenant is the fundamental relationship. The Mosaic covenant is dependent upon it. Even though a certain generation (or generations) fails the terms of the Mosaic covenant and experiences the curse instead of the blessing, the opportunity still exists for a renewed offer of blessing to that generation or later descendants of Abraham."⁸

2. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Law:

- a. Matthew 5:17-18
 - i. "Jesus fulfilled the Scripture by replicating in His own life the patterns of God's historical relations with Israel and by accomplishing in His own history the predicted events of prophecy . . . The accomplishing of the covenants, the prophecies, and the patterns of Scripture take place in the history of His ministry – some during the time of His birth, childhood, and adult pre-ascension ministry, some in His death, resurrection, and ascension, some in His present session, and the rest in His future and everlasting reign. It is in this 'accomplishment' of the covenants, the prophecies and patterns of Scripture, that the Mosaic covenant as such is said to be fulfilled and replaced by a new covenant which abides forever. "⁹
- b. Galatians 3:1-29, 4:21-31
- c. Ephesians 2:14-15
- d. Romans 7:1-6, 10:1-10

The Big Picture:

"Reconfirming the gracious character of the patriarchal grant, the Lord first bound that generation of Israel to himself by faith (Ex. 14:31), and *then* He established a covenant with them to bring them into their day-to-day history and experience of the blessings promised to the patriarchs."¹⁰

Tough Questions:

1. How can an entire nation keep or break a covenant? What if 60% are disobedient, but 40% are obedient?
2. Is it a sin not to observe the Sabbath as described in Exodus 20?

⁷ Constable, Thomas. *The Book of Exodus*. p. 94-95. Italics mine. (via www.soniclight.com)

⁸ Blaising, Craig. Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p. 144.

⁹ Ibid. p. 195. We will discuss this and the other Bible passages further later on in this study.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 141.

Promised Redemption

Week 7: The Davidic Covenant

"After the conquest of Canaan when Israel's loyalty to YHWH lapsed, YHWH's protection of his people also lapsed. By the time of Samuel and Saul, the Philistines threatened the very existence of Israel. The institution of the Davidic covenant, vested in a vassal [the Davidic king] loyal to the suzerain [Yahweh], constituted an earnest of protection, vouchsafed but virtually impossible to realize in the Sinaitic covenant. The suzerain-vassal model as a legal framework for both the Sinaitic and Davidic covenants validated the basis on which YHWH's protection was to be obtained. There now existed no provision for national protection other than within the framework of a suzerain-vassal type of relationship with YHWH. But the Davidic covenant did away with the necessity that all Israel—to a man—maintain loyalty to YHWH in order to merit his protection. In the analogy of suzerain-vassal relationships, David's designation as YHWH's 'son' and 'firstborn' (2 Sam 7: 14; Pss 2: 6-7; 89: 27) legitimized him as Israel's representative—as the embodiment of YHWH's covenant people, also called his 'son' and 'firstborn' (Exod 4: 22). With regard to Israel's protection, the Davidic covenant superseded the Sinaitic covenant, but only because of Israel's regression in her loyalty toward YHWH (compare 1 Sam 8: 7). Henceforth, the king stood as proxy between YHWH and his people."¹

"From God's plan it had always been the will of God that His theocracy would be centered in Jerusalem and be administered by His king who would be known as His Son. The plan of creation, reiterated by the covenants, promised a SEED and a LAND and DOMINION. The people rushed the plan of God by demanding a king like the other nations--and so he gave them one, Saul. Ultimately, because of the people's unbelief, the monarchy failed as the administration of the theocracy. People could rule over the nation, but could not rule themselves. They were eventually run out of the land and lost dominion and kingship with the exile."²

Background & Overview

- **2 Samuel 1-4** – David establishes his kingship after Saul's death
- **2 Samuel 5** – David confirmed as King & takes Jerusalem from the Jebusites
- **2 Samuel 6** – The Recovery of the Ark & David's Procession to Jerusalem
- **2 Samuel 7** – Once peace is restored to the kingdom, David wishes to build a 'house' for the Lord now that he has relocated the Ark to his capital city of Jerusalem. Instead, God promises a 'house' to David.

Promises & Conditions of the Covenant

The covenant with David is found primarily in 2 Samuel 7, but can also be found referenced in several other locations. In fact, the Davidic covenant is the most mentioned covenant in the Hebrew Bible (1 Chron. 17, Ps. 89, 110, 132, 2 Sam 23:5, 1 Ki. 8:23, 2 Chron. 13:5, 2 Chron. 21:7).

2 Samuel 7:1-7

The Hebrew word for 'house' (*bayit*) is repeated 15 times in this chapter and, since we have the perspective of history, we realize there is a lot of play on the word throughout the chapter. David begins using the word to describe a physical building. Later, God promises David a dynasty (house) in reference to his descendants. Ultimately we see that the temple that David's son would build becomes euphemistic for the coming of the Divine Son, Jesus Christ, who, in turn, makes it possible for us as believers to become the 'temple' of God. Needless to say, there is a lot going on here. ☺

"In the ancient Near East the people did not consider a king's sovereignty fully established until he had built himself an appropriate palace. The people of ancient Near Eastern countries

¹ Avraham Gileadi, "The Davidic Covenant: A Theological Basis for Corporate Protection," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration*, p. 160.

² Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan*.

also regarded the kings as the vice-regents of their gods. Therefore they viewed the temples of the gods as the palaces of the true kings. This view existed in Israel as well. David thought it inappropriate for him as second-in-command to live in such a magnificent palace while his commander-in-chief's dwelling was only a temporary much less impressive structure. The Canaanites often built a temple in honor of a god who gave them victory over their enemies."³

"Building and maintaining a temple is a priestly act. Since the Davidic king builds and maintains the house of God, it is not surprising that he is described in Scripture as a kind of priest."⁴

- Although David is the Anointed King of Israel, he begins acting like a priest in chapter 6:
 - He decides to move the Ark (v. 12)
 - He makes sacrifices (v. 13, 17)
 - He leads the priests in celebration (v. 12-14, 18-19)
 - He wears a priestly garment (v. 14)
- Not only that, he has just conquered Jerusalem, the ancient city of Salem (which means peace). Thus, David would now sit on the throne of Melchizedek (who was also a king-priest) who just so happened to make a tithe/tribute to Abram after he conquered his enemies in battle (Genesis 14:18-20).
 - Psalm 110 sings about this and is the most often quoted Psalm in the New Testament.
- Once he decides to build God a house in chapter 7, David, the king-priest of Jerusalem (the city of peace) sets his face towards building the temple of God.

2 Samuel 7:8-17

Before David can lift a finger to build the temple, the LORD establishes a covenant with David wherein David's son will build the temple and the LORD will build David a dynasty (the first and only dynasty of Israel). Before listing the promises, God reminds David of his sovereign plan, abiding presence and faithful protection (v.8-9). Within this context, God delivers five promises:

- v. 9 – Promise of a great name to David
 - God promised the same thing to Abraham – a great name = great influence.
- v. 10-11 – Promise of land and peace therein to the nation of Israel [LAND]
 - For the first time the promise of land is accompanied by the promise of peace. With the Davidic King reigning on the throne from Jerusalem ("city of peace") the entire land will enjoy the peace that the King establishes. It will be a time of prosperity and rest.
- v. 12 – Promise of a 'descendant' to David [SEED]
 - As we learned in talking about Abraham the word 'descendant' (*zera*) is always plural. Thus, Solomon is the immediate referent of the promise, but as we have seen with the other covenants, the meaning can be expanded as God's revelation progressively unfolds to mean an ultimate descendant who will occupy the throne: King Jesus.
- v. 13,16 – Promise of an eternal dynasty [DOMINION]
 - The key word here is "forever". God promises David a dynasty that will never be overthrown or snuffed out. The establishment of his descendant's kingdom will come only by the sovereign hand of God.
- v. 14-15 – Promise of a relationship between God and the 'descendant'
 - "The title "Son" was introduced into the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7, and would apply to every king of Judah that God ordained. But ultimately one would come for whom the designation "son" meant much more, i.e., that he shared the divine nature of the Father. Kingship would then be focused on Him in a greater way than David, Solomon, or any of the others."⁵

³ Constable, Tom. *Notes on 2 Samuel*. p. 30

⁴ Blaising, Craig. Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p. 161

⁵ Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan*.

- God's Sovereignty is emphasized through his adoption of the Davidic king as his son, ultimately realized in the person Jesus Christ, the Son of God and King of Israel.
- The Royal Psalms (Psalms written for the King of Israel) recognize the adoption of the Davidic king as the Son of God:
 - Psalm 2:2—The Davidic king is referred to as the Lord's "Anointed One." The Hebrew word for this is literally "Messiah," and the Greek word is "Christ."
 - Psalm 2:6-7—Quotes 2 Samuel 7:14. "*God says, 'I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.' I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: He said to me, 'You are my Son, today I have become your Father.'"*
 - Psalm 45:6-7—Addresses the king, 'O God,' signifying the king's anointing; clearly a reference to Jesus and His deity. "*Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.*"
 - Hebrews 1 applies the Davidic Covenant and the Royal Psalms specifically to Jesus, confirming that the eternal rule of the Davidic line was consummated in and through Jesus' eternal rule. "*In these last days, God has spoken to us by his Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2).*"

"The promise to David was that his son would establish the mode by which God would be present among his people, and by which the people in turn would worship God."⁶

Is the Davidic Covenant conditional or unconditional?

