

The Main Covenants of God

Introduction

"A covenant is a sovereign pronouncement of God by which He establishes a relationship of responsibility (1) between himself and an individual, (2) between Himself and mankind in general, (3) between Himself and a nation, or (4) between Himself and a specific human family. A covenant in one category may overlap others...The covenants are normally unconditional in the sense that God obligates Himself in grace, by the unrestricted declaration, 'I will' to accomplish certain announced purposes, despite any failure on the part of the person or people with whom He covenants. The human response to the divinely announced purpose is always important, leading as it does to blessing for obedience and discipline for disobedience. But human failure is never permitted to abrogate the covenant or block its ultimate fulfillment." (C.I. Scofield)

In a separate study entitled *What is a Covenant?* examples of several types of covenants found in the Bible are described. This was done primarily by quoting various passages in the Bible so the reader would have first hand references available when studying the subject of God's covenants. God (Yahweh) is a God who frequently enters into personal relationships with individuals and with groups of individuals. One special set of these covenants might well be called "mainline" covenants because they are connected one after another in a line, all the way from the first promise God made to Eve (that one of her sons would be the Messiah, the Savior of mankind), down through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (rather than Ishmael or Esau for example), through King David and ending in Jesus Christ. Both Joseph and Mary are descended from David though through different family lines as the NT genealogies in Matthew and Luke detail.

This essay lists the "mainline covenants" mainly by quoting the relevant Bible references, without commentary which hopefully can be added later.

I. The Edenic Covenant

Man is charged with responsibility for propagating the race, subduing the earth, exercising dominion over the animals, caring for the garden in Eden, and refraining from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

"And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so."(Gen. 1:28-30)

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'" (Gen. 2:16, 17)

II. The Adamic Covenant

See Genesis 3. Consequences of man's fall necessitated a changed relationship between man and God including the following elements: (1) A curse on the serpent: Gen 3:14, Rom. 16:20, 2 Cor. 11:3,14, Rev. 12:9. (2) The first promise of a redeemer (the proto-evangelium). Messiah would come in the line of Seth, Noah. Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David. (3) A changed state of woman including bondage and subservience to man's headship, and suffering and pain in motherhood. (4) Loss of the garden in Eden as a dwelling place and light occupation changed to heavy burden of work because of a cursed earth. (5) Inevitable sorrow and disappointment in life. (6) Shortened life span and tragedy of death.

III. The Noahic Covenant

This unconditional covenant with Noah (which affects all mankind) establishes principles for all government, and includes the following: (1) Sanctity of all human life established. Man responsible to protect life, even to capital punishment. (2) A Promise that another universal flood will not occur and the ground will not be cursed further. (3) Man's relationship to the animals and to nature is confirmed (Gen. 8:22, 9:2). (4) Man, presumably a vegetarian before the flood, is now allowed to eat meat. (5) Special characteristics are assigned to the three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

"And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odor, the LORD said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.' And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man; of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image. And you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on the earth and multiply in it.'

"Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.' God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.'" (Gen. 8:21-9:17)

Reference: [Who Needs Government, Genesis 9, by Ray C. Stedman.](#)

IV. The Abrahamic Covenant

An unconditional covenant. (1) God gave Abraham the promise of a great nation---primarily meaning Israel, but also includes great peoples in the line of Ishmael and Abraham's others sons. In all Abraham, had eight sons, six through his second wife Keturah after Sarah died, (Gen. 25:3). Two peoples descended from Abraham are named specially. They are an earthly group (Israel) "as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore," and a heavenly group (the true church) "as numerous as the stars in the heavens." These two "family trees" form the subject of the mainstream of redemptive history in the Bible. (2) Abraham was chosen to be the father of numerous descendants, to be blessed personally, to be personally honored, to be a channel of blessing to others. (3) Those who bless Abraham are to be blessed and those who curse him will be cursed. Blessings on the nations are to come through Abraham. (4) Reaffirmation of the promise of a Messiah was made by God to Abraham.

"Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.' So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions which they had gathered, and the persons that they had gotten in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him." (Gen. 12:1-7)

"The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, 'Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants for ever. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your descendants also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." (Gen. 13:14-17)

"After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, 'Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.' But Abram said, 'O Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'Behold, thou hast given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir.' And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir.' And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, 'I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.' But he said, 'O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?' He said to him, 'Bring me a heifer three years old, a she-goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' And he brought him all these, cut them in two, and laid each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram; and lo, a dread and great darkness fell upon him. "Then the LORD said to Abram, 'Know of a surety that your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there, and they will be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgment on the nation which they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.' When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites,

the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites." (Gen 15:1-21)

"And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.'" (Gen. 22:15-18)

The Covenant With Abraham Is Restated And Confirmed To Isaac By The Lord

"And Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. And the LORD appeared to him, and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give to your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves: because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.'" (Gen. 26:1-5)

The Covenant With Abraham Is Restated And Confirmed To Jacob By The Lord

"Jacob left Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place, and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, 'I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants; and your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and by you and your descendants shall all the families of the earth bless themselves. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you.'" (Gen. 28:10-15)

V. The Mosaic Covenant

A Conditional Covenant. Connected with the giving of the Law at Sinai, and the Levitical priesthood. The Law condemns all men.

"And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all

the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." (Exodus 19:3-6)

The New Testament Comments On The Mosaic (Old) Covenant

"Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this was, will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? For if there was splendor in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendor." (2 Cor. 3:7-9)

"Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:19,20)

"For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin. But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,' as it is written of me in the roll of the book.' When he said above, 'Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings' (these are offered according to the law), then he added, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will.' He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb. 10:1-10)

VI. The Palestinian Covenant

This partly conditional covenant has several parts: (1) dispersion of the Jews was to be a consequence of disobedience. (2) Future repentance will be accomplished by God. (3) God will regather his scattered people and restore them to the land. (4) The people of Israel will be brought to the Lord as a nation. (5) The enemies and oppressors of Israel will be punished. (6) Future national prosperity and preeminence is guaranteed. See also Deut. 28, 29. Because of this covenant, the right of the Jews to live in the land is conditional upon their behavior.

"When all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you this day, with all your heart and with all your soul; then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes, and have compassion upon you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will fetch you; and the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, that you may possess it; and he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and

the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. And the LORD your God will put all these curses upon your foes and enemies who persecuted you. And you shall again obey the voice of the LORD, and keep all his commandments which I command you this day. The LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your ground; for the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

"For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'" But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. 'See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you this day, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you this day, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.'" (Deut. 30)

"For lo, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, 'Evil shall not overtake or meet us.' 'In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,' says the LORD who does this. 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land which I have given them,' says the LORD your God." (Amos 9:9-15)

The New Testament Promises God Will Resume His Fulfillment Of Various Covenants With Israel

"Simeon [Peter] has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written, 'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old.'" (Acts 15:14-18)

"and so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob'; 'and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.'" (Rom. 11:26, 27)

The Old Testament Concur

"In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant which is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." (Isa. 11:11,12)

"Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, says the LORD. 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.' Therefore, behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when men shall no longer say, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' but 'As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' Then they shall dwell in their own land." (Jer. 23:3-8)

"...Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all sides, and bring them to their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. They shall not defile themselves any more with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 'My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. They shall dwell in the land where your fathers dwelt that I gave to my servant Jacob; they and their children and their children's children shall dwell there for ever; and David my servant shall be their prince for ever.'" (Ezek. 37:21-25)

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. 'And in that day, says the LORD, you will call me, 'My husband,' and no longer will you call me, 'My Baal.'"" (Hosea 2:14-16)

"And the LORD said to me, 'Go again, love a woman who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress; even as the LORD loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.' So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. And I said to her, 'You must dwell as mine for many days; you shall not play the harlot, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you.' For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days." (Hosea 3)

"The LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land, and aliens will join them and will cleave to the house of Jacob. And the peoples will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them in the LORD's land as male and female slaves; they will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them." (Isa. 14:1,2)

