

# Digging Deeper into Biblical Covenants: The Covenant with Israel

## 1. Introduction/Review.

- (1) *In Scripture, God's promise(s) are tied to 'covenants' from Creation to Christ.*
  - i) Covenants *not only* teach us about *who God is*, but are also the *primary* means by which God's plan unfolds *across time* – “backbone of the storyline.”
  - ii) God's plan of redemption/Scripture does *not* come all at once – it unfolds over time. See Heb 1:1-2. *That entire plan culminates in Christ.*
  - iii) The covenants **tell/reveal** a story – a story of God's glorious salvation in Christ.
  - iv) Starting in Creation, and tracing out the biblical covenants, is how the Bible teaches us that the “whole Bible” finds its Yes/Amen in Christ.
  - v) In addition, as we do so, we grow in our knowledge of God and Scripture; grow in our confidence in God's promises; learn to trust God more in the midst of this fallen world; lead to greater worship/obedience.
  - vi) It also enables us to handle rightly the Bible and apply *all* of it to our lives – ‘to think God's thoughts after him’ and ‘to bring all of our thought/lives captive to Christ.’
- (2) *As we trace out the biblical covenants, it is crucial to follow context, context, context*
- (3) *Where are we in the Story? So far... 'Creation,' 'Noahic,' & 'Abrahamic' Covenants.*
  - i) ‘Creation Covenant’ – Adam.
  - ii) ‘Noahic Covenant.’
  - iii) ‘Abrahamic Covenant.’

## 2. Moses, Israel, the Old Covenant.

- (1) *What is the context of the Old Covenant? What has come 'before' it?*
  - i) ‘**Old covenant**’ rooted in the promises to the Patriarchs.
    - a) It is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob that God calls Moses to deliver his people from Egypt (Ex 3:6; cf. 2:24-25; Deut 4:36-38; 1 Chr 16:15-19; 2 Kgs 13:22-23).
    - b) **Election.** God did not set his love on Israel because they were better or more numerous than the nations (Deut 7:7). Neither was it for their righteousness that they were given the land of Canaan. The basis for God's calling of Israel was not to be found in them, but in him and of his covenant loyalty to his promises to Abraham (Ex 19:4; Dt 7:8). *Remember:* God's choosing of Abraham was *grace*. *Application:* The same is true of us. Thankfully, God takes the initiative to save!
  - ii) *How is the Old Covenant related to the previous covenants?*
    - a) Israel, **as a nation**, is the **means** by which God brings salvation blessings to all nations (=which is rooted in creation and the Abrahamic promises) **in 2 ways**.
      - (1) **1<sup>st</sup>:** *Via* them will come the ‘seed’ of the woman (=with greater definition).
      - (2) **2<sup>nd</sup>:** Israel as a nation is to show the world what ‘Adam’ (=image-bearers) are to look like. They are to be a ‘**kingdom of priests**’ (=Adamic role). They are to live out and show to the nations what it means to be the people of God.
      - (3) **Crucial: Israel (subset of Gentiles; specific Law given).**
    - b) *Where do we see this?* Look what they are called (=see Exod 19:5-6).
      - (1) Israel is ‘**my possession**,’ ‘**kingdom of priests**,’ and ‘**holy nation**’ (*gôy*).
      - (2) This is an advance on the Abrahamic promise, but now *via* Israel.

- c) Israel was to be the paradigm of theocratic rule, which is the biblical aim for the entire world. Here they fulfill the role of Adam – a ‘new Adam.’
  - d) However, as we know, they also failed. ***That too is part of the story.***
- (2) ***What is the Relationship of the LORD to Israel?***
- i) ***Father-son (=Exod 4:22-23)***
    - a) Back to Adam (=son, representatives, function like the Lord on the earth).
    - b) Forward to the Davidic kings (=King as an individual – “son”).
  - ii) ***As a son, Israel is called to be OBEDIENT.***
- (3) ***Three Other Important Observations → Leading us to Christ.***
- i) ***1<sup>st</sup>: ‘Old covenant’ is a package deal.***
    - a) We cannot separate ‘moral, civil, ceremonial.’ Talk about 10 commandments.
    - b) *E.g. Relation of priesthood to ‘law’* (see Heb 7:11).
    - c) ‘Under law’ = entire covenant package (1 Cor 9). ‘Law’ in Paul = Law-covenant.
  - ii) ***2<sup>nd</sup>: Crucial Typological Structures Developed in the Old Covenant.***
    - a) ***Exodus*** (=Passover, redemption – new exodus; Ex 15:14-17).
      - (1) In Ex 15, the exodus is open-ended toward the future. It describes a future safe passage of Israel through the midst of their enemies instead of the expected portrayal of their past passage.
      - (2) *New exodus theme – Isa 11:15-16; 40:3-5; 41:17-20; 42:14-16; 43:1-3, 14-21; 48:20-21; 49:8-12; 51:9-11; 52:3-6, 11-12; 55:12-13; Jer 16:14-15; 23:4-8; 31:32; Hos 2:14-15; 11:1; 12:9, 13; 13:4-5.*
    - b) ***Passover*** (=10<sup>th</sup> plague on all, God provides) → ***sacrificial system. See Gen 22.***
    - c) ***Israel is a Kingdom of Priests but they need Levitical Priests.*** Why? Sin.
      - (1) *Priest, sacrificial system, tabernacle* (Ex 25:9, 40; cf. Ex 24-40; Heb 8-9).
      - (2) Tabernacle always access but limited to God (=see Holy of Holies).
      - (3) Access is via priest, sacrifice/substitution. God’s presence dwells in midst.
    - d) ***Moses*** (=unique individual, yet never enters the Promised Land).
      - (1) ***Mediator/Deliverer – Kingly*** (=Exodus, Sinai, Ex 32-34).
      - (2) ***Prophet*** (Dt 18:15-18; Num 12:6-8; Dt 34:10-12) – institution of Prophets.
      - (3) ***Priestly*** (=see Leviticus).
    - e) ***Anticipation of the King*** (Deut 17:14-20; cf. Gen 17:6, 16; 49:8-12; Num 24:17-19; cf. 24:7; Joshua-Judges; cf. Josh 23:1-16; Judges 2:16-3:6; 9:1-57. See refrain: Judges 17:6; 21:25. Cf. the book of Ruth).
    - f) ***Land (=place of Rest). See Joshua.***
      - (1) Entrance into the land is back in God’s presence tied to tabernacle/temple.
      - (2) In creation, linkage of Eden w/ temple. Yet, full access to God is limited.
      - (3) Ultimately anticipates Eden restored (=see Revel 21-22).
  - iii) ***3<sup>rd</sup>: ‘Old covenant’ is a means to an end, not an end in itself (=contra Judaizers).***
    - a) Promise precedes the law (Gal 3:15-4:7). ‘Old covenant’ is temporary.
    - b) It was *not* intended to save in the ultimate sense. Why the law?
      - (1) Instruction, guidance, moral demand, show them how to live.
      - (2) **But Gal 3:** Revealed sin, tutor. *It pointed forward to Christ.* See Heb 9.
    - c) **It was prophetic** (=Matt 11; Rom 3:21; Heb 5-10).

### 3. Concluding Reflection on the Old Covenant → Christ.