

## Covenant Overview

**My word for this year is hope.** The Greek word defines it as a confident expectation of good. We cannot see the future, yet I know Whom I have believed and know my ultimate destination is eternal life with Him. But day by day I frequently battle with hope in those difficult issues of life.

**Heb 11:1** Now **faith** is the assurance (ability to stand under in trust) of [things] hoped for, the conviction (withstood the test) of *things not seen*. When we study covenant, I pray that our **faith** strengthens as our eyes are opened to the love and commitment God has for us.

**Rom 8:24** For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; *for who hopes for what he [already] sees?*

If you would like to study more, *Our Covenant God by Kay Arthur* is an excellent resource, and I used her chapter titles for the list at the back of this lesson. And paraphrased her book frequently in this overview.

Covenant is God's promise. **It is a solemn, binding agreement. God does not lie.** Then why do I have so much trouble believing Him at times? Why do we struggle? This fallen world has so many trials and tests of faith, we get discouraged, heartbroken, disappointed or are just afraid. I forget and doubt how much He loves me and the cost He paid for my salvation. Covenant guarantees God has to keep His end of this bargain.

**Psalm 25:10, 14** Notice we have a responsibility

10 All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth

To those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.

14 The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him,

And He will make them know His covenant.

How do I live believing God's promises? Can I radically change my walk with God if I understand covenant? Comprehending covenant in the grace of God's Spirit is to experience security we have never known, as we realize *everything God does* is based on covenant. When we understand His truth what it means to be a child of God, we open ourselves to a freedom, a peace, a strength, a safety protected by the power of God. Covenant removes the veil from truth and frees us from bondage into a grace of everlasting love that keeps us, guards us and never abandons us.

The Greek word for covenant is *diathēkē*. Generally speaking, it is a last will and testament to take effect after someone has died. (**Heb 9:16-18**). **Interestingly the one who makes the will does not ask the recipient if it is acceptable or not.** It is the unilateral demonstration of the one who made the will, "the testator." A will only be in effect when the one who made it dies. Spiritually speaking covenant is God's desire for humanity. It is a "will" made by God for the benefit of man. **Jesus is Him who died.** The superior being is binding Himself to His children.

**The first prophecy about Jesus: Gen 3:15** (God is speaking to the serpent.) "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.

**John 3:16.** Think about God loved us and sent His Son. Jesus is Eve's seed and would crush Satan's head. God expressed His will toward man by making His plan of redemption and offered Jesus as His guarantee. The word covenant was not used but implied in this promise. God had this plan in place **before the foundation of the world**; prior to the original sin.

**Ephesians 1:3-4** Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him **before the foundation of the world**, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

**1 Pet 1:20-21** 20 For He was foreknown **before the foundation** of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are **believers** in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

**John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. Note: the plan from the beginning. (**Perish not absence of being, but well-being**).

The first mention of the actual word "covenant" is stated to Noah. **Gen 6:18** "*But I will establish My covenant with you*; and you shall enter the ark you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. God's covenant promised that he would never again destroy all men by water. The rainbow is a sign of this promise.

**Gen 6:8-10** But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. 9 These are [the records of] the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. 10 Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. **Noah did not allow Himself to be conformed to the world.**

**Heb 11:7** By faith Noah, being warned [by God] about things *not yet seen*, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

**God could not destroy ALL men and keep his promise to Eve.** One reason God saved Noah was to continue Eve's seed who would conquer death. Our God has always been a promise keeper.

There are three main covenants: **The Abrahamic Covenant, The Law or Old Covenant, and The New Covenant.** They all foreshadow our salvation through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

**ABRAHAMIC COVENANT:** **God promised Abraham descendants, blessing and land, and more.**

**Gen 12:2-3, 7** 2 And I will make you a **great nation**, And I will **bless you**, and make your name great; and so you shall be a **blessing**; 3 and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you **all the families of the earth will be blessed.**" (Jesus!) 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "**To your descendants I will give this land.**" So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

**Gen 15: 6** **Abraham believed God and was counted as R+=justified. Later in the chapter** Covenant is vividly described in God's encounter with Abram. The Hebrew term for covenant is to "*cut covenant*". God commanded Abram *to cut* animals in two and place the pieces opposite each other with a path between the pieces. Then God revealed Himself in a dream to Abraham about a smoking oven and flaming torch passed between the pieces, representing God (The Father and Holy Spirit) walking into death (the pieces represent Jesus). God had made a promise to Abram that he who was childless would have a descendant (seed) who would bless all the nations of the world.

