

## CONSIDERING THE COVENANTS

By  
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There are three requirements recognized for the acceptance of a valid Bible covenant. They are:

- 1) It must be CALLED A COVENANT. Of the ones we do accept as valid, each one is specifically so called. Why would one or more then not be? It Biblically would seem a necessary element for recognition of a Bible covenant;
- 2) It must CONTINUE ON through succeeding generations, unless specifically replaced or someway nullified;
- 3) It must be CONFIRMED to those future generations. The beginning of the covenant must be verifiable in the history of the future generations, as in Deuteronomy 5:1-5.

There are two types of covenants discernable, CONDITIONAL and UNCONDITIONAL. Only the Mosaic and Palestinian covenants are conditional, for they alone contain provisional terminology, as "if," and offer the blessings of the covenant provisionally to the response of the ones with whom the covenant is made.

Unconditional covenants are made by God without regard to the response of the objects thereof. God simply says, "I will." This is seen even in the words used for covenant within the Greek culture, as contrasted to the one used in Biblical terminology. While the Hebrew, Old Testament word means, "to bind," the common Greek word, "συνφηκε," meaning "an agreement between two people/parties," is never used in Holy Scripture. The New Testament word is "διαφηκε," the word used for making a will or testament. It is a one-sided decree concerning which the receiving party cannot accept, reject, nor alter (Gen 15:12).

How many covenants are there? There are positions espoused for from as few as three to as many as twelve. Here is a list of covenants claimed:

- 1) Redemption, 2) Works, 3) Grace, 4) Edenic, 5) Adamic, 6) Noahic, 7)Abrahamic, 8) Mosaic, 9) Palestinian, 10) Davidic, 11) New (for the church), 12) New (for Israel).

Let's look at the possibilities.

### I. Alleged Covenants.

#### A. Covenant Theology.

Covenant Theology, found among the reformed groups, and a major part of the foundational theology of both Covenant Premillennialists, and Covenant Amillennialists, is based on the theological supposition of two basic covenants:

##### 1. The Principle Tenets.

- a. Covenant of Works. This covenant was supposed to have been made with Adam. God committed to him the responsibility of occupying, tending, and guarding the garden. In return, God would bless Adam and his posterity. Adam broke that covenant when he sinned. God made another covenant for the

redemption of Adam, the;

b. Covenant of Grace.

Supposed to have been made in Gen. 3:15, Berkhoff defines it as "that gracious agreement between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner, in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner accepts this believingly, promising a life of faith and obedience" (Berkhoff, quoted by Baptist Publications' CLARIFYING GOD'S COVENANTS, p. 21). Not all would restrict the covenant to the elect, depending upon their soteriological views.

The Covenant of Grace extends (though some separate them) an earlier covenant called the;

c. Covenant of Redemption.

In eternity past, the members of the Godhead, particularly the Father and Son, covenanted to redeem future fallen man, who in their omniscience (and, according to the Calvinist view, in their elective and predestinative sovereign purposes) they knew would (knew, and calvinistically "caused" to) sin. Following Adam's failure under the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Grace was instituted and revealed, offering salvation to all men/the elect, whichever. Succeeding covenants are but extensions of the Covenant of Grace.

2. Problems.

a. Named Covenants.

Where are they called covenants? See above, the three requirements theologians have set for considering a covenant to exist.

b. Extended Covenants.

How can succeeding covenants be considered extensions of an earlier covenant, when Scripture plainly states the contrary? (Deuteronomy 29:1; Jeremiah 31:32).

c. Purpose of God.

Covenant Theology makes man the center of God's covenant relationships, as His primary purpose becomes the redemption of mankind. Consequently, His purpose, stated in Ephesians 1:3-14, of bringing glory to Himself--His chief purpose, is violated. He shall glorify Himself in the salvation of mankind, but He also has other programs through which He shall do the same.

d. Principle of Interpretation.

Literal Interpretation of Scripture is rejected, as seen in their failure to distinguish between the Church and Israel, and their denial of the future, literal fulfillment of the prophecies to Israel.

e. Perpetuity of the Covenants.

If, for instance, the Mosaic Covenant is but an extension of the Covenant of Grace, and not a separate covenant, why are we not then still offering sacrifices under the law?

