

The Biblical Covenants

Insights and Applications for the Christian

A Four-Part Series
Prepared for the JOY Class
By Pat McRight
February - March, 2021

SESSION 3

The Relationship Between The Old and New Covenants

Part 2

March 3, 2021



The Story of Salvation: Covenants

God's Unfolding Plan for His People



Mediator or Recipient	Adam	Noah	Abraham	Moses	David	Jesus
Form	A Promise	Grant	Grant	Suzerain-Vassal	Grant	Echoes of Suzerain-Vassal
Sign		Rainbow	Circumcision	Passover	Throne	Baptism, Lord's Supper

Today

- The New Covenant as a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty
- Various Perspectives on OT/NT Continuity & Discontinuity
 - Presuppositions
 - Ramifications
- The 10 Commandments: Are they in force under the New Covenant?
 - Are the 10 Commandments distinct from the Law of Moses?
 - What was nailed to the cross? (Col 2:14-16)

Types of Ancient Covenants

Type	Pledge(s)	Ritual
Kinship (Parity)	Equal parties swear mutual oath	Typically includes a family meal
Grant	Only superior party swears the oath	Sacrifice???
Suzerain-Vassal	Superior party imposes oath on the subordinate	Self-malediction

Elements of Ancient S-V Treaties

1. Preamble
2. Historical Prologue
3. The Stipulations
4. Provision for deposit in the temple and period public reading
5. The list of gods as witnesses
6. The curses and blessings formula
7. The formal oath
8. Solemn Ceremony
9. Procedure against rebellious vassal

New Covenant Echoes of S-V Treaty



Preamble

Historical Prologue

The Stipulations

**Deposit, Periodic
Reading**

Witnesses

Curses and blessings

The formal oath

Solemn Ceremony

**Procedure against
Rebellion**

I am the Alpha and the Omega

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Acts 2:32–33, 36 (NASB95)

³² “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

³³ “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

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John 14:15 (NASB95)

15 “If you love Me, you will keep My
commandments.

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2 Corinthians 3:2–3 (NASB95)

² You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;

³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

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Romans 8:16–17 (NASB95)

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

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Acts 2:38–39 (NASB95)

³⁸ Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

Mark 16:16 (NASB95)

¹⁶ “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

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Matthew 10:32 (NASB95)

³² “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

Romans 10:10 (NASB95)

¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

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1. The Sacrificial Death of Jesus
2. Our death with Him through baptism
(Romans 6:3-7)
3. Our circumcision of the heart, connected
with baptism (Colossians 2:11-12)
4. The Lord's Supper Our Covenant Meal
(Matthew 26:26-28; I Cor 10:16-17)

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Ultimately, The Final Judgment

Continuity between Old & New Covenants vs. Discontinuity

Various Schools of Thought

Continuity vs. Discontinuity

- This debate involves the degree to which the New Covenant disrupts the Old Covenant.
 - What is the relationship between Israel and the Church?
 - To what extent are promises made to Israel fulfilled by the establishment of the Church?
 - What is the relationship between Jesus' commands and the laws of the Mosaic Covenant.

Continuity vs. Discontinuity

	Dispensationalism	Covenantalism
Why the name?	Emphasizes separate epochs of time in Salvation history where God deals differently with people (Discontinuity)	Emphasizes the <i>progression</i> of covenants with "the people of God" (Continuity)
Israel vs. the Church	Has tended to assume that Israel and the church are distinct. Promises made to Israel do not relate to the church.	Has tended to see Israel and the church as "the people of God". Speaks of the OT church.
Prophecy Fulfillment	Insists on more literal fulfillment of OT prophecy.	Allows more spiritual fulfillment of OT prophecies, especially when NT applies "fulfillment language"
Role of Types and Antitypes	More reluctant to studying types and antitypes	More open to the use of types and antitypes

