

## THE COVENANTS OF A LOVING GOD REDEEMING A FALLEN WORLD

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1

### WHY ARE GOD'S COVENANTS IMPORTANT?

- They tell us a great amount about the character of God
  - a. His completely loving nature
  - b. His unfailing holiness and sense of justice
  - c. His absolute power and control over all things
  - d. His unlimited knowledge of all things at all times and places
  - e. His eternal faithfulness

2

### THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S COVENANTS--continued

- They provide a basic framework for the entire Biblical story
  - They carry the story from God's creation of a perfect world to the final return to the perfect world God always intended (after Christ's Second Coming)
  - They represent major turning points in God's relationship with humanity

3

### THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S COVENANTS--continued

- They work cohesively together to document God's unfolding plan of redemption developed before the foundation of the world (Eph.1:4)
- They all respond to the basic pattern of life
  - Humanity sins
  - God judges sin
  - God bestows grace and mercy to restore our relationship with God

4

### THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD'S COVENANTS

- They were all initiated by God
- They are all special promises made by God
- Some are conditional and some unconditional
- Some are unilateral and some bilateral
- They cover several topics in addition to the principal one of redemption, including: descendants, land, and national and kingship issues
- Some are permanent and some temporary

5

### COVENANT ATTRIBUTES--continued

- They are supported by many types and degrees of formalities
  - One type is the "blood covenant" in common use in the Ancient Mideast
  - Nine steps were included in a blood covenant
    - An exchange of coats or robes (offering one's very life to the other party)
    - An exchange of belts (offering personal protection to the other party)

6

### COVENANT ATTRIBUTES--continued

- "Cut the Covenant"--An animal is killed and cut down the middle and the two halves are laid opposite each other. The two parties pass between the two halves of the animal saying: " May God do this to me and more if I break this covenant. This is a blood covenant and cannot be broken."
- You raise your right hand, cut your palm and clasp the other person's hand to intermingle their blood (and thus their lives) with yours

7

### COVENANT ATTRIBUTES--continued

- exchange of names (take on part of the other person's name)
- make a scar or another identifying mark publicly disclosing the covenant to others
- both parties stand before a witness and disclose the terms of the covenant
- they share a memorial meal of bread and wine
- a memorial tree is planted and is sprinkled with blood from the animal sacrificed under the covenant

8

### MODERN CONTRACT LAW

- Modern contract law contains many similar formalities
  - Mutual assent (offer and acceptance)
  - An exchange of value (consideration)
  - A legal purpose
  - Legal capacity
  - In writing (always preferred, sometimes required)
    - Witnesses required on occasion
    - Notarized signature and/or corporate seal for specialized purposes

9

### HOW MANY MAJOR COVENANTS ARE THERE?

- Numbering differs from scholar to scholar
- The major covenants include the following seven:
  - a. An initial one in the Garden before the Fall
  - b. One in the Garden after the fall
  - a. One to Noah and his descendants
  - d. One to Abraham and his descendants

10

### NUMBER OF MAJOR COVENANTS-continued

- e. One to Moses and the nation of Israel
  - f. One to King David and his descendants
  - g. The New Covenant through Christ's death and resurrection to all believers
- These seven covenants directly represent God's unfolding plan of redemption

11



12

### THE EDENIC COVENANT

- Genesis 1:28-30 (not in traditional covenant form but treated as one in Hosea 6:7)
- The three parties: God, Adam and Eve
- How God intended life to be before the Fall --Adam and Eve were created in God's image. They received divine blessings including eternal life in paradise
- Adam was to manage God's Garden
  - He was to work it and care for it (Gen.2:15) and name each living creature (Gen. 2:19)

13

### THE EDENIC COVENANT

- Adam and Eve were told to:
  - Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it
  - Rule over and enjoy all of creation
- It was conditional--do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or you will die (Gen. 2:16)
  - The loss of eternal life

14

### THE EDENIC COVENANT

- It was intended that God would rule and enjoy a relationship with humans forever
  - Adam and Eve were to obey God's one restriction and manage and enjoy God's creation
  - Sin made this covenant temporary
- This covenant plays a key role in God's unfolding plan of redemption by showing humanity's inability to obey God despite having the potential for eternal life and living in God's paradise on earth

15

### THE COVENANT SHORTLY AFTER THE FALL

- Genesis 3:14-19
- God's covenant to Adam, Eve, their descendants and satan
- A descendent of Eve would be bruised by satan but would also wound satan's head
- This gives us our first glimpse of how God's redemptive plan would ultimately be achieved (through the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ)