**Heb 11:8-11, 17-19** By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, *not knowing where he was going*. 9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign [land,] dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; 10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered

Him faithful who had promised.... 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten [son;] 18 [it was he] to whom it was said, "**IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.**" 19 He considered that God is able to raise [people] even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. They weren't perfect by any means but saved.

**Genesis 22** Abraham **believed** God about his descendants, and *like God's promise to Eve*, Isaac had to survive. Abraham believed God would resurrect Isaac if he was sacrificed. The covenant continued to Isaac & Jacob.

**Heb 6:17-20** 17 In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things in which *it is impossible for God to lie*, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a [hope] both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

**Gal 3:16** Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his **seed**. He does not say, "And to **seeds**," as [referring] to many, but [rather] to one, "And to your **seed**," that is, Christ. If you note the genealogies in the gospels, Noah (his son Shem), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David are in both Mary and Joseph's lineage.

Notice that **God establishes and initiates** the covenant with Noah. And Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And David. (2 Samuel 7) And their seed, just like Eve's seed would bless all the nations. Notice it is a singular seed meaning Jesus.

**The Old Covenant is the Law.** The sacrificial system of an animal taking upon itself the sin of the one who sacrifices it. When you look at the sacrifices described in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, they **represent Jesus** who was to come. The Law required atoning blood.

**Heb 9:22** states without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Jesus' blood was acceptable to God and he exchanged identity with us to pay for our sin.

**God tells Moses that Israel will reject Him in idolatry, be taken into captivity. But to keep His promise to Abraham He will bring them back. Remember God promised Abe: Descendants and the seed, blessing, land.**

**Deut 30:1-5, 11-14, 19-20** Israel had to decide between blessing and cursing, but God's promise to Abraham stood, regardless of Israel's obedience. **Covenant requires we decide to believe God.** 1 "So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call [them] to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and **obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today**, you and your sons, 3 then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 "The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. . **He officially gave them their own country again May 14, 1948! God is keeping His covenant to Abraham to this day!..** 11 "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. 12 "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' 13 "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' 14 "**But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.** ... 19 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. **So choose life in**

**order that you may live**, you and your descendants, 20 by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

## **Jesus is the New Covenant, He is the fulfilment of the Law, the Old Covenant**

He shed His blood as our covenant sacrifice. Upon His death the veil that separated man from God in the Temple's Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom; thus, a new way to approach God arose which He 'willed' for man. **Jesus' death was the testator dying, God Himself died** to allow this will or covenant to be in effect. He became the **atoning burnt offering** pictured in the Law. (And the other atoning sacrifices described).

**Phil 2:5-11 NASB** - 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, [and] being **made in the likeness of men**. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming **obedient to the point of death**, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **Everybody bows, no exceptions**

**We exchange identity with Jesus. His example shows us how to die to self.** In covenant there is a "walk into death" We see our responsibility in the commandments of the New Testament. **Romans 6** speaks of our old man (sin nature, flesh) **died with Christ** and our new man (filled with Holy Spirit, life) was raised with Him. We no longer have to be slaves to sin. We have the power, through the Holy Spirit, to walk in newness of life.

**2 Cor 5:17-21** 17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, [he is] a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all [these] things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God (choice of faith)**. 21 He made Him who knew no sin [to be] sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. **Here is the exchange of identity.**

**The modern Church has drifted away from Jesus being the only way the only truth and the only life. Disbelief in God's word is a dangerous path. We have to enter in** to the Covenant of Salvation. **God** is the one who sets the terms. It has lapsed into the same idolatry described in Noah's time, the wilderness Israelites and their golden calves, the pagan worship that put Israel into captivity. All of them took on the culture that was overtaking their time. They have no understanding of the promises or covenants of God. **They did not believe the truth of God's word.** They are trying to determine obedience that is comfortable and deny God's authority in their life.

