

Biblical Covenants

By Victor Gluckin

A covenant can be defined as an agreement between two or more parties to fulfill certain promises, with both parties committing to do or not do certain things. GOD has worked with mankind throughout the ages through a series of covenants. These covenants chronicle the unfolding of GOD's restoration plan.

Out of all of the men of the Bible, only one is called the friend of GOD – Abraham. GOD met Abraham and called him from out of his land and his family to be separate for the LORD. GOD cut a covenant with Abraham in which He promised to give Abraham a large inheritance of land, an innumerable ancestry and pledged to “bless those who bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee (Genesis 12:3).” Abraham's response to these words of GOD was to be that of a faithful obedience to the LORD's direction. The sign of this covenant was the circumcision, which would serve as a reminder to all of Abraham's descendant's that GOD was going to fulfill His end of the covenant and that they should keep their trust in Him.

After Abraham, GOD's next important covenant was made with Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel. Through His prophet Moses, GOD redeemed Israel from bondage in Egypt with the intent to bring them to the land, which was promised to Abraham. After their initial deliverance, GOD set forth the terms of this covenant, spoken to Moses by GOD. GOD was promising to bring the children of Israel into the Promised Land if they would adhere to the laws set forth in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Detailing the plan for the tabernacle, the role of the High Priest, and sacrificial regulations, this law code would serve to set the people apart from the nations, which would surround Israel once in Canaan. Unfortunately, the Mosaic Law said nothing about eternal salvation and life, but the Jews soon began to believe that their

salvation would depend on their strict adherence to the law, even outside of faith and love towards GOD. Evidence to this can be seen in the religious leaders during Jesus' time.

Once Israel entered Canaan and the period of the judges were over, David eventually became King over the nation. David was "a man after GOD's own heart (I Samuel 13:14)," and ruled over a time of unparalleled peace and equity. David's first acts as King included taking over Jerusalem, the city GOD desired for His name to rest, and return the Ark of the Covenant into Israelite hands, thus restoring worship of the True God to Israel. After this, David desired to build a house for the LORD's name to dwell. GOD responds by developing a covenant with David characterized by a descendant of David who would "build an house for (GOD's) name, and (GOD) will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son...(II Samuel 7:13-14a)." To have a Davidic King on GOD's throne forever became the basic premise of the David covenant.

As time passed however, it may have seemed that these covenants of promise were not to be fulfilled. Abraham had died, his descendants scattered, and Israel and Judah both divided and exiled. However, GOD's promises are not empty. "God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good (Number 23:19)?"

The Scriptures pick up the covenantal idea in the opening pages of the New Testament. Jesus himself becomes the central figure not only in GOD's salvation plan but also in the fulfillment of the covenants GOD has made throughout time. Matthew opens with the heading "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1)." Jesus was literally the physical descendant of both Abraham and David!

Jesus' own words connect his followers in with the Abrahamic promise. "Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5)" tells us that those who are gentle can share in the earthly inheritance that was promised to Abraham. Paul clarifies this truth even further in the important Galatians 3:29 where he writes "and if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." The logical progression would be to look back at just what was promised to Abraham and rejoice in being a partaker of that glorious promise! As we turn the page from Malachi to Matthew, the story we left off with continues.

Jesus is also clearly associated with the Davidic covenant as well. Even before his birth, Gabriel tells Mary about her son that "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:32, 33)," clearly reminding the reader of the promise to David given centuries before.

As for Jesus' connection with the Mosaic covenant, we learn in Deuteronomy 18 about a great prophet who would arise after Moses who the people should hear. Jesus is that great prophet to come and as a result his words supercede the words of Moses. Moses himself attested to this (See Deuteronomy 18:18-19). Paul writes that "the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ...(Galatians 3:24)" and now that Christ has come, his words serve as the terms of the new covenant GOD is making with mankind.

This new covenant is a combination of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants with a greater fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah. He offers mankind a new relationship opportunity with GOD, a new covenant, which ends with eternal life. Like Moses before him, Jesus now is "the mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 12:24)," and *his* words serve as the law, which must be followed in order to fulfill our end of the deal. GOD's part of the covenant is recorded in

Jeremiah 31:33-34: “this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” A day to come when we will be perfected to serve the LORD forever awaits those who heed Jesus’ words and partake in his sacrificial death.

GOD’s salvation plan continues today. Those who are of the faith of Abraham await the new Moses, Jesus the Christ, to come and reign on David’s throne over the entire earth forever. Abraham will inherit the land and be truly blessed, David will see his son sitting on his throne in the exact manner which he was promised, and Jesus will welcome those who followed his words into the new paradise of GOD, a time when all will be made right with the world and what GOD originally intended will come to pass. Through a series of covenants, GOD has moved His plan along so that eventually all of the earth will belong to the people of the Most High. Let us be those who seek to please our GOD by following the teachings of His Messiah, Jesus who has become the capstone in the arch of GOD’s plan.