"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations, and have divided up my land, and have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and have sold a girl for wine, and have drunk it. 'What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will requite your deed upon your own head swiftly and speedily. For you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples. You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, removing them far from their own border. But now I will stir them up from the place to which you have sold them, and I will requite your deed upon your own head. I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a nation far off; for the LORD has spoken.'" (Joel 3:1-8)

"In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,' says the LORD who does this. 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land which I have given them,' says the LORD your God." (Amos 9:11-15)

VII. The Davidic Covenant

Features (1) a temple in Israel, (2) a kingdom in perpetuity, (3) a throne, i.e., royal authority in the line of David, and (4) chastisement on sons for their disobedience. The promise of Messiah in the line of David is confirmed.

"Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David, `Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men; but I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you, And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.'" (2 Sam. 7:8-16)

"Therefore the Lord says, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: 'Ah, I will vent my wrath on my enemies, and avenge myself on my foes. I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.' Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall be destroyed together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed." (Isaiah 1:24-28)

"Thou hast said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: "I will establish your descendants for ever, and build your throne for all generations." [Selah] I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him; so that my hand shall ever abide with him, my arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. He shall cry to me, 'Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.' And I will make him the first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth. My steadfast love I will keep for him for ever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. I will establish his line for ever and his throne as the days of the heavens. If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges; but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His line shall endure for ever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established for ever; it shall stand firm while the skies endure." [Selah] (Psalm 89, excerpts)

VIII. The New Covenant

An everlasting, unconditional covenant imparting a renewed mind and heart to the recipients. Restored favor and blessing for Israel. Complete and final forgiveness and removal of sins. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. A rebuilt temple in Israel (Ezek. 37:26,27a). Cessation of war and institution of world peace. The Greek word *diatheke* is used interchangeably 15 times in the New Testament for "covenant" and "testament."

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (Matthew 26:26-28)

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD. In those days they shall no longer say: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But every one shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD.

"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they

shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar ---the LORD of hosts is his name: 'If this fixed order departs from before me, says the LORD, then shall the descendants of Israel cease from being a nation before me for ever.' Thus says the LORD: 'If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the descendants of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD.' 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when the city shall be rebuilt for the LORD from the tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. And the measuring line shall go out farther, straight to the hill Gareb, and shall then turn to Goah. The whole valley of the dead bodies and the ashes, and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be sacred to the LORD. It shall not be uprooted or overthrown any more for ever." (Jer. 31)

"But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says: 'The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord. This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.' In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." (Heb. 8:8-13)

Some Provisions Of The New Covenant

The New Covenant promised to Israel went into effect at the Last Supper during Easter Week. Jesus instituted this covenant with his eleven disciples who were representatives of true, believing Israel. Jesus then asked these disciples to become representatives of a new body of believers known as the church. They were called as Apostles to invite Jews and Gentiles alike around the world to enter into this New Covenant. After the completion of this calling out of the true church, Scripture promises that God will return and bring the nation of Israel (as a nation) into the New Covenant. This will take place at the end of the age when Jesus return to Jerusalem to sit as King on the throne of His father David.

Under the new covenant all those who belong to Christ and are part of the church benefit in the following ways:

- Called children of God---Romans 8:16.
- Called the household of God---Ephesians 2:19
- Called children of Abraham---Galatians 3:7
- Called children of promise---Romans 9:8
- A "people of His own"---Titus 2:14

- Heirs of God according to promise---Galatians 3:29
- God's people called the temple of God---1 Cor 3:16
- God's people called "the circumcision"---Philippians 3:3
- God's people called "the Israel of God"---Galatians 6:16
- Called "a chosen generation, royal priesthood, peculiar people, a holy nation"---1 Peter 2:9
- Heirs of the kingdom---James 2:5
- Called "sons of God"---John 1:12
- Kings and priests of God---Revelation 1:6
- Called "Mount Zion", "The City of the Living God"---Hebrews 12:22
- The Bride of Christ---2 Cor. 11:2
- The Body of Christ---1 Cor. 12.