God's promise to David is obviously unconditional. There are no conditions for David to meet for the promises to come true. However, much like the covenant with Abraham, those who come from David's loins will have a condition to meet if they wish to share in the promises made to David.

- See 1 Chronicles 28:5-6, 1 Kings 2:2-4; 6:12; 8:25; 9:4-9
- "God's promise to raise up a descendant is unconditional. But a continuous, uninterrupted reign is not."⁷

"Israel learned over the centuries following David and Solomon that disobedience in her king always brought the nation to ruin. But the godly among them knew one thing for sure: God had promised that the throne of David would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:4). So they came to see that a son of David must be coming who would fulfill the conditions of the covenant, sit on David's throne, and rule forever. A succession of imperfect kings could never fulfill the promise. If God were true to his word, if he stuck by his job description in 2 Samuel 7, he would have to raise up a righteous, obedient son of David to take the throne (see Psalm 89:29-37)."⁸

Implications & Fulfillment of the Covenant

The ripple effects of God's promise to David radiate out from 2 Samuel 7 throughout the rest of the narrative of Scripture – all the way to the final chapter of Revelation:

- 1 Kings 2:1-4 – On his deathbed, David passes the baton to Solomon and illustrates the future conditionality of the covenant that still remains unconditionally promised to David.
- 1 Kings 8:22-27 – Solomon remembers his father's word once the temple is complete.
- 1 Kings 11:11-13 – Solomon blows it and has the kingdom torn away from him much like Saul. Nevertheless, God remembers his promise to David & we await the next Davidic King who will be an even greater David.
- Ezekiel 37:23-ff, Jeremiah 23:5-6, Isaiah 9:6-7 – The prophets begin to see visions and hear from God about a coming King who will, indeed, fulfill the promises made to David.

⁶ Blaising, Craig. Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p.160

⁷ *ibid.* p. 164

⁸ Piper, John. *God's Covenant with David*. © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org.

- Luke 1:31-33 – The angel Gabriel informs a simple woman, Mary, that she will bear a son who will be called “Son of the Most High”⁹ who will give him the throne of his “father” David and whose kingdom will have no end.”
- Luke 1:55 – Mary recognizes exactly what is happening. God is fulfilling his promise from Genesis 12 by bringing the King – the Messiah – through her womb.
- Luke 1:67-79 – Zechariah, the priestly father of John the Baptist, echoes Mary’s sentiment in his prophecy recognizing the entire scope of redemption that was upon them.
- Acts 2:22-36 – After Jesus’ resurrection, Peter interprets David’s words from Psalm 16 as prophetic – saying that they foretold the promised resurrection of the Messiah (compare 2 Samuel 7:12). It is all the evidence he needs to declare him Lord and Christ (Messiah).
- Acts 13:23-41 – Paul proclaims the entire story of redemption to the hearers in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch that God’s promises are fulfilled in Jesus the Christ.
- Acts 15:13-18 – James speaks to the council at Jerusalem about the Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus. He quotes Amos 9:11 and realizes that it is coming true (cf. 2 Samuel 7:16).
- Revelation 11:15, 22:16-17 – All of the promises made to David come true.

“The raising up of Jesus son of David from the dead, His title *Son of God*, His enthronement at the right hand of God, and His activity of blessing Jews and all other peoples who bless Him, who trust in Him, are all aspects of the Davidic promise.”^{10 11}

The Big Picture:

The Davidic Covenant & the Abrahamic Covenant

“The descendants of Abraham have been restructured politically so that the function of mediating blessing rests chiefly with the king. Whereas God had said, “I will bless you,” the *you* must now be seen in a political structure with the king at the top, receiving the blessing and mediating it to the rest of the people. And whereas God had said that He would bless all nations “in you” and “in your descendants”, the “you” and “descendants” must likewise no longer be taken in a uniform sense of all the descendants generally, but in a monarchical sense, meaning first of all the king and then the nation in submission to him. It is through him and his rule that the Abrahamic covenant promise to bless all nations will be fulfilled.”¹²

“The promise that David and his seed would be kings fulfilled the even more ancient Abrahamic Covenant blessing that the patriarchs would be the fathers of kings (Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11). To Judah, great-grandson of Abraham, was given the explicit pledge that a promised ruler would come from Judah (Gen. 49:10). Samuel anointed this one from Judah, David himself, of whom the Lord said, “He is the one” (1 Sam. 16:12). David was aware of his election by God and of the theological significance of that election as part of the messianic line that would result in a divine Descendant and King (Pss. 2:6-7; 110; cf. Ethan’s words in Ps. 89:3-4). The prophets also attested to the Davidic Messiah, the One who would rule over all and forever on His throne (Isa. 9:1-7; 11:1-5; Jer. 30:4-11 ; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Amos 9:11-15).”¹³

Tough Questions:

1. Is Jesus sitting on the throne of David right now or are we still waiting for that to happen?

⁹ Interesting to note that this same terminology is used to describe Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18.

¹⁰ Blaising, Craig. Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p. 177-178 (see also Romans 4:1-4, 2 Tim. 2:8)

¹¹ “All conservative [Christian] interpreters of the Bible recognize that the promise has its ultimate fulfillment in Christ. Again the amillennial and premillennial differences in explaining eschatology come to the fore, however. The amillennial position is that Christ is now on the throne of David in heaven, equating the heavenly throne with the earthly throne of David, whereas the traditional premillennial view is that the Davidic throne will be occupied at the second coming of Christ when Christ assumes his rule in Jerusalem.” (J. Walvoord, “The New Covenant,” in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*, pp. 192-93.)

¹² Blaising, Craig. Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p. 168

¹³ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2 Sa 7:3–17). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Promised Redemption

Week 8: The New Covenant in the Prophets

Despite God's provision of a dynasty of kings to provide for the needs of the people, the kings would repeatedly fall into idolatry and unrighteousness again and again. As we have seen time and again in this study, whenever we have the failure or rebellion of God's people, His judgment is not far behind. So, the Northern Kingdom is exiled by the Assyrians in 722 BC and the Southern Kingdom is exiled to Babylon in 586 BC. At that moment it must have seemed that all of God's promises up till that point had been nullified and had come to an end. God used the *pagan* nations of Assyria and Babylon to discipline the *royal priesthood* of God.

Much like in the times of Noah, however, there remained a righteous remnant of true believers who still had to endure this judgment from God. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke during Israel's darkest hour of a coming time when the nation would no longer be in exile and when she would no longer act wickedly as she had previously. Within their writings came the promise of a New Covenant for the Nation of Israel where all the promises of God would finally come to fulfillment.

The New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34

Jeremiah is a pre-exilic prophet-priest who lived during the days of Josiah (627-580 BC). His name means "Yahweh Lifts Up" and he consistently struggled with his own prophetic office (1:1-7). Jeremiah was called into his ministry just as the kingdom of Babylon was coming to power and just as the kingdom of Judah was lapsing out of Josiah's reforms and back into idolatry. Jeremiah is a character much like Moses was – only his prophecies declare the destruction of the nation rather than her emancipation. Nevertheless, Jeremiah always has a thread of hope running through his entire book – and his prophecy about the New Covenant is probably the most significant.

A Basic Outline of the Promises of the New Covenant:

- 1. It will be a new covenant made with both the house of Israel & Judah (31:31).**
 - a. The nation of Israel had been wiped away in 722 BC for her wicked disobedience and the nation of Judah was about to suffer the same fate. Just as we have seen since Genesis chapter 3 God is not thwarted by humanity's rebellion or insolence. God continues to work toward the redemption He has promised in spite of and together with the sinful people He has chosen for Himself.
- 2. It will be fundamentally different from the Old Covenant in that it will ensure the people's faithfulness (31:32) (cf. Exodus 19:1-24:11).**
 - a. The language here is similar to the language we read about in Exodus 19:1-6. At Sinai, God declared that he was the new owner of the nation of Israel. As the sovereign, God laid out His terms of relationship to the people and asked them to enter into covenant with him. They agreed. The health of the relationship, then, was dependent upon the obedience of the people to the terms of the covenant.
 - b. Yet, Israel had gone after the Baals even though God had remained faithful to His people (see Jeremiah 3:14).
 - i. "There is a wordplay between the term "true master" and the name of the pagan god Baal. The pronoun "I" is emphatic, creating a contrast between the LORD as Israel's true master/husband versus Baal as Israel's illegitimate lover/master. See 2:23-25."¹
- 3. God's law (*tora*) will be written on the hearts of people (31:33) (cf. Deut. 30:5-6)**
 - a. "Instead of God's law being external to them, the Lord would write it on their heart (i.e., mind and will; cf. 17:1). He would do something for them that they could not do for themselves (cf. Deut. 30:5-6). Writing on the heart suggests the removal of

¹ Biblical Studies Press. (2006; 2006). *The NET Bible First Edition*.