16

#### THE COVENANT AFTER THE FALL--continued

- The penalty for humanity became physical and spiritual death.
- There would also be pain in childbirth (Gen. 3:16)
- The cursing of the ground made Adam's work much harder and it was to continue throughout his life (3:17-19)
  - The ground would produce thorns and thistles
- Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23)
- God's grace is the only solution for humanity's sin

17



18



19

#### GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

- The wickedness of humanity was great (Gen. 6:5)
- God sent a great flood to start over (Gen. 6:7) but God spared Noah and his family
- Genesis 9:8-17: A covenant made with "righteous" (Gen, 6:9) Noah, his descendants and every living thing on earth
- A permanent, unilateral and unconditional promise
- God promised to never again destroy earthly life by flood

20

### GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

- The sign always confirming the promise: the rainbow
- This covenant assures that sinful humanity will survive for the time required for God's plan of redemption to work itself out
- Noah and his family are told to be fruitful and replenish the earth

21



GOD'S  
COVENANT  
WITH  
ABRAHAM

22

### ABRAHAMIC COVENANTS-continued

- These covenants were given over a period of time
- The covenants are unilateral and unconditional (although Abraham's faith played a key role--see Gen. 12:1 and Gen. 22, when he left his homeland and was later willing to sacrifice his son Isaac at God's command)
- The covenants are permanent and were affirmed for Isaac (Gen. 26:3), Jacob (Gen. 28:13-15) and Jacob's sons (Gen. 49)

23

### GOD'S COVENANTS WITH ABRAHAM

- Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17 and 22
- God's promises to Abraham and his descendants
  - God would bless them, be their God and redeem the world through them (Gen. 12:2-3)
  - Abraham would have descendants, they would become a great nation (Gen. 12:2) and Abraham would father many nations (Gen. 17:4-6)
  - God would give them a specific land to live in (Gen. 15:17-21)

24

**ABRAHAMIC COVENANTS--continued**

- God uses the formalities of a blood covenant
  - God offers to be Abram's shield and God promises to reward Abram (15:1)
  - God "cuts the covenant" through the shedding of animal blood (15:7-21)
  - God recites the terms of the promises (15:13-21)
  - Names are exchanged--Abram becomes Abraham (17:4,5 and 15) and God becomes known as the God of Abraham

25

**ABRAHAMIC COVENANTS--continued**

- Physical circumcision becomes the scar/sign of the covenants (17:10-12)
- The covenants represent a very early example of God's unfailing grace to humanity without any merit on our part
- The covenants to Abraham are later expanded and refined in the covenants with Israel on Mt. Sinai and perfected in the New Covenant

26

**GOD'S GRACE IN ACTION**

- Abraham lived in a pagan area-- Haran (11:31)-- where his family worshipped multiple pagan gods (Joshua 24:2)
- Abraham was called to leave his prior world and embark on a new journey with the One True God
- God acted first and faith resulted
- God is the moving force in fulfilling all of the blood oath and takes the entire covenant upon Himself
- God spares Isaac later during Abraham's test even though God did not spare His Son in His sacrifice for our

27

**ABRAHAM'S FAITH**

- Abraham left his home in a flourishing caravan city and followed God to an unknown place of God's choice
- God promised to make Abraham into a great nation while he and Sarah were childless and well advanced in years
- Abraham believed God's commands and faithfully followed
- Abraham was even willing to sacrifice the child of God's promise (Isaac) at God's later command in ch.22

28



29

**GOD'S COVENANT TO AND THROUGH MOSES**

- In His covenants with Abraham, God said that Abraham's descendants would be enslaved in Egypt for 400 years, and that God would then free them and return them to the Promised Land (Gen.15:13-16)
- God appointed Moses to act as His emissary to punish Egypt and lead the Israelites out of captivity culminating in The Passover (Exodus 6-12)

30

**COVENANTS TO MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES--continued**

- Soon the Israelites reached Mt. Sinai and God's covenants to that nation began through Moses from the mountaintop:
  - Ex.19:5-6--if the Israelites obeyed God and kept the covenants' conditions:
    - they will be God's special possession
    - they will become a kingdom of priests
    - they will become a holy nation
  - In Ex. 19:8 the people accepted the covenants' terms