Is the New Covenant a renewal of the Mosaic Covenant?

The new covenant is declared in Jeremiah as follows:

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer 31:31-34).

Let's examine Jeremiah 31:31 carefully. Literally it reads:

"Behold, days are coming' declares YHWH, 'I will covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant.'"

The word I have translated as "new" is the Hebrew word "chadash" (H2319). The DBD Hebrew Lexicon definition of this word is "new, a fresh thing." But the Hebrew word for "renew" (H2318) is also transliterated as "chadash." The difference between "new" (H2319) and "renew" (H2318) are the vowels - the consonants are identical (chet*dalet*shin). H2318 has the vowel patach under the dalet whereas H2319 has a qamats. Since the vowels were added by the Masoretes how can we then be sure if this word is "renew" (H2318) or "new" (H2319)? Perhaps the Masoretes made a mistake? Could then the phrase "new covenant" be translated as "renewed covenant"? No. We can tell by the word order of the sentence which word is correct. In Hebrew the order is: verb-noun-adjective. In Hebrew "renew" (H2318) is a verb and "new" (H2319) is an adjective. The word "chadash" comes after the noun "covenant" (beriyt, H1285). The word must be an adjective and not a verb. Thus, "new" is correct and not "renew." The next verse confirms this meaning. The Lord continues to describe this new covenant as "not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (Jer 31:2a). The Lord specifically states that this new covenant will be different than the one that they received at Mt. Sinai.

Now lets look more carefully at Jeremiah 31:32. It literally reads: "not like the covenant that I covenanted with their forefathers on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out from the land of Egypt because they broke my covenant though I was a husband to them declares YHWH." The verse starts out, in Hebrew, as "lo kab'riyt." The word "lo" means "not" (H3808); the prefix "ka"

means "like the;" and "b'riyt" means "covenant." Since the word "lo" appears at the beginning of the sentence it has a special stress upon it. The new covenant mentioned in Jer 31:31, we are told here, is "not like the covenant" that was given at Sinai. The imagery is of a marriage covenant that has been violated by one of the parties and has become subject to nullification. It is now by the Lord's discretion whether He will allow the violated covenant to continue. He proclaims here that He will establish a new covenant that is NOT LIKE the covenant given at Sinai. The stress in the Hebrew is on how this covenant will be completely different. It is not a renewal. It is not an enhancement. It is not a modification. It is different. God is sovereign. So it is His prerogative to continue on with a covenant that has become subject to nullification. But the Lord proclaims in Jer 31:31-32 that He will establish a new and different covenant.

The covenant made with Israel was subject to nullification because Israel had broken the covenant. But don't confuse the covenant with the goal of the covenant. The goal of the covenant cannot be nullified. The goal of the covenant at Sinai was to bring men back into a loving relationship with God and restore the position of man to God's original intent for him when He placed him in the Garden of Eden where only one law existed. The goal of the Sinai covenant and the new covenant remain the same. The goal of these two covenants has always been to draw men into a trusting relationship with God. This is a constant in all God's dealings with man and is exemplified in Abraham's trust in God counting as righteousness.

Since we see that the Patriarchs did not have the covenant of Sinai and that the Lord declared that He would create a new covenant not like the one given at Sinai (Jer 31:31-32) we then see that the Sinai covenant is not the exclusive way in which God has provided to obtain this goal. Certainly Abraham obtained this goal without the covenant of Sinai because he was not alive when it was given. And the new and different covenant spoken of by Jeremiah will not have provisions to deal with sins because, according to Ezek 36:25-27 & 37:23, there will be no sin.

So how are the new covenant different? The Lord describes it in contrasting terms to the covenant that was delivered to Israel at Sinai: the covenant at Sinai was written on tablets of stone whereas this new covenant would be written on our hearts (Jer 31:32).