written documents and merely human mediators. Having the Lord's word in the heart prevents sin and fosters obedience (cf. Deut. 11:18; Ps. 40:8; 119:11)."²

- b. "Two contexts are relevant for understanding this statement. First is the context of the first or old covenant which was characterized by a law written on stone tablets (e.g., Exod 32:15–16; 34:1, 28; Deut 4:13; 5:22; 9:10) or in a "book" or "scroll" (Deut 31:9–13) which could be lost (cf. 2 Kgs 22:8), forgotten (Hos 4:6), ignored (Jer 6:19; Amos 4:2), or altered (Jer 8:8). Second is the context of the repeated fault that Jeremiah has found with their stubborn (3:17; 7:24; 9:14; 11:8; 13:10; 16:12; 18:12; 23:17), uncircumcised (4:4; 9:26), and desperately wicked hearts (4:4; 17:9). Radical changes were necessary to get the people to obey the law from the heart and not just pay superficial or lip service to it (3:10; 12:2). Deut 30:1–6; Ezek 11:17–20; 36:24–28 speak of these radical changes. The LORD will remove the "foreskin" of their heart and give them a circumcised heart, or take away their "stony" heart and give them a new heart. With this heart they will be able to obey his laws, statutes, ordinances, and commands (Deut 30:8; Ezek 11:20; 36:27). The new covenant does not entail a new law; it is the same law that Jeremiah has repeatedly accused them of rejecting or ignoring (6:19; 9:13; 16:11; 26:4; 44:10). What does change is their inner commitment to keep it. Jeremiah has already referred to this in Jer 24:7 and will refer to it again in Jer 32:39."³

4. God's people will be His and He will be the God of His people (31:33)

- a. The very reason that God brought His people out of Egypt cannot happen without complete obedience to the terms of the covenant He stipulated to them in Exodus 19. Since man's heart was always evil continually, the external writing of the law would never allow the hearts of men to make room for God. The law would have to be internalized first and then, as a result, God would once again have his rightful place in the lives of his people as He did before the fall.

5. All of the people will know God (31:34)

- a. "The verb *know* (*yada*) here probably carries its most profound connotation, the intimate personal knowledge which arises between two persons who are committed wholly to one another in a relationship that touches mind, emotion, and will. In such a relationship the past is forgiven and forgotten."⁴
- b. "'Knowing" God in covenant contexts like this involves more than just an awareness of who he is. It involves an acknowledgment of his sovereignty and whole hearted commitment to obedience to him. This is perhaps best seen in the parallelisms in Hos 4:1; 6:6 where "the knowledge of God" is parallel with faithfulness and steadfast love and in the context of Hos 4 refers to obedience to the LORD's commands."⁵
- c. "This statement should be understood against the background of Jer 8:8–9 where class distinctions were drawn and certain people were considered to have more awareness and responsibility for knowing the law and also Jer 5:1–5 and 9:3–9 where the sinfulness of Israel was seen to be universal across these class distinctions and no trust was to be placed in friends, neighbors, or relatives because all without distinction had cast off God's yoke (i.e., refused to submit themselves to his authority)."⁶

6. God will forgive sin permanently (31:34)

- a. "They would know Him in this intimate way because He would forgive their sins and not bring them to memory or judgment any more. True forgiveness, in contrast to the covering of sin that the Old Covenant sacrifices provided, would make intimacy with God possible."⁷

² Constable, Thomas. *Notes on Jeremiah*. p.156

³ Biblical Studies Press. (2006; 2006). *The NET Bible First Edition*.

⁴ Thompson, J.A. *The Book of Jeremiah*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. p. 581

⁵ Biblical Studies Press. (2006; 2006). *The NET Bible First Edition*.

⁶ *ibid*.

⁷ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on Jeremiah*. p.156

The New Covenant in Ezekiel 36:22 – 37:28

Ezekiel is an exilic prophet who lived as a contemporary of Jeremiah, but was about 20 years younger than him. His ministry and calling did not begin until 593 and it lasted until 571 BC. His name means “Yahweh will Strengthen/Harden”. The book itself is most-likely written while Ezekiel is in exile in Babylon. There, Ezekiel picks up on the same theme from Jeremiah. Although he does not use the term ‘new covenant’, the elements that Ezekiel lists are so similar to Jeremiah’s that most scholars agree that we have an elaborated view of the promises that Jeremiah first outlined.

A Basic Outline of the Promises in Ezekiel (36:24 – 37:28)

1. God will gather the house of Israel back into the [LAND] (36:24, 28).
2. God will cleanse the nation from her filthiness (36:25, 29; Jer 31:34).
3. God will give his people a new heart – a heart of flesh (36:26; Jer 31:33).
4. God will put a new spirit within his people (36:26-27).
5. God will cause his people to be obedient (36:27; Jer. 31:32).
6. God will make his people His and become the only God of His people (36:28; Jer 31:33).
7. God will provide an abundance of food (36:29-30).
8. God will rebuild the ruined cities (36:33-36).
9. God will re-establish the population of the nation [SEED] (36:37-38).
10. God will resurrect the spiritually dead nation of Israel (37:1-14).
11. God will restore the kingdom of Israel under the Davidic King [DOMINION] (37:15-23).
12. God will make a covenant of peace with them & dwell with them forever (37:24-28).

It is important to remember that each of these promises are written to a nation that is now in exile because of her disobedience to God. Nevertheless, just as we have seen throughout our study, even though man rebels against God and His judgment comes – God is always about the business of recreating and redeeming. It’s also important to notice that *God will* accomplish all of these promises himself; it is clear that this is an unconditional covenant.

“God is saying that by divine action He will overcome the distance between external divine commands and internal human rebellion. He will make them to be the kind of people he wants them to be.”⁸

“In the new covenant, God will confirm His people in faith and obedience. It will be the supreme manifestation of grace. For He will give to His people that which He commands from them, and He will command that which He gives.”⁹

Implications & Fulfillment:

Dr. Alan Ross has a helpful summary of the implications of the New Covenant promises:¹⁰

SEED: The promise of a “seed” for Abraham through which the families of the earth will be blessed finds fulfillment in Christ. But then all of us who are “in Christ” are also the “seed of Abraham.” In salvation the promise of a seed will be fulfilled. Christ will present the redeemed in glory, saying, “Here I am and the children/seed you have given me” (from Hebrews from Isaiah 8). He will bring many sons/children to the kingdom to sit down with Abraham.

“The “seed of Abraham” can refer to the natural descendants of Abraham, Hebrews, and that would be the physical seed. It can refer to Israelites who believe, and they are the physical

⁸ Blaising, Craig. Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p.152 (compare with Deuteronomy 10:16)

⁹ *ibid*, p.155

¹⁰ Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan*.

and spiritual seed. It can also refer to non-Israelites who are in the covenant, and they--we--are the spiritual seed/descendants of Abraham, but not the physical descendants.

LAND: Many scholars argue that the land promises do not apply in salvation, for we are going to be in heaven. However, several hints suggest otherwise. Revelation 5 tells us that we are going to reign with Christ on earth. The same book reiterates from Isaiah that there will be a new heaven and earth, a new creation. And, Daniel and Revelation indicate that the saints will be from every tribe and nation and language on earth--they keep their unique identities in glory, but will be perfected, or glorified. The clue is that Jesus after the resurrection, although glorified, is still the man Jesus, albeit the God-man, Jesus the Son of God. The scores of passages about the age to come locate spiritual Israel in the Promised Land. And why not? Why should the promises not be fulfilled, albeit in a renewed creation? This is part of the study of the nature of the heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation, and the prophecies of the renovation of the holy land in Ezekiel, Isaiah and Zechariah.

DOMINION: In and with Christ the seed will reign with Christ on earth. Jesus will reign as king, even though we do not now see everything under his feet. But according to Hebrews 1, when the Father again brings the firstborn into the world, all the angels will bow, and everyone will bow and proclaim Him Lord. And as Christ's representatives, we will rule over cities and judge angels.