B. Edenic Covenant

1. Principle Tenets.

That God made a Covenant with Adam in the Garden, prior to the Fall. See Scofield note, p.6, for clear layout of this alleged covenant.

## 2. Problems

There are no "I wills." It is not called a covenant. Scofield's tenets coincide with dispensational elements. If this one stands, then the Covenants of Works/Grace may have to be admitted.

## C. Adamic Covenant

### 1. Principle Tenets

See Scofield note, p.9. God made a new covenant with Adam after The Fall.

### 2. Problems

There are "I wills," but they are curses, not blessings. That is a strange, one-of-a-kind covenant; an out-of-character covenant relationship. If this one stands, why do we not then recognize covenants also made separately with Eve and the Serpent? Similar language, if not identical, is found concerning them.

## II. Actual Covenants

### A. Noahic (Gen. 9:9)

1. Circumstances--Noah had obeyed, and was spared the judgment.
2. Called a Covenant (9:9, and six other times)
3. Confirmed a Covenant
  - a. Unconditional (9:11)
  - b. Universal (9:11). If flood local, the covenant must be also.
  - c. Unique sign (9:12-17). Rainbow set in the clouds.
4. Continuing to Descendants
  - a. Promised to Noah
  - b. Persisting today--it hasn't flooded world-wide
5. Contents (Genesis)
  - a. Relation of man to earth curse (8:21)
  - b. Order of nature confirmed (8:22)
  - c. Human government established (9:6)
  - d. No more universal flood judgment (9:15)

### B. Abrahamic (Gen. 12:1-3)

1. Circumstances--Abram obeyed and left Ur.
2. Called a Covenant (15:18)
3. Confirmed (Gen. 15)
  - a. Unconditional (Jeremiah 31:37,38)
    - 1) Everlasting Covenant (17:7,13,19)
    - 2) No Conditions stated
    - 3) Promise Immutable (Hebrews. 6:13-18)
    - 4) No Conditions Added in later confirmations (28:13-15)
  - b. Unique Sign—Circumcision
4. Continuing to Descendants
  - a. Isaac (25:5; 26:1-5)
  - b. Jacob (28:13-15)
  - c. All Nations (Gal. 3:14)
  - d. Believers Today (Gal. 3:9)
5. Contents
  - a. Great Nation (12:1-3)
  - b. Bless Abram (")
  - c. Great Name (")
  - d. Be a Blessing (")
  - e. All Families Blessed (")

- f. Blessing and Curse (")
- g. Given Land (12:7)
- h. Egyptian Bondage Prophesied (15:13-16)

God promised Abram a land (12:7; 15:18-21; 17:8), a seed (15:4-7) and a blessing (12:2,3; 15:6). The land is reaffirmed in the Palestinian covenant, the seed in the Davidic Covenant, and the blessing looks toward the future New Covenant. See final note under New Covenant.

### C. Mosaic (Exodus)

1. Circumstance (chps. 12-20) People delivered from Egypt, but could not find the power to obey God; demanded his instruction to be written out plainly, and promised obedience. Note Jeremiah 7:21-24.
2. Called a Covenant (19:5)
3. Confirmed
  - a. Conditional (19:5)
  - b. National (19:3) Limited:
    - 1) To Jews (Rom. 2:14 & 3:19) Test Plot
    - 2) In Time (Gal. 3:24)
  - c. Unique Sign (31:13-17) Sabbath Day
4. Continuing (to Calvary) (Mt. 5:17; Luke 24:44)
5. Contents
  - a. Commandments (20:1-26) Moral Law (righteous will of God)
  - b. Judgments (21:1-24:11) Social Relationships
  - c. Ordinances (24:12-31:18) Religious Activity. Involves the Priests, as God's representatives to intercede for sinful man, and the sacrifices, God's covering for the sins of man. The Law was: 1) Given orally (20:1); 2) Written and added to (24:9); 3) Broken (32:16) and 4) written again (32:16, God both made the tablets and wrote the law, and 34:1, where Moses makes the tablets and God re-writes the law).