You will notice that the reference is to the establishment of the covenant with Judah and Israel (Jer 31:33). You are right in stating that this prophecy has not yet been completely fulfilled. How is it that I can say that the new covenant is now in operation? The key is to understand the specificity of this particular prophecy to Judah and Israel. The new covenant is now being provided to the Gentiles. So how can this be? Consider when David actually became king of Israel in God's eyes and when the men of Israel recognized him as their king. First, King Saul loses his kingship and David gains it, though David does not yet know that he is king:

"So Samuel said to him [King Saul], 'the LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you.'" (1 Sam 15:28).

But then David is officially anointed king over Israel and recognized by Samuel:

"Now the LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons.'" (1 Sam 16:1).

"So he sent and brought him [David] in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, 'Arise, anoint him; for this is he.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah." (1 Sam 16:12-13).

Over the next several years, in God's eyes David is king, though the men of Israel still have Saul over them. But finally David is recognized first by the men of Judah:

"Then the men of Judah came and there anointed David king over the house of Judah." (2 Sam 2:4).

And then by the men of Israel:

"So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the LORD at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel." (2 Sam 5:3).

In God's eyes David was king over Israel years before the men of Judah and Israel recognized him as such. So in the same way the new covenant is now in operation, with the Messiah Jesus as King though the men of Israel have not yet recognized Him to be King over Israel. However, after some time Jesus will be recognized as their King who operates under the new covenant of Jer 31:31-32.

Isaiah says some especially interesting things in regards to the covenant that the Messiah will instigate. Isaiah refers to a particular servant of His:

"I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison." (Isa 42:6-7).

Reading Isa 42:1-6 reveals that this is an individual (for the "you" is singular, masculine) and seems to refer to the Messiah. One interesting thing to note is that it says "I will appoint YOU AS A COVENANT." Don't you think that this is a curious phrase? The Messiah will be appointed as a covenant and not that he will enforce or maintain or renew a covenant. He will BE the covenant! We see a similar phrase used in Isa 49:8:

"Thus says the LORD, 'In a favorable time I have answered You, and in a day of salvation I have helped You; and I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, to restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages.'" Isaiah is telling us that the Messiah himself will be the covenant. This is a very curious phrase.

The Messiah as the new covenant is also presented by Daniel the prophet. Daniel wrote:

"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined." (Dan 9:24-26).

The "weeks" (literally "sevens") which Daniel spoke of cannot possibly be a regular week of seven days because no one appeared even remotely resembling the Messiah that soon after the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The other alternative is that the "sevens" refer to years. Calculating years, starting from Cyrus' decree (compare Isa 44:28; 25:13; and Ezra 1), places the Messiah's coming at the time of Jesus's ministry on earth (around AD 30).

But concerning the new covenant we need to look at the Hebrew word translated as "cut off" in verse 26. The Hebrew word is karath (H3772); it means "to cut" but also means "to covenant" (e.g., Gen 15:9-18 and Jer 34:18). Daniel seems to doubly indicate that the Messiah would be "cut off" and that he would "covenant." This is precisely what happened to Jesus (cut off) and what He did (covenant) when He was crucified. He became the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah. Note what Daniel later tells us was to be accomplished with the Messiah as the covenant: "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness." Also note that Isaiah tells us (Isa 42:6) that the Messiah, as the covenant, would be "a light to the nations (i.e., the 'goyim,' the Gentiles)." This is precisely what Jesus accomplished. He is the new covenant that Jeremiah spoke of, the atonement for our sins that Daniel prophesied, and a light to the Gentiles that Isaiah said He would be. And at some point in the future Israel will come into the New Covenant as Jeremiah prophesied.