"The New Covenant is a branch of the Abrahamic Covenant. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised Abraham a piece of real estate for his descendants, an incalculable number of descendants, and blessing for his descendants and for all people through his descendants (Gen. 12: 1-7; et al.). Deuteronomy 29—30, sometimes called the Palestinian Covenant, gave more information about the land God had promised to Abraham. The Davidic Covenant gave more information about God's promises regarding descendants (2 Sam. 7). The New Covenant revealed the particulars of the promised blessing (Jer. 31). Each of these later covenants relates to the Abrahamic Covenant organically; each is an outgrowth of it in the progress of revelation. In contrast, the Mosaic (Old) Covenant does not relate organically but "was added" (Gal. 3: 19) to explain how the Israelites could maximize the benefits God had promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. Consequently when God terminated the Old Covenant it did not eliminate anything He had promised in the Abrahamic, "Palestinian," Davidic, or New Covenants."¹¹

"The promise of a new covenant shows the abiding nature of the Abrahamic covenant since the new covenant will be given precisely to bring the Abrahamic covenant promise to fulfillment. At the same time, the meaning of 'blessing' promised to the patriarchs is expanded to include the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the people and a divine operation on human hearts to make them holy. The blessing is also now seen to include immortal, everlasting life through the resurrection from the dead."¹²

Tough Questions:

1. How is the New Covenant inaugurated? It is prophesied here in the prophets, but how does it come to pass? When?
2. Does the church participate in the blessings of the new covenant? If so, how is that possible if these promises are made only to Israel? *What are the consequences of your answer?*

¹¹ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on Ezekiel*. p.158-159

¹² Blaising, Craig, Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p.158

Promised Redemption

Week 9: The New Covenant in the Gospels

"The fulfillment of all the covenant promises in the Bible hang on one thing--the person of the Messiah. There is no participation in the New Covenant apart from faith in Him. If indeed the Messiah is God manifested in the flesh, and there is only one God, then how could there be salvation apart from Him?"¹

"From the words of Jesus the night before the crucifixion, we can see the entire New Testament teaching on forgiveness as an extended exposition of the blessing of the new covenant, which is in turn a revelation of the specific meaning of the more generally stated Abrahamic promise: "I will *bless you*."²

There is only one occasion in the Gospels where Jesus refers to any covenants at all and it is recorded only in Matt 26:28 and Mk 14:24, the accounts of Jesus' last supper with His disciples. It just so happens that the covenant that Jesus refers to isn't the covenant with Abraham, Moses or David. He is referencing how the inauguration of the new covenant just hours away would provide the initial access to its promises. All other covenants have brought us to this point in the story. It culminates here. This one event, the death and resurrection of Messiah, will virtually complete the story of redemption.

Matthew 26:17-19, 26-30

v. 17-19: Passover & the Feast of Unleavened Bread

Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were two separate festivals that were part of the same holy week. Passover happened first and was only a day long and then the Feast of Unleavened Bread would last the remainder of the week. Thus, this would have been the Thursday of that particular week on 14 Nissan.³

"[Thursday] was the first day of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. On that first day Passover lambs were sacrificed (Mark 14:12). The Feast of Unleavened Bread followed immediately after the Passover; the entire eight-day event was sometimes called the Passover Week."⁴

Of course, the Passover meal and Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates Israel's Exodus from Egypt. The entire festal week would be focused on Israel's remembering all that God had done to ransom her from captivity and bring her into the Promised Land. In fact, the ritual of the Passover *seder* meal is arranged the way it is because the meal itself tells the story of the people:⁵

1. Opens with a prayer of thanksgiving
2. Drinking of the first cup: the cup of thanksgiving (cf. Exodus 6:4)
3. Eating of the bitter herbs
4. Singing of Psalms 113-114
5. Drinking of the second cup: the cup of bitterness (cf. Exodus 6:5)
6. Eating of the Lamb & unleavened bread as specified in Exodus 12
7. Drinking of the third cup: the cup of blessing (cf. Exodus 6:6; 1 Cor. 10:16)
8. Drinking of the fourth cup: the cup of praise (*hallel*) (cf. Exodus 6:7-8)
9. Singing of Psalms 115-118 (Matt. 26:30)

¹ Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan*.

² Blaising, Craig, Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p203

³ See Exodus 12:18 and Harold Hoehner's *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* p.81-93.

⁴ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Mt 26:17-19). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ For an excellent look at what this custom would have looked like in Jesus' day, you should read Alfred Edersheim's thorough volume, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

v. 26: The Blessing and Breaking of the Bread

In addition to eating Lamb and bitter herbs at the Passover meal, the Jews were also required to eat bread without leaven (Ex 12:8). The absence of leaven was practical in application because the salvation the Lord was bringing about would happen quickly and they would not have time for the leaven to rise within the bread (Ex 12:11). Throughout the revelation of Scripture leaven has also come to symbolize the presence of sin.

The significance of unleavened bread is not limited to Passover alone. Besides being mentioned over 300 times in the Scriptures, we find bread in some very significant places and functioning as a very significant symbol in the Bible. Consider these passages: Gen. 14:18; Ex. 16:1-32, 25:30, 35:13, 39:36; Lev. 8, 21:22; Deut. 8:3, 16:3; 1 Sam. 21:3-6; Matt 4:3-4, 6:11, 12:4; Mark 8:4-17; John 6:1-58; 1 Cor. 10:16-17, 11:23-28.

The bread of the Passover would have been much more like a large tortilla (rather than a loaf or crackers). The bread would have had 3 basic characteristics:

1. It would be unleavened (see also Ex 12:14-20)
2. It would be striped (see Isaiah 53:5)⁶
3. It would be pierced (see Isaiah 53:5)^{7 8}

Until Jesus said the words, “this is My body”, the ritual would have been exactly the same as the disciples had known it growing up and as the Nation had known it for some 1500 years. In those words, however, Jesus was assigning new significance to the bread that had not existed before.⁹ He likened himself to this same bread that was without leaven (sin), striped and pierced. The breaking of the bread does not symbolize the literal breaking of Jesus body (see John 19:33). It would be ‘broken’ in the sense that his body would receive the wrath of God for the sins of the world and be crushed (see Isaiah 53:5, 10). Since the time of Moses (and the first Passover/Exodus) the debt owed to the Law would be paid fully in the life of the one who obeyed the law fully. Anyone who *takes* and *eats* of this bread of life (John 6:35) will experience an entirely new kind of Passover and Exodus from sin, death, and this world into the Promised Land/Kingdom of God’s beloved Son.

Amazing how much just a few words from Jesus can change the meaning of a 1500 year old ritual!

v. 27: The Blessing & Offering of the Cup

Just as Jesus had done with the bread so also he does with the wine. He follows the ritual as had been observed for generations before and then changes it slightly at the end by saying “this is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.”

Before Jesus says those words and gives them the cup to drink, he takes the cup and he ‘gives thanks’. He did not do this with the bread. Jesus broke the bread ‘after a blessing’ (*eulogeo*). Here with the wine Jesus ‘gives thanks’ (*eucharisteo*) – from which we get our term Eucharist. As Jesus is holding the cup and speaking these words he is ending the last legal Passover – ever. Jesus was instituting a new observance that would help the people always remember what their salvation was based upon. Much later, the church would call this observance “communion.”

⁶ When cooked, the bread did not lay completely flat on the cooking surface so there would be areas that came in contact with the cooking surface directly and some areas that did not. Those that did would be darker in color after cooking – thus creating splotches and even stripes of darker colored bread.

⁷ When the dough for the bread was kneaded, pockets of air would find their way into the ball. Before it was cooked the dough would be pierced (much like the way our pizza crusts are made today) to prevent those air pockets from expanding in the heat and creating large bubbles in the bread.

⁸ Even though Jesus ‘breaks’ the bread, it is inappropriate for us to correlate that with his own death because, just as Exodus 12:5 states: it shall be without blemish. In fact Jesus’ body was not broken (see John 19:33).

⁹ From this one statement come several differing views on how literal or figurative Jesus was being when he said these words. Since those debates are not the focus of this study, we will not discuss them here. The Catholic Church believes in the doctrine of transubstantiation, for example, that the elements of bread and wine literally become the body & blood of Jesus.

Most scholars seem to agree that the cup Jesus was holding at this time of the meal would have been the third cup: the Cup of Blessing (a part of the ritual where Exodus 6:6 was in mind).

"This cup was probably the third cup drunk in the Passover meal, namely, the "cup of blessing." It contained wine diluted with water. Jesus then gave thanks again. The Greek word *eucharistesas* ("gave thanks") is a cognate of *euchariste* ("thanksgiving") from which we get the English word "eucharist," another name for the Lord's Supper. Jesus commanded all of His disciples to drink from the cup. They had to personally appropriate what symbolized His blood as they had to personally appropriate what symbolized His body. Together these elements represented Jesus Himself. They learned to appreciate the larger significance of these things after His resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-28)."¹⁰

v.28: The Explanation of the Cup

Jesus explains to his disciples that the cup is 'My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' This was a phrase that had never been uttered during a Passover meal either. The mentioning of forgiveness of sins is a dead giveaway that the new covenant is in view because it is the only covenant wherein the forgiveness of sins is promised (Jer. 31:31-34).

Exodus 24:8 is also in mind here. The ratification of the Mosaic covenant after the very first Passover was inaugurated by the sprinkling of blood upon the people. The ratification of the New Covenant would be inaugurated by the 'drinking' of the blood of Jesus after the very last Passover. In both cases blood symbolized the life of a substitute sacrifice (Lev. 17:11) and initiated a new relationship between the people and God. And that's where the similarities cease.

For Passover, every Jewish family had to present their own lamb and prepare it each year. Jesus would become the final Passover Lamb. The lamb that was purchased for the Jewish household only atoned for the sins of those in the household. Jesus, on the other hand, would atone for the sins of the entire world. The Passover lambs were all slaughtered by priests at the temple. Jesus suffered at the hands of the Gentiles outside the walls of the city (cf. Heb 13:11-13). The blood of the Lamb did not need to be sprinkled anywhere or applied to any doorposts. It simply needed to be received in the cup and appropriated to one's entire life by faith.

Anyone who did so would receive a greater Passover than the Jews experienced in Egypt. The angel of death will come again and anyone who has taken from this cup will again enjoy a Passover because the blood will have forgiven all of their sins (just like Jeremiah & Ezekiel had promised).