### D. Palestinian (Deuteronomy)

1. Circumstances--the new generation to obey God for occupation of and blessing in the Promised Land.
2. Called a Covenant (Deuteronomy. 29:1)
3. Confirmed
  - a. Conditional (Chapters. 29,30). Occupancy and blessing contingent upon obedience.
  - b. National (29:1,2)
  - c. Posterity (29:14,15)
  - d. Unique Sign (28:37,46) "Byword" is Hebrews. "shniynah" (shen-ee-naw), something sharp, a gibe. (Gibe, is to utter derisive remarks; to taunt, jeer. Jibe, pronounced the same, is 1) to swing from one side of a vessel to the other, and 2) to agree; be in accordance.)
- e. Continuing
  - 1) Prophecy of Babylonian Captivity (Deuteronomy. 28:36, 48-62). Fulfilled (Jeremiah 39:1).
  - 2) Prophecy of return from Babylon (Deuteronomy. 28:63, allowed for, in phrase, "bring you to nothing," as only a remnant returned, then a fuller destruction was enacted, the Dispersion). Fulfilled (II Chronicles. 36:22,23; Ezra and Nehemiah). Note Isaiah. 11:11.
  - 3) Prophecy of world-wide dispersion (28:63-68; 30:1-3). Fulfilled, historically, in 70 A.D., and witnessed to Biblically,

progressively, in Acts 8:1-4; 11:19-22 and in James 1:1 and I Peter 1:1.

- 4) Prophecy of re-gathering of Israel from the dispersion (30:1-4), not yet fulfilled (Isaiah. 11:11).  
See "New Covenant," below.

4. Contents (Deuteronomy 30:1-9)
  - a. Dispersion for disobedience (1)
  - b. Future repentance (2)
  - c. Return of Messiah (3) First mention of in Old Testament (though Job spoke of it, and Enoch prophesied thereof)--first, as you read through from Genesis 1:1.
  - d. Restoration to the land (5)
  - e. National conversion (6)
  - f. Judgment on enemies (7)
  - g. National prosperity (9)

#### E. Davidic (II Samuel 7)

1. Circumstances--Saul rejected as King. David accedes to throne and given rest (II Samuel 7:1); desires to build God a house.
2. Called a Covenant (Psalms 89:3; Jeremiah 33:21)
3. Confirmed
  - a. Unconditional (II Samuel 7:13-16). Verse 14 shows that disobedience would bring chastisement, but not abrogation of the covenant (15). Note II Kings 25:1-7.
  - b. Universal (12) Extended to Solomon, however, universally limited to Israel.
  - c. Unique Sign (Psalms 89:34-37; Jeremiah 31:35, 36). Sun/moon on course.
4. Continuing to Posterity (Acts 15:16, 17; Luke 1)
5. Contents
  - a. Unfailing House (16,17)
  - b. Throne (16)
  - c. Kingdom (16). Note II Samuel 7:13-17's accuracy in the omission of the "temple (v.16)."

#### F. New (Jeremiah)

1. Circumstances--Dispersed Israel repents and is converted (Chapter 30)
2. Called a Covenant (31:31)
3. Confirmed
  - a. Unconditional (Deuteronomy 30:1-3; Jeremiah 31:31-37; Hebrews 8)
  - b. Universal (Hebrews 8:8; Isaiah 2:2). While the covenant itself is limited to and made only with Israel, the blessings thereof extend to all the earth (Gen 12:3b, herein finally realized).
  - c. Continuing. We have God's promise that the covenant will be made. The blood, the provision and power of the covenant, has been shed. The Church now ministers in the spirit of the covenant, as we preach the blood of Christ for the remission of sins. One day the covenant will be made, and will continue on into eternity.
  - d. Unique Sign--the shed blood of Christ (Mk 14:24,25)
4. Contents (see Scofield notes, p. 1297)
  - a. Better than Mosaic Covenant (Hebrews 7:19)
  - b. Established on better promises (Ezekiel 36:23-39; Hebrews 8:10-13). Under the Mosaic, blessings are promised upon Israel's obedience. Under the New, blessings are promised

upon God's enabling of Israel so that they can and will be obedient.

- c. Personal revelation of the Lord to each believer (31:14)
- d. Complete removal of sins (Hebrews 8:12)
- e. Based upon a perfect redemption (Hebrews 10:12-24)
- f. Future perpetuity, conversion and blessings for Israel (Ezekiel 37)

(Refer back to the final note under the Abrahamic Covenant.) The blood of the New Covenant provides the blessing of salvation in Christ, today, for all who are the children of Abraham by faith. The full kingdom blessing will bring in the fulfillment of all the covenants with Israel under the New Covenant.