**John 14:6**, Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. Here is one doctrinal statement of a local church. "Love" has replaced the deity of Jesus. They don't **believe** in hell or an afterlife. Underlines are mine. Remember Romans 12:1-2 Conformed vs. Transformed!

"It's probably important to start by making it clear that we're not the ones who "figured out God". Neither do we possess the secret to **life**, exclusive access to **truth** or the only **way** to find fulfillment. **Vs. Salvation?** We are, however, powerfully drawn to the life and teachings of Jesus (as well as other great teachers of the way of love). **But rather than fixating on supernatural beliefs**, we want to cultivate a practical path and a living practice in the **way of love**. We think the truth about life may just be love and love may just be the way. "Love" is not salvation from sin. No sin is addressed! Easy believe-ism

**God is Love. Love is God.** We envision a community where every human being awakens to this Love; working in us, among us, through us and even **as us**. **This Love is our supreme value**, which manifests in the individual as a self-giving choice to act responsibly with justice, integrity, courage and forgiveness, and transcends the instinctual drive for personal survival and protection. Because of this, **we don't focus on escaping to a renewed, peaceful world in some heavenly afterlife.** Rather, our hope is to actively build one here and now. This includes protecting and restoring the Earth and the value and dignity of the life upon it. In the words of Mr. Rogers, **"Life is for service"**. **Why did Jesus come and die, then?**

### **Communion remembers what Jesus did on our behalf:**

**Luke 22:19-20** And when He had taken [some] bread [and] given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 20 And in the same way [He took] the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is **the new covenant** in My blood.

**Heb 9:15** For this reason He is the mediator of a **new covenant**, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were [committed] under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

**How were people saved in the Old Testament (or Covenant) before Jesus died?** It is the same salvation, looking to the ultimate death of the One who would take our sins once and for all. **Hebrews 8 and 9 describe how and why Jesus is the better sacrifice as compared to the Law.** If you read these passages, note the terms "better" time descriptions like "once for all" and notice how they compare to the Law of animal sacrifices. **Those who were saved believed in the Messiah who was coming and was represented by their sacrifices offered by the priests. After the cross we believe in the Messiah who came and paid the eternal price for our salvation.**

Covenant of salvation is offered to all. It is a walk taken by Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. It is always available, unbroken and eternal, once we enter into it. We choose to enter this covenant in salvation. It requires our walk into death to our old life and new life in Jesus. We will explore this in coming lessons.

To understand covenant is ...

- to discover a promise that has been there all the time,
  - hidden in vague shadows and blurred by the veil of my ignorance.
- to understand the intimacy and intricate details of God's plan and purpose.
- to know that because of His covenant of grace
  - I can be assured that I will always be beloved of God.
  - It frees us to bask in His love and to move through every circumstance of life in the security of His promises.
  - It gives us a confidence that removes the fear of death because the sting is gone, and the grave will not ever hold us.

To understand covenant is

- to grasp the incredible truth that the covenant is for you, beloved of God.
  - It will take you through a blood-washed door into a whole new world
  - of understanding of what it means to be a child of God,
  - bidden to come through the rent veil of the flesh of His only begotten Son
  - Into the presence of your Covenant God
  - and cry, "Abba, Father!"

To understand covenant is to hear Him say to you,

- "You are precious in my sight"
  - and to believe Him. (Kay Arthur, Our Covenant God)

Because God is a covenant God:

1. I can be secure
2. I can trust Him completely
3. I am loved unconditionally
4. His promises will never fail
5. I have three attributes of covenant:
  - A bond in blood
  - A walk into death
  - An unbreakable commitment
6. I am assured of my covenant heritage
7. I have a new identity
8. I have His help in temptation
9. I have a defender and vindicator
10. I have something worth dying for
11. I have His strength and power
12. I belong to someone forever
13. He will always bear my wounds
14. I have a faithful Friend
15. I am rich beyond measure
16. My life is on the line
17. I am invited to come and dine at the King's table

Which of these promises is the most difficult for you to have faith in and why?