"Jesus revealed that the sacrificial death He was about to die would ratify (make valid) a covenant (Gr. *diatheke*) with His people. Similarly the sacrificial death of animals originally ratified the Mosaic Covenant with them (Exod. 24:8). In both cases, blood symbolized the life of the substitute sacrifice (cf. Lev. 17:11). Jeremiah had prophesied that God would make a New Covenant with His people in the future (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:37-40; cf. Exod. 24:8; Matt. 2:18). When Jesus died, His blood ratified that covenant. This meal memorialized the ratification of that covenant. Messiah saved His people from their sins by His sacrificial death (cf. 1:21). The resulting relationship between God and His people is a covenant relationship."¹¹

"It appears, then, that Jesus understands the covenant he is introducing to be the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecies and the antitype of the Sinai covenant [cf. Exod. 24:8]. His sacrifice is thus foretold both in redemption history and in the prophetic word. The Exodus becomes a 'type' of a new and greater deliverance; and as the people of God in the OT prospectively celebrated in the first Passover their escape from Egypt, anticipating their arrival in the

¹⁰ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*. p.351

¹¹ Ibid, p.351

Promised Land, so the people of God here prospectively celebrate their deliverance from sin and bondage, anticipating the coming kingdom . . ."¹²

v. 29: The Promise of Completion

"As the first Passover looked forward to deliverance and settlement in the Promised Land, so the Lord's Supper looked forward to deliverance and settlement in the promised kingdom. Disciples are to observe the Lord's Supper only until He returns (1 Cor. 11:26). Then we will enjoy the messianic banquet together (Isa. 25:6; cf. Matt. 8:11)."¹³

"The four cups were meant to correspond to the fourfold promise of Exodus 6:6-7. The third cup, the 'cup of blessing' used by Jesus in the words of institution, is thus associated with redemption (Exod. 6:6); but the fourth cup corresponds to the promise 'I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God' (Exod. 6:7; . . .). Thus Jesus is simultaneously pledging that he will drink the 'bitter cup' immediately ahead of him and vowing not to drink the cup of consummation, the cup that promises the divine presence, till the kingdom in all its fullness has been ushered in. Then he will drink the cup with his people. By referring to drinking the wine anew (Gr. *kainon*, i.e., new in a qualitatively different way) Jesus meant that He and the disciples anticipated suffering and death. However in the future they would experience the joy of the messianic banquet and kingdom."¹⁴

v. 30: The Hallel

What Jesus and the disciples sang was undoubtedly the last part of the *Hallel* (Ps. 114—18 or 115—18; cf. Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39; John 18:1). The Jews customarily sang this antiphonally with the leader, in this case Jesus, singing the first lines and the other participants responding with "Hallelujah!" What Jesus sang included a commitment to keep His vows (Ps. 116:12-13). Another section of the *Hallel* referred to Messiah's appearing (Ps. 118:25-26). It is interesting to read these psalms keeping in mind Jesus' singing them in the upper room with His disciples.

Summary:

"Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant in the Upper Room with the elements of what we now call Eucharist, or Holy Communion. In his words Jesus connected Exodus 24:8, Jeremiah 31, and Isaiah 53 to show that the New Covenant subsumed and fulfilled the old. Then with His blood on the cross he sealed the covenant, as the Book of Hebrews says. And yet, all the promises of the New Covenant--which are "yes" in Him, Paul says--will be completely fulfilled at the second coming. Those who now enter into the New Covenant by faith in Jesus Christ--and there is no other way since he is God in the flesh--will doubtless have a share in the fulfillment of all the promises to come.

"The promises of the New Covenant began to be fulfilled with Christ. In the Upper Room He breathed on the disciples (cf. Gen. 2:7) and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 20:22). He then died on the cross to pay for our sins, making the salvation through the forgiveness of sins available. He then sent the Holy Spirit to indwell believers permanently as a pledge of eternal life and as an enablement to live righteously in this world. Today, believers, both Jews and Gentiles, enter into this new covenant by the grace of God through faith--prematurely, as Paul said, being grafted in to the covenant now before its fulfillment. Christ will come again to complete all the promises of the New Covenant--which means all the promises of all the covenants that came together in the New Covenant. Most of these promises will be fulfilled in a far more glorious way than we could even imagine."¹⁵

Tough Question:

1. Can you answer this question? "Why do Christians practice communion?"

¹² Carson, Donald A. "Matthew." In *Matthew-Luke*. Vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. 12 vols. Edited by Frank E. Gaebeline and J. D. Douglas. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984. p.538

¹³ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*. p.354

¹⁴ Ibid, p.539

¹⁵ Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan*.

Promised Redemption

Week 10: The New Covenant in 2 Corinthians 3

Although Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples only, Paul sees clearly that Jesus' words to the disciples were not meant just for them or for the Jews. In 1 Corinthians 11, "Paul places the New Testament church under this very same new covenant arrangement when he identifies the church's practice of the Lord's Supper as a sharing of the bread and of the cup which Jesus instituted that night before the crucifixion."¹

So, in Jeremiah and Ezekiel the promise of the New Covenant is made. In the Gospels we see the inauguration of the covenant by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the promised Davidic King (Messiah). It is inaugurated in part – not in full – because some of the promises await their ultimate fulfillment in the second coming of Christ. In the meantime, Paul, in 2 Corinthians 3, takes the time to explain to the newly forming church the superiority of the new covenant and the impact it has on the ministry of the Gospel right away.

2 Corinthians 3:1-3

Paul realizes that some of his words in chapter two might have instigated some hard feelings in some of his readers, so he feels the need to make a defense in chapter three that leads him to explain why he has so much boldness with his preaching of the gospel.

"In the preceding portion of this letter (2:12-3:6) Paul had begun an explanation and a defense of his ministry. Prompted by the inference that his credentials were inadequate Paul cited the internal attestation of the Spirit as superior to any external human commendation. In so doing he intimated that those challenging him proclaimed an adulterated message based on the Old Covenant, acceptance of which could only lead to death."²

v.1 – "Letters of commendation"

- "Some might suppose Paul had to commend himself because he could find no one else to do so. His opponents obviously carried letters of recommendation, a common practice in the first century. Paul himself followed this practice at various times on behalf of those who served with him (Rom. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:22-24). Paul, however, had reason to doubt the authenticity of their letters (4:2). Unlike those false letters, apparently unavailable to public scrutiny, Paul's letter of commendation could be examined by everybody. His "letter" was the Corinthians themselves! And they were a letter ... written by the Spirit of the living God dispatched by Christ Himself."³

v.2 – "You are our letter"

- Paul's defense of his ministry isn't found in a resume or endorsements. The miraculous change of life that has happened to the Corinthian believers is testimony enough to the genuineness of Paul's apostleship. Instead of using written *characters* (letters) as a means of authenticating his ministry, he appealed to the transformed *character* of the believers.
- "Paul's ministry and the ministry of all Christians consists of being the instruments through whom Christ writes the message of regeneration on the lives of those who believe the gospel. He does this by the Holy Spirit."⁴

¹ Blaising, Craig. Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p.200

² Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2 Co 3:4-6). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2 Co 3:1-3). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on 2 Corinthians*. p.33

v.3 – “You are a letter of Christ . . . written on human hearts.”

- This is a re-statement of verse two with an expanded meaning. Those teachers who had no authority in the Gospel carried around paper letters that were ineffective in pointing anyone to the glory of God because, although they had credentials, the fruit of their ministry was missing. Paul contrasts himself with this group of people by saying that he has been the scribe writing Christ's letter on the hearts of the Corinthian believers. It is this contrast that leads him into a digression, of sorts, about why his ministry is superior to those who were still insistent upon teaching the Law.
- Of course the reference to tablets of stone and human hearts should immediately jog or memory to the new covenant promises of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36. Paul will parallel the superiority of his ministry over his critics with the superiority of the new covenant over the old.

2 Corinthians 3:4-6

Adequacy does not come from accomplishments. Even though Paul's ministry has been effective in the lives of the Corinthians he makes clear in verses 4-6 that he was made adequate (he did not make himself adequate). Paul recognizes (and remembers) that his baptism into Christianity was the most unlikely of all conversions. So, not only are the Corinthians an endorsement of the effectiveness of the Gospel that Paul is preaching, but so also is Paul himself! He is a living picture of the power of the Gospel.

God has made Paul an adequate/competent/sufficient (*hikanos*) runner/servant (*diakonos*) of the new covenant by the new covenant – something which could only be accomplished by the Spirit (because the letter only kills whereas the Spirit imparts life). It should also be noted that Paul is a passive recipient of the action of God in relation to his adequacy and calling.