31

**MT. SINAI COVENANTS--continued**

- God consecrated the people through Moses, God addressed them directly and God gave them the ten commandments (Ex.19:10 to Ex. 20:17)
- God then supplemented the ten commandments with many further ordinances (@ 613 rules?). Moses received them and passed them on to the people (Ex. 21-23)
- The people accepted the terms of all of the commandments and ordinances in Ex. 24:3
- The Passover seder and sabbath were the signs given

32



**MT. SINAI COVENANTS--continued**

- Moses wrote God's words in a book, built an altar, sacrificed several oxen, sealed the covenant with blood (Moses threw some blood on the altar), read the book to the people, sprinkled blood on the people (Ex.24:4-8) and had a feast with the elders (vv. 9-11)
- Moses received the stone tablets written by God (Ex. 31:18)
- In the 40 days Moses remained on Mt. Sinai the people broke their covenant promise and made an idol (the golden calf)--Ex. 32

33

**MT. SINAI COVENANTS--continued**

- Moses intervened through prayer beginning in Ex 32:11
- While the people were severely punished {3,000 were killed by the Levites (Ex. 32:27-29) and God sent a plague (Ex. 32:35)}, God relented
- If the covenants were based solely on works (strict justice), God would have abandoned the people
- Instead God renewed the covenants showing that they were based on God's GRACE and MERCY

34

**MT. SINAI COVENANTS--continued**

- God had Moses return to the mountaintop and God wrote the ten commandments on new tablets--Ex. 34 (Moses had smashed the earlier ones signifying the breaking of the covenants--Ex. 32:19)
- God proclaimed His name and described Himself as "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin." Ex.34:6-7

35

**MT. SINAI COVENANTS--continued**

- The covenants with Abraham were extended and reaffirmed through these descendants:
  - Israel will be God's special possession
  - Israel will be a kingdom of priests to God
  - Israel will be a holy nation
  - God will fight for Israel and overcome all of her enemies
  - God will treat Israel with grace and mercy and forgive her sins

36

#### MT. SINAI COVENANTS--continued

- These covenants were conditional and required obedience to God's voice and commandments (Ex. 19:5)
  - They did not require sinless perfection (Ex. 34:7)
  - The people must believe, love and trust God (Ex. 20:5-6) and keep their focus on Him
  - Their obedience should flow from the heart not from merely going through the motions or out of habit or a sense of obligation

37

#### MT. SINAI COVENANTS--

- The Israelites failed to live up to the conditions of the covenants for generations and God eventually exiled the people
  - Isaiah 29:13--And so the Lord says, "These people say they are mine. They honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. And their worship of Me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote."
  - Their failures ultimately condemned the nation

38

#### COVENANTS WITH KING DAVID

- 2 Samuel 7:12-17, 1 Chron. 17:10-14
- The covenants provide:
  - That a son of his (Solomon) will succeed David as king and build a house for God (2 Sam. 7:13)
  - David's house, throne and kingdom will endure forever (2 Sam. 7:16)
- The kings in David's line that followed failed to live up to God's standard, so they were not worthy to fulfill the second promise

39

#### COVENANTS TO KING DAVID

- Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied how God would fulfill the promise to David
  - Ezekiel 37:23
  - Jeremiah 23:5-6
  - Isaiah 9:6-7--"For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulder... Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness...forevermore."

40

### DAVIDIC COVENANTS

- In Luke 1:31-33, the Angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary of Christ's coming birth includes the following:..."He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."
- Jesus is both the Son of David (Rom.1:3) and the Lord of David (Matt. 22:45)

41

### DAVIDIC COVENANTS

- Thus the second promise is fulfilled as part of God's unfolding plan of redemption
- God Himself fulfills the promise through His son, Jesus, since none of David's earlier line qualified
- Jesus reigns as king in heaven now (1 Cor.15:25) and will reign forever (Rev. 7:9)

42



43

### THE NEW COVENANT

- Jeremiah pointed directly to the coming New Covenant
  - Jeremiah 31:33-34--"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time", declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people...I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

44

### NEW COVENANT

- God's covenants to the Israelites on Mt. Sinai had been ineffective in their goal of drawing their hearts ever closer to God
- The covenant sign of circumcision was meaningless per Jeremiah without a heart focused on God (Jer. 4:4, 9:26)
- Confidence in the Temple, sacrifices and the priesthood was similarly meaningless without changed hearts (Jer. 7:4-15, 7:21-26)