Discontinuity

Continuity

	Classic Dispensationalism	Revised Dispensationalism	Progressive Dispensationalism	Progressive Covenantalism	Covenant Theology	Christian Reconstructionism
Prophecy Interpretation	Israel restoration prophecies demand literal fulfillment	Rather literal Allows for more symbolism	"Complementary" Hermeneutic Literal but more open to typology	Author's intent, allows for spiritual fulfillment, typology	Author's intent, spiritual fulfillment, typology	Typology is crucial.
Structure	7 Dispensations (innocence, conscience, human govt, promise, law, grace, kingdom)		4 Dispensations Patriarchal Mosaic Ecclesial Zionic	6 covenants Adamic, Noahic Abrahamic Mosaic, Davidic New (Ultimately One)	6 covenants +3: Redemption Works/Creation Grace	One unifying covenant with various manifestations (pre-Adamic, pre-Fall, post-Fall and Post Resurrection)
View of the Millennial Reign of the Messiah	Literal 1000 year reign in Jerusalem on David's Throne after 7 yr Trib.	Literal 1000 year reign in Jerusalem on David's Throne after 7 yr Trib.	Literal 1000 year reign in Jerusalem on David's Throne after 7 yr Trib.	Christ is now reigning. Some Premill. And Amill. adherents	Christ is now reigning. Amillennialism.	Postmillennial. Most OT prophecies fulfilled in First Century.
Israel vs. Church	Distinct people, distinct futures	Distinct	Both are the one people of God	Church is partial fulfillment	One people of God	One law. All OT law is still applicable.
Kingdom vs Church	Church = () Kingdom postponed	Church=() Kingdom postponed	One unified plan. Church is first phase of kingdom	Kingdom will be consummated at 2 nd coming	Kingdom will be consummated at 2 nd coming	Church will transform the world. 2 nd Coming → Eternal State
Israel's future	Saved as nation	Saved as nation	Saved as nation	Saved in the church	Saved within the church	Saved within the church

Some Example Ramifications

- Dispensationalists doubt the Sermon on the Mount is Applicable to Christians.
- Christian reconstructionists emphasize social justice, bringing earthly government within church control.
- A priori rules of interpretation can drive adherents into obsession with End Times, creating division, distraction from the gospel.

Why Discuss Dis/Continuity?

- My purpose in sharing this information about modern controversies surrounding continuity vs. discontinuity is to help each of us:
 - To be aware of possible biases and assumptions stemming from our background or upbringing.
 - To recognize that certain interpretations (e.g. a literal 1000-year kingdom) are tied to certain a priori assumptions (e.g. that all prophecy must be literally fulfilled)
 - To recognize that theological systems that require “correction” of statements made by Peter or Jesus or other inspired speakers/writers, are suspect and need to be carefully evaluated in light of other possibilities.
- I submit that we should interpret prophecy in light of clear passages, not the other way around! If Peter says Acts 2 fulfils Joel 2, then I’m going to believe him rather than insist Peter meant to say something different!
 - For example, some dispensationalists insist that Peter meant to say Acts 2 was only a PARTIAL fulfilment. Peter could have said that, but he simply didn’t.

Some Recommendations

- Let's adopt a humble, reverent, truth-seeking view of Scripture
 - Allow the Bible to interpret itself
 - Allow NT writers to interpret the OT
 - Preserve unity when we disagree on *non-essentials*.
- Let's NOT blindly adopt:
 - A theological system (a "team jersey")
 - An arbitrary manmade set of assumptions
 - A vocabulary that is totally foreign to Scripture
 - A view that fits our own preference

What Has Become of
the Old Covenant and
the Ten Commandments?

The Old Covenant Was Time-Limited

NASB

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, **until the seed would come** to whom the promise had been made.

Galatians 3:19



Who is the Seed?

NASB

Galatians 3:16 (Three verses earlier)

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**.



Old Covenant Awaited the New

NASB

Hebrews 9:8–10

⁸ The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, ⁹ which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, ¹⁰ since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed **until a time of reformation.** (diorthosis = setting things right, restoring).



Old Covenant Served its Purpose

NASB

Galatians 3:24–27 (NASB95)

²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor **to lead us to Christ**, so that we may be **justified by faith**. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were **baptized into Christ** have **clothed yourselves with Christ**.