2 Corinthians 3:6-11

“Paul proceeded to identify seven contrasts between the New Covenant (agreement, Gr. *diatheke*) under which Christians serve God and the Old Covenant under which believing Israelites served God.¹¹⁶ He did so to heighten understanding of and appreciation for the ministry of Christians. The Old Covenant in view is the Mosaic Covenant, and the New Covenant is the covenant that Jesus Christ ratified by His death (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 9:21; 11:25; Gal. 6:2; Heb. 13:20).”⁵

1. <i>Economy:</i>	old	New	v. 6
2. <i>Type:</i>	letter	Spirit	v. 6
3. <i>Results manward:</i>	death	Life	v. 6
4. <i>Vehicle:</i>	stone	Spirit	v. 7
5. <i>Results Godward:</i>	some glory	greater glory	vv. 7, 8, 10
6. <i>Purpose:</i>	condemnation	righteousness	v. 9
7. <i>Duration:</i>	temporary	permanent	v. 11
8. <i>Mediator:</i>	Moses	Jesus Christ	v. 1-18
9. <i>Result:</i>	Bondage	Liberty	v. 17

v.7-8 – “The Ministry of Death vs. The Ministry of the Spirit”

- **The Ministry of Death:** The Law was designed to set God's people apart from the rest of the nations & give them instructions about how they were to be his priestly people. It could not, however, remove the stain of sin or the sinful nature in each person's heart. Thus, it left them dead in their sins – purifying them only enough to expiate God's wrath temporarily. It was indeed glorious when it was received (because there had been nothing like it before), but its glory has faded with the revelation of the unfolding promises of the new covenant.⁶

⁵ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on 2 Corinthians*. p.36. I have added two more contrasts that are implied, but not stated in the Text.

⁶ See Exodus 34:29-35

- **The Ministry of the Spirit:** We might expect Paul to use the phrase 'The Ministry of Life' here instead of 'The Ministry of the Spirit.' Paul equates the two. True spiritual re-birth cannot happen apart from the Spirit (as promised in the new covenant). The Spirit that will indwell believers and write the Law on the hearts of God's people will also impart a new quality of life to humanity that she had not known since before the fall. That is a kind of glory that the Law could never achieve on its own.

v.9 – "The Ministry of Condemnation vs. The Ministry of Righteousness"

- **The Ministry of Condemnation:** The Law not only showed the people of God how to be his holy and priestly people, it also established a set of standard expectations God required of His people while they were in covenant relationship with Him. These terms were condemning in the sense that failure (an inevitability) would bring condemnation, wrath and death. Thus, when the people did fail at keeping their end of the covenant, it revealed to them their sinfulness and, eventually, their need for some kind of help apart from the Law so that the covenant relationship could be fulfilled.⁷
- **The Ministry of Righteousness:** Under the Mosaic Law, righteousness was only a possibility and rarely an actuality because it was contingent upon the obedience of the people. Under the ministry of the New Covenant, however, God *guarantees* the obedience of *all* the people who place their faith in the Messiah.

v. 11 – "That which Fades Away vs. That which Remains"

- **That which Fades Away:** No one is running Windows 3.0 anymore (and thank goodness!). However the present version of Windows 7 wouldn't exist were it not for the first version of Windows ever produced. Nevertheless, the glory that was Windows 3.0 back in 1985 has long since faded in the shadow of the glory of Windows 7 today. In the same way, the Law's glory has faded with the advent of the new covenant. The Law was not annihilated, it has just become useless, null, and void.
- **That which Remains:** The result of the New Covenant promises would not just be permanent, they would also be eternal. The Mosaic Covenant did not carry language with it of permanence or eternality (as do the Noahic, Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenants).

2 Corinthians 3:12-16

"The superiority of Christian ministry should produce great openness and encouragement within Christ's ministers. Paul developed these qualities in this section to enable his readers to understand his behavior and to respond in like manner in their own ministries."⁸

v. 12-13 – "Therefore, having such a hope we use great boldness . . ."

- Paul summarizes the entire scope of his argument in this one phrase. Under the Law there was no hope. Under the New Covenant, however, there is more than just hope – there is boldness. Why? Because of the surpassing glory of the covenant that has been made known to Paul and to all of those who have placed their faith in Jesus the Messiah.
- The word 'boldness' is *parrhesia* and carries a connotation of 'barefacedness'.
 - Paul could be barefaced in his confidence because of the permanent character of the covenant under which he ministered. Moses, in contrast, could not. He ministered with a literal veil over his face much of the time (Exod. 34:29-35). He removed the veil when he spoke with the people (Exod. 34:33) and when he spoke with God in the tabernacle. He wore it at other times evidently to teach the Israelites' their

⁷ See Romans 3:20; 4:15; 5:13, 20; 7:9-11, 19; 10:4; Galatians 3:10, 24-25. 'A ministry of condemnation' is a very harsh way of describing the Mosaic Covenant. In this term alone (along with several other New Testament passages) I believe it is safe to say that God has fulfilled the Mosaic Covenant in Christ and we are in Him. The terms of the covenant, in relationship to us, are thus fulfilled and no longer active (unless they are recapitulated in the New Testament in the commandments of Jesus, the law of Christ (1 Cor 9:21, Gal 6:2)).

⁸ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on 2 Corinthians*. p.37

unworthiness to behold God's glory. Paul used this difference in ministry to illustrate the superior nature of the New Covenant."⁹

v.14-16 – “But their minds were hardened . . . the same veil remains unlifted . . .”

- The hardening of Israel's minds was both a function of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. A similar point is made by Paul in Romans 11:7-11. There he explains further that the Israelites did not follow God faithfully even though God gave them everything they needed to be able to do so. In spite of all God continued to do for them, they did not regard or respond to Him. So, God hardened their hearts (perhaps as a form of judgment) by giving them over to their own wicked state of mind. However, the hardening is not permanent (if it were so, then his promises to Abraham would be in question!). As Paul says in Romans 11:11-12, “By their [Israel's] transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous. Now if their [Israel's] transgression means riches for the world and their defeat means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full restoration bring?”
- The hardness of the heart of Israel should also remind us that the promises of the New Covenant will replace a ‘heart of stone’ with a ‘heart of flesh.’ As we have discussed in previous lessons the promises of the New Covenant are inaugurated and imparted only through Messiah. As long as Israel continues to reject Messiah in favor of their love for the Law (that which is fading), the veil will remain over their hearts – to this very day.
- “Only the grace of God can remove the blindness of tradition, self-righteousness, and sin. Religious people are as prone to spiritual blindness as non-religious people. Fallen mankind's only hope is: 1). the unchanging mercy of the Father, 2). the full and finished atonement of the Son 3). the universal wooing/work of the Spirit. Salvation is a spiritual gift and not a matter of family, tradition, intellect, performance, or preference. What Paul may be asserting in this context is the believer's ability through the Spirit to see the life, teachings, and work of Jesus in the OT. Jesus Himself opened the minds of the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13–35, especially vv. 25–27).”¹⁰

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

v. 17 – “Now the Lord is the Spirit . . . where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

- “This verse explains the former one. The Holy Spirit (vv. 3, 6, 8) is the member of the Trinity who causes a person to understand and believe that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the law. Paul here described the Spirit's function and equated Him with Christ (cf. v. 14). Believing in Jesus liberates one from sin, death, and the Mosaic Law but not from obligation to respond obediently to God's new revelation in Christ, of course. Even though the Spirit is Lord, His presence liberates the believer rather than enslaving him or her (cf. Rom. 8:15).”¹¹
- “This [liberty] refers to freedom from spiritual blindness, self-righteousness, and legalism caused by a personal faith relationship with Jesus Christ (cf. John 8:32, 36; Rom. 14: I Cor. 8; 10:23ff; Gal. 5:1, 13).”¹²
 - “Paul certainly knew the love of Christ to be the all-compelling power in life. Where love is the compelling power, there is no sense of strain or conflict or bondage in doing what is right: the man or woman who is compelled by Jesus' love and empowered by his Spirit does the will of God from the heart. For (as Paul could say from experience) ‘where the Spirit of the Lord is, there the heart is free’.”¹³

⁹ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on 2 Corinthians*. p.38

¹⁰ Utley, R. J. D. (2002). Vol. Volume 6: *Paul's Letters to a Troubled Church: I and II Corinthians*. Study Guide Commentary Series (224). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

¹¹ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on 2 Corinthians*. p.39

¹² Utley, R. J. D. (2002). Vol. Volume 6: *Paul's Letters to a Troubled Church: I and II Corinthians*. Study Guide Commentary Series (225). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

¹³ Bruce, F.F. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. p.21

v. 18 – “But we all . . . are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory . . .”

- All believers are experiencing transformation as a result of their participation in the New Covenant – not just Paul. As we continue to peer into the Word of God, it acts like a mirror for us. Only in the mirror we do not see our own reflection, we see the image of Jesus. We recognize that we are being transformed into His image and will reflect His glory – just like Moses did. This time, however, the glory that will be on our faces will not fade away, it will be from one degree of glory to the next, ever increasing. So, Paul is suggesting that we all, as ministers of this New Covenant, are like Moses. Instead of transforming our faces, though, Christ has transformed our very character – our very lives! – back into His image that we had marred so long ago.
 - “Jesus is the image of God (cf. 4:4; John 1:14–18; 14:9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Humans were created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26–27). Believers are in the image of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29–30). Christlikeness is God’s primary goal for all believers (cf. Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4).”¹⁴
- “This glory is the experience of salvation available in the New Covenant and mediated by the Spirit who leads Christians from justification through sanctification to glorification. As believers manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), they are progressively being transformed (the same word Paul used in Rom. 12:2) into His likeness. Christlikeness is the goal of the Christian walk (Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10). No wonder Paul said the New is far superior to the Old!”¹⁵

Summary: The New Covenant is superior to the Mosaic Covenant and supersedes it because the unfolding plan of redemption has swallowed it up and fulfilled all of its requirements in Jesus Christ. The New Covenant is able to do that which the Law was never able to do: transform the hearts of people back into their original state before the fall. And all of this is accomplished through the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus Christ has sent.