45

### NEW COVENANT

- The sacrificial suffering and death of Jesus created the New Covenant
  - 1 Cor. 11:25--In the same way, after supper, He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."
  - Jesus eliminated any perceived disconnect between the old and new covenants

46

### NEW COVENANT

- Matthew 5:17---"Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets, but to fulfill them."
- However, the new covenant replaces the Mt. Sinai covenants in the sense that eternal life is now provided exclusively through faith in the sacrificial suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. (Hebrews 8:13, John 3:16, Ephesians 2:8-9)

47

### THE FATE OF THE EARLIER COVENANTS

1. The covenant before the fall established how we cannot obey God on our own even in the best circumstances
2. The covenant with Adam, Eve and Satan: It was fulfilled through Christ's atonement for our sins
3. The covenant with Noah and all life after the Great Flood: It continues without change
4. The covenants with Abraham were permanent. Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection fulfilled the promise that the whole world would be blessed through Abraham

48

### THE EARLIER COVENANTS ---continued

- 5. The covenants with the nation of Israel: Superseded
- 6. The covenants with King David: The current and future reign of Christ fulfills the promise that a descendent of King David will always be on the throne
- They all form part of God's plan for our redemption, developed before the dawn of time

49

### HEBREWS 8 AND 9

- The New Covenant ("NT") is vastly superior to the Mosaic ("OT") Covenant
  - OT: Result: Spiritual enslavement  
NT: Result: Spiritual freedom
  - OT: Extensive regulations for worship  
NT: Worship of the heart through the Holy Spirit
  - Jesus is a superior mediator to Moses

50

### HEBREWS 8 AND 9

- OT: The Israelites failed to obey  
NT: Performed fully by Christ
- OT: External standards and rules  
NT: Internal standard--a new heart
- OT: Limited access to God  
NT: Unlimited access to God
- OT: Legal cleansing  
NT: Personal cleansing

51

### HEBREWS--continued

- OT: Remembers sin  
NT: Sin is forgiven and forgotten
- OT: Demanded works  
NT: Requires faith and obedience
- OT: For Israelites only  
NT: For Gentile and Jewish believers alike

52

### HEBREWS--continued

- OT: Ongoing sacrifices required (curse of sin continued)  
NT: Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient for all time (curse of sin eliminated)
- OT: Many human high priests  
NT: One Heavenly High Priest: Jesus
- OT: Leads to physical and eternal death  
NT: Gives eternal life

53

### GOD'S FINAL BLOOD COVENANT

- The New Covenant contains the formalities of a blood covenant (like the covenants with Abraham and Moses did)
  - Jesus is both a descendant of Abraham and the offering
  - We exchange our sinfulness for Christ's righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21)
  - He protects us (Luke 10:19, Eph. 6 13-17)
  - God "cut the covenant" through Jesus, the sacrificial lamb (Heb.10-14-18)

54

### GOD'S FINAL BLOOD COVENANT--continued

- The mixing of blood--The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin and we are made holy as He is
- Exchange of names--Jesus took on the name Son of Man and we take on the name Christian
- The covenant terms disclosed--the entire Bible
- Eat the memorial meal--the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

55

### GOD'S FINAL BLOOD SACRIFICE

- Make a scar-- Jesus has the scars of the nails in His hands and feet and of the spear wound in His side. We have the circumcision of the heart (Rom.2:29)
- Plant a memorial tree--The cross Jesus died on was the tree that His sacrificial blood was sprinkled on and it remains a memorial of the New Covenant

56

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- God's covenants all represent God's Kingdom in action
  - God created all things and reigns over them
    - God's creation and Kingdom were perfect in every way
  - When Adam and Eve sinned, God provided a glimpse of His redemptive plan to restore His Kingdom on earth
  - God selected Abraham and his descendants to begin this process of restoration

57

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- God's covenant relationship with Israel was to be a model for the entire world to witness
- The permanence of King David's kingdom would be accomplished through the eternal rule of the resurrected Christ
- The first six covenants all focus us on Christ's suffering and death to make God's Kingdom available to all believers

58

### REDEMPTION

- On our own, we have never been able to maintain or restore our relationship to God through our own obedience
- Old Testament covenants point to Christ and His sacrificial death as the sole source of our redemption
- Faith in Christ as our Savior and Lord is our only path to eternal life through the power of the Holy Spirit
- After Christ's Second Coming, we will return to the perfect world God always intended

59