Old Law Achieved its Goal

NASB

Romans 10:4

⁴ For **Christ is the end*** of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

* (teleos = goal, objective, completion, end)



The Old Covenant is Set Aside

NASB

When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first **obsolete**. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is **ready to disappear**.

Hebrews 8:13



Sarah and Hagar (Gal. 4)

NASB

Galatians 4:21–22

²¹ Tell me, you who want to be under **law**, **do you not listen to the law?** [Paul now references Genesis 16 & 21...]

²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.



Sarah and Hagar

NASB

Galatians 4:24–26 (NASB95)

²⁴ This is allegorically speaking, for these women are **two covenants**: **one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves**; she is Hagar.

²⁵ Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and **corresponds to the present Jerusalem**, for she is in slavery with her children.

²⁶ **But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.**



Old Covenant/Law is “Cast Out”

NASB

Galatians 4:30–31

³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? **“CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN.”**

³¹ So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.



Is the Decalogue Separate?

- Paul speaks of ONE covenant from Mt. Sinai.
- He refers to ONE law of that covenant.
- The NT provides no clear teaching distinguishing between the Decalogue and the rest of the Law.

II Corinthians 3:7-8

NASB

⁷ But if **the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones**, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,

⁸ how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?

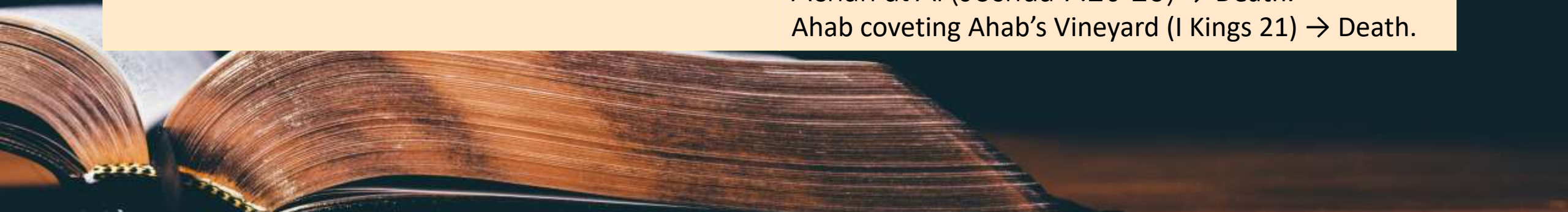
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Paul's "Ministry of Death"

NASB

Commandment	Penalty
1. & 2. No other Gods. No idols.	Death. Deuteronomy 13:6-17.
3. Don't Take God's Name in Vain.	Death. Leviticus 24:10-16.
4. Keep Sabbath Holy.	Death. Numbers 15:32-36.
5. Honor Father and Mother.	Death. Exodus 21:15.
6. Do not murder.	Death. Exodus 21:12-14. Numbers 35:31-34.
7. Do not commit adultery.	Death. Leviticus 20:10.
8. Do not steal.	Death sometimes. No penalty for killing thief. Exodus 22:2.
9. Do not bear false witness.	Often Maiming or Death (Deut 19:16-21).
10. Do not covet.	Death penalty? Achan at Ai (Joshua 7:20-26) → Death. Ahab coveting Ahab's Vineyard (I Kings 21) → Death.



II Corinthians 3:17

NASB

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**



Jesus Fulfilled the Law

- The Old Covenant is "obsolete".
- The Law stands fulfilled.
 - It stands a witness to God's faithfulness in His covenants.
 - The OT is written for our learning (Romans 15:4)
 - It teaches us right and wrong
 - It teaches us God's
 - Jesus removes the sting, the curse of the Law

Next Session...

- The principles of 9/10 of the Decalogue are taught in the New Testament.
- The question of the Fourth (Sabbath) Commandment has been controversial and a source of confusion.
- Lord willing, we'll take another look at whether the Decalogue and therefore the Sabbath apply to Christians today as part of "the Law of Christ."

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