Tough Questions:

1. What does it mean to have liberty/freedom as Paul says here? Can we do whatever we want? If not, then how can Paul say we have liberty?

¹⁴ Utley, R. J. D. (2002). Vol. Volume 6: *Paul's Letters to a Troubled Church: I and II Corinthians*. Study Guide Commentary Series (225). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

¹⁵ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2 Co 3:18). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Promised Redemption

Week 11: The New Covenant in Hebrews

As we come to our final lesson, we would be wise to look back and see how the rose has unfolded since the first week of our study. If we were to associate one word with how the covenants have unfolded the redemptive plan of God, it might look something like this:

<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Key Word of the Story</u>
Adamic	<i>Corruption</i>
Noahic	<i>Protection</i>
Abrahamic	<i>Provision</i>
Mosaic	<i>Extension</i>
Davidic	<i>Mediation</i>
New	<i>Transformation</i>

The New Covenant is one of the central themes of the letter to the Hebrews. The central focus of the book (chapters 7-10) are entirely focused on how the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant – much like Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 3. Both Paul and the author of Hebrews argue the same points, but for different reasons. Paul argued the superiority of the New Covenant because it was a better ministry than that of his competition. The author of Hebrews argues for the superiority of the New Covenant to exhort recently converted Jews to remain as Christians and not turn away from him back to Judaism.

The author is *very* convincing. Starting in the first chapter and continuing throughout the remainder of the letter, the author of Hebrews makes the strong argument that Jesus is the ultimate High Priest, of the ultimate Covenant, in the ultimate Sanctuary, as the ultimate Sacrifice. Jesus is the "ultimate" in each of these categories because Jesus is . . .¹

- Beyond which it is impossible to go; farthest
- By which a process or series comes to an end; final; conclusive
- Beyond which further analysis, division, etc. cannot be made; elemental; fundamental
- Greatest or highest possible; maximum; utmost

Jesus is the fulfillment of every promise that God has made from the beginning of the story of redemption. The author of Hebrews explains it all in detail in chapters 7-10. We will do a survey of these chapters as a review and conclusion to our study of the covenants.

Hebrews Chapter 7

Jesus Christ is the ultimate High Priest (7:1-28). Two reasons why:

1. He is of an order greater than Abraham: the order of Melchizedek (7:1-10)
 - What makes Melchizedek so significant?
 - He was a king-priest of Salem (Jerusalem)²
 - He was a superior to Abraham (he blessed Abraham; cf.v.6)
 - He received tithes from Abraham
 - His name means "King of Righteousness"
 - His lineage is very unique & obviously special
 - Bottom line: Melchizedek was superior to Abraham, the forefather of Levi.
 - "The writer referred to Melchizedek as the head of a priestly order. Aaron was also the head of a priestly order. The writer explained that Jesus Christ was a member of Melchizedek's order, not Aaron's (6:20). Melchizedek was a prototype of Jesus Christ in two respects. He was both a king and a priest, and what characterized him was righteousness and peace (cf. 12:10-11; Ps. 85:10; Isa. 32:17; Rom. 5:1; James 3:17-18). The fact that Melchizedek was a priest is clear from two facts: he

¹ Definition of "ultimate" from *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 3rd Edition, 1998.

² Salem means 'peace' and Jerusalem means 'city of peace'

blessed Abraham, and Abraham paid tithes to him of all the spoils that he had taken in war (v. 4; cf. Gen. 14:23-24)."³

2. Thus, Jesus is also greater than the great (yet inadequate) Levitical Priesthood (7:11-25)
 - "If Christ is our high priest today, then there has to be a change in the law, since He could not qualify as a priest under the Levitical arrangement (being of the tribe of Judah). If the law has not been done away today, then neither has the Levitical priesthood; but if Christ is our high priest, we cannot be under the law. Every prayer offered in the name of Christ is an affirmation of the end of the law."⁴
 - "Jesus Christ did not become a priest because He met a physical requirement, namely, was born into the priestly tribe and qualified by his descent to serve as high priest. He became a priest because He would not die. In this He showed Himself to be a member of Melchizedek's "order" since Melchizedek appears from the scriptural record to have lived forever. Jesus is a priest forever because of His resurrection."⁵
 - "The fact that Christ will not die and need replacement by another priest means that He can see His work of delivering His people through to the end. He can deliver completely (better than "forever," v. 25) in the sense of seeing us through to the realization of our full salvation, our rest (inheritance) in God's presence (cf. 1:14)."⁶
3. Bottom line: The ministry and ministers of the Mosaic Covenant are inferior to the ministry and ministers of Jesus & Melchizedek (cf. Ps 110:4). God has replaced the old system with a new one that can do what the Law could never do: redeem us.

Hebrews Chapter 8

Jesus Christ is the ultimate Minister of the ultimate Covenant (8:1-13). Three reasons why:

1. His is the Ultimate Ministry (8:1-5)
 - He is a seated priest: he has finished his work of offering a sacrifice for sin.
 - He is enthroned priest: he is at the right hand of God the Father
 - He is heavenly priest: he ministers in the heavenly sanctuary (cf. 9:11-14)
 - No Levitical priest can ever claim any of those things!
2. He is a Minister of the Ultimate Covenant (8:6-13)
 - The people would know and desire to do God's will
 - God will *really* be their God and they will *really* be His people
 - The people will know God intimately
 - The people will receive permanent and eternal forgiveness of sins.
 - The Mosaic Covenant couldn't accomplish even one of those things if it tried!
3. Bottom line: The New Covenant has power to do that which the Mosaic Covenant could never do. The Ultimate Minister of this covenant, thus, can minister in ways that ministers of the Mosaic Covenant never could.
 - "The New Covenant is a branch of the Abrahamic Covenant. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised Abraham a piece of real estate for his descendants, an incalculable number of descendants, and blessing for his descendants and for all people through his descendants (Gen. 12:1-7; et al.). Deuteronomy 29—30, sometimes called the Palestinian Covenant, gave more information about the land God had promised to Abraham. The Davidic Covenant gave more information about God's promises regarding descendants (2 Sam. 7). The New Covenant

³ Constable, 65.

⁴ Ryrie, Charles C. "The End of the Law," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124:495 (July-September 1967):244.

⁵ Constable, 68.

⁶ *ibid*, 69.

revealed the particulars of the promised blessing (Jer. 31). Each of these later covenants relates to the Abrahamic Covenant organically. In contrast the Mosaic (Old) Covenant does not relate organically but "was added" (Gal. 3:19). It explained how the Israelites could maximize the benefits God had promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. Consequently when God terminated the Old Covenant it did not eliminate anything He had promised Abraham."⁷

Hebrews Chapter 9

Jesus Christ is preparing an ultimate Sanctuary

1. The Old Covenant Sanctuary was inferior because it was: (9:1-10)
 1. An earthly sanctuary (9:1)
 2. But a shadow of something greater (9:2-5)
 3. Inaccessible to all the people (9:6-7)
 4. Temporary (9:8)
 5. An external rather than internal ministry (9:9-10)
2. The New Covenant Sanctuary is (& will be) superior because it is (& will be): (9:11-28)
 1. A heavenly sanctuary: not just an earthly copy (9:11)
 - Jesus was able to enter into the very presence of God (not simply a tabernacle where his glory rested) and make atonement for since once for all.
 2. Effective in dealing with sin: not just a shadow or symbol (9:12-15)
 - "When Christ entered the most holy place once for all by His own blood rather than by animal blood, He likewise demonstrated the superiority of His service because His blood had obtained eternal redemption. Thus the value of His sacrifice is immeasurably greater than the animal offerings of the Levitical arrangements. A perfect ransom price had been paid for human "redemption," and because it need not be paid again that redemption is an "eternal" one."⁸
 3. Receive a more costly sacrifice: what animal blood cannot do (9:16-23)
 - The Old Covenant went into effect when the Levitical priests shed the blood of animal substitutes and applied that blood to the covenant beneficiaries. The beneficiaries were the Israelites and the tabernacle. The New Covenant went into effect when God shed Jesus Christ's blood and applied it to its beneficiaries spiritually."⁹
 4. The real sanctuary of God (not a copy) (9:24)
 - "Christ was appointed as High Priest of the New Covenant to represent sinful people in heaven itself, that is, in the presence of God. So His sacrifice had to be greater than that which allowed entrance into a mere man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one. Nor could Christ offer repeated sacrifices as in the Levitical institution, for that would have required Him to die many times since the Creation of the world. Instead, as is obvious, the heavenly ministry of Christ called for a thoroughly sufficient, one-time sacrifice. This is precisely why He appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin, which the priests in the old arrangement could not do."¹⁰

⁷ Constable, 77.

⁸ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures (Heb 9:11-12). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁹ Constable, 84.

¹⁰ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures (Heb 9:24-26). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

5. Bring completion to redemption: The Law only repeated sacrifices (9:25-28).
 - "At His ascension Christ was formally installed as High Priest and began His present high priestly work. In the heavenly tabernacle today He represents His people; obtains free access for them into God's presence; intercedes in prayer for them and grants them help; mediates their prayers to God and God's strength to them; anticipates His return to earth to reign; and, at the end of the present session, will bless His people by bringing them deliverance into the kingdom."¹¹
6. Bottom Line: The sanctuary of the Old Covenant could not handle the ministry or minister of the New Covenant. For the ultimate High Priest to perform the ultimate ministry of the ultimate covenant as the ultimate sacrifice, He would need to officiate the sacrifice in the ultimate sanctuary for it to be effective once for all.

Hebrews Chapter 10

Jesus Christ was the ultimate Sacrifice (10:1-18)

1. 10:1-10 – The author here finishes the argument he began back in chapter 7. He has asserted that Jesus is the ultimate High Priest who is the ultimate minister of the ultimate covenant. Jesus prepares the ultimate sanctuary wherein he gives himself as the ultimate sacrifice. Verses 1-10 illustrate how the sacrifices of the Old Covenant could not atone for sins permanently because the sacrifices themselves were not of the same kind as those who committed the offense. The blood of animals is non-moral, thus it cannot rightly atone for sins. The blood of man is immoral and is also ineligible. The blood of the God-Man, however, is moral and proves to be an appropriate sacrifice for sins and has "sanctified"¹² believers once for all.
2. 10:11-18 – The Levitical priests were always standing and offering sacrifices because the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. Jesus, by contrast, is *seated* (indicating a completed and acceptable sacrifice) at the right hand of God. Now that the redeeming work is done, he awaits the time when He will be sent by His Father again no longer for the redemption of sin, but for the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. Until then, believers can enjoy what those under the Old Covenant could never dream of: perfection¹³ for all time without the need of another sacrifice.

Therefore, He should remain the ultimate object of our faith & worship (10:19-39)

1. 10:19-25 – After a lengthy exposition on the superiority in all facets of the New Covenant over the Old, the author returns to his core theme of the book: "now that you see why the ministry of Christ is superior, do not abandon it for something lesser". Believers have a "confidence"¹⁴ to be in the presence of God because of all that the author has just argued in chapters 7-10:18. Verses 19-21 summarize those chapters and lead into the author's points of application:
 - a. Let us Draw Near to God: If Jesus Christ really is the fullness of all of the promises of God (as the writer has argued), then there is no longer any need to doubt the efficacy of His sacrifice on our behalf. No longer do we have to stand outside the tabernacle wondering & hoping if our lamb was acceptable to God. On the basis of the shed blood of the Lamb of God, the LORD has given us *His* sacrificial Lamb so that we can now enjoy access to Him that we haven't known since before the fall. The way has been made & all that is left for us is to walk into His presence.

¹¹ MacLeod, David J., "The Present Work of Christ in Hebrews," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148:590 (April-June 1991):200.

¹² Most commentaries I have looked at have indicated that the writer's use of the word translated here as "sanctified" (also in v.14) is closer to our understanding of Paul's use of the word "justified". The writer of Hebrews is unique in this regard.

¹³ Perfection here does not mean 'to be made sinless.' As in 10:1, it means more that our access to God has been perfected by the complete removal of sin. There no longer remains anything that obstructs our access to him.

¹⁴ The word for confidence is *perresia* – the same word for 'barefacedness' that Paul used in our week 10 study of 2 Cor. 3.

- b. Let us Hold Fast our Confession: We must cling to the promises of God because apart from them we have no confidence nor reason to continue in the faith. Our faith can only rest on His faithfulness to His promises to us – not the other way around. No matter what the world around us may try and persuade us to believe, we must not abandon this confession (cf. 7: 1 – 10: 18).
 - c. Let us Consider How to be Encouraging: Believers must deepen their community and dependence upon one another because the temptation to abandon the confession of hope will only grow stronger and stronger until the Day of the Lord finally comes.
- 2. 10:26-31 – If Jesus doesn't remain the ultimate object of our faith and worship, then there is nothing else that can save us. If you succumb to the pressure of non-believers around you and forsake this Way, you abandon all hope and reckon it as garbage. If you reckon God's only provision of redemption as garbage, don't expect to find something better elsewhere. If people who willfully rebelled in the days of an inferior covenant were severely punished, how much more if you spit upon a covenant that is far superior to the old one? If you do, you will be left all alone into the hands of the Living God without a High Priest. That is a terrible thing. Hold fast to your confession and do not be lured away by the siren song of the world!
- 3. 10:32-39 – In the coming days until our Lord returns, our worship will be mocked and our faith will be tested. Nevertheless, it should not change object of our faith because it certainly doesn't change the certainty of His return. If you endured persecution before for these things with joy once before, you know you can do it again. You didn't turn away then because you believed in the superiority of the New Covenant – why would you change your mind and abandon it in the future? Thus, no matter what the future holds for us as believers, we can face whatever comes with confidence and boldness because of our continued faith in the sure promises of God.

Summary of Study:

"Jesus the Messiah restored God's plan through His obedience: the human race had lost its way, but Jesus declared, "I am the way"; the race had believed a lie, and Jesus announced, "I am the truth"; and the race had entered into death through their sins, yet Jesus said, "I am the life." The cycle of judgment and re-creation was now finalized: the judgment for sin was placed on Him as the innocent substitute who became the curse; and the re-creation of new life comes through His resurrection, and ours."¹⁵

"The history of the covenants prior to Jesus Christ is the story of the divine promise to bless all life on earth – all nations and the people that compose them. It is the story of the divine plan of redemption, of reconciliation, which holds forth the hope of the accomplishment of that purpose which was revealed in the creation: an earth filled with life, filled especially with human beings living in peace, prosperity, and full fellowship with God.

It is necessarily a story of redemption because the blessings of God set forth in the covenants stand in contrast to fundamental judgments against sin – warnings and pronouncements of misery, insecurity, destruction, and death.

The covenant with Abraham is foundational, for it picks up the promise of the Noahic covenant (made with all life) and directly addresses human existence. It offers God's blessing upon human life both individually and in its collective national identities. The story of the Bible, from Abraham on, is the story of God's relationship with human beings as set forth in this covenant and developed from it as its features are expanded and detailed in subsequent revelation.

Blessing was decreed by divine initiative as a grant to Abraham, who in turn received it by faith and experienced many of its aspects in his personal and family life as he walked with the Lord in obedience to His commandments. The covenant designated Abraham a mediator of God's blessing to all peoples and nations on earth. All who blessed Abraham, believing the promise of blessing God granted to him, would likewise be blessed by God.

¹⁵ Ross, Alan. *The Divine Plan*.

Blessing and mediation of blessing passed to Abraham's descendants as they were chosen by God to inherit the covenant. A new [covenant] for blessing was instituted by the Mosaic covenant, which constituted the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as a nation, taking the divine name for Jacob – Israel. The law of the Mosaic covenant challenged the generations of Israel to trust in God alone and obey His commandments. Those who were of the faith of the patriarchs sought to worship God according to His commandments. They were the true heirs of the patriarchal grant and mediated its blessing to the rest of the nation and to other peoples as well. When the Israel of faith constituted only a small remnant of physical Israel, the curses of the Mosaic covenant, judgments of misery, destruction, exile, and death threatened the nation. But the remnant of faith held to the hope of inheriting divine blessing in an eschatological age.

During [the time of the Mosaic Covenant], the role of mediating blessing was politically restructured as a function of the Davidic king. A covenant was made with David to bless him and his son(s) with rulership over Israel and the rest of the nations, an intimate and blessed relationship with God, and the mediation (even priestly mediation) of *blessing* to Israel and to all peoples and nations. [During the time of the Mosaic Covenant], this grant manifested itself in varying degrees in the reigns of those Davidic kings who trusted the Lord according to the Mosaic covenant.

But as the history of Israel's faithlessness and apostasy finally led to national destruction and exile, the prophets looked to a new [covenant which] would replace the Mosaic covenant and bring the Abrahamic grant into everlasting fulfillment. In this new covenant, God would grant the blessing of new reconstituted hearts, filled with His Spirit, fully trusting and obeying Him, having God's will written directly into their very lives. He would eliminate the problem of sin so that the grant of blessing would be received fully, completely, and eternally. He would grant full forgiveness of sins and resurrection from the dead to life immortal. All the promises of blessing for personal and national life in communion with God, with peace and prosperity, would be fulfilled forever.

The new covenant blessing would be exemplified in the life of a Davidic king under whose rule and through whose mediation the blessings would come to the Israel of faith – that remnant of physical Israel which trusts in God – and to all those of the nations who trust in God through this king and thus come to constitute those nations who are blessed forever "in Him."¹⁶

* * *

God has been and is redeeming humanity by His promise.

How?

That is a story we must continue to tell until He returns to write the final chapter.

¹⁶ Blaising, Craig. Bock, Darrell. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. p.172-173. Though a very long quotation to include here, it is one of the best summaries of the covenants we've been studying I have found. Although it is from a dispensational perspective, I feel it represents the trajectory of the story of redemption well enough for us to see how God has redeemed all of humanity with a promise.