The Relationship Between Jesus The Son Of God And The Covenants

With regard to the Edenic Covenant, Jesus Christ is the "Last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45-47) who takes the place of the First Adam and recovers all that the First Adam lost, (Col. 2:10, Heb. 2:7-9). Concerning the Adamic Covenant, Jesus is the promised "Seed of the Woman" (Gen. 3:15, Jn. 12:31, Gal. 4:4, 1 Jn. 3:8) who fulfills all the demands on man for labor and toil (Mk. 6:3) as well as obedience, (Phil. 2:8, Heb. 5:8). As the son of Shem, Jesus fulfilled the promise to Noah and to Shem. Jesus Christ is the promised seed (singular) of Abraham to whom all the promises to Abraham apply. (Gen. 22:18, Gal. 3:16, Phil. 2:8). Jesus is the only man who fulfilled all the requirements of the Law of Moses, and He bore the curse of the law on our behalf, (Gal. 3:10-13), under the conditions of the Mosaic Covenant. Under the Palestinian Covenant He will yet perform the gracious promises, (Deut. 28:1-30:9). Jesus is the Seed and Heir and King under the terms of the Covenant with David, (Mt. 1:1, Luke 1:31-33). It was the sacrifice of Jesus that founded the New Covenant, (Mt. 26:28, 1 Cor. 11:25). (Adapted from the C.I. Scofield Bible notes).

Addendum:

The following notes are from ISBE:

NEW COVENANT: (berith chadhashah, Jer 31:31; he diatheke kaine, Heb 8:8,13, etc., or nea, Heb 12:24: the former Greek adjective has the sense of the "new" primarily in reference to quality, the latter the sense of "young," the "new," primarily in reference to time):

1. Contrast of "New" and "Old"-The Term "Covenant"
2. Christ's Use at the Last Supper
3. Relation to Exodus 24
4. Use in Epistle to the Hebrews
5. The Mediator of the New Covenant
6. "Inheritance" and "Testament"

7. Relation to Jeremiah 31:31-34

8. To Ezekiel

9. Contrast of Old and New in 2 Corinthians 3

1. Contrast of "New" and "Old"-the Term "Covenant":

The term "New" Covenant necessarily implies an "Old" Covenant, and we are reminded that God's dealings with His people in the various dispensations of the world's history have been in terms of covenant. The Holy Scriptures by their most familiar title keep this thought before us, the Old Testament and the New Testament or Covenant; the writings produced within the Jewish "church" being the writings or Scriptures of the Old Covenant, those within the Christian church, the Scriptures of the New Covenant. The alternative name "Testament"-adopted into our English description through the Latin, as the equivalent of the Hebrew berith, and the Greek diatheke, which both mean a solemn disposition, compact or contract-suggests the disposition of property in a last will or testament, but although the word diatheke may bear that meaning, the Hebrew berith does not, and as the Greek usage in the New Testament seems especially governed by the Old Testament usage and the thought moves in a similar plane, it is better to keep to the term "covenant." The one passage which seems to favor the "testament" idea is Heb 9:16,17 (the Revisers who have changed the King James Version "testament" into "covenant" in every other place have left it in these two verses), but it is questionable whether even here the better rendering would not be "covenant" (see below). Certainly in the immediate context "covenant" is the correct translation and, confessedly, "testament," if allowed to stand, is an application by transition from the original thought of a solemn compact to the secondary one of testamentary disposition. The theological terms "Covenant of Works" and "Covenant of Grace" do not occur in Scripture, though the ideas covered by the terms, especially the latter, may easily be found there. The "New Covenant" here spoken of is practically equivalent to the Covenant of Grace established between God and His redeemed people, that again resting upon the eternal Covenant of Redemption made between the Father and the Son, which, though not so expressly designated, is not obscurely indicated by many passages of Scripture.

2. Christ's Use at Last Supper:

Looking at the matter more particularly, we have to note the words of Christ at the institution of the Supper. In all the three Synoptists, as also in Paul's account (Mt 26:28; Mr 14:24; Lu 22:20; 1Co 11:25) "covenant" occurs. Matthew and Mark, "my blood of the (new) covenant"; Luke and Paul, "the new covenant in my blood." The Revisers following the critical text, have omitted "new" in Matthew and Mark, but even if it does not belong to the original MS, it is implied, and there need be little doubt that Jesus used it. The old covenant was so well known to these Jewish disciples, that to speak of the covenant in this emphatic way, referring manifestly to something other than the old Mosaic covenant, was in effect to call it a "new" covenant. The expression, in any case, looks back to the old and points the contrast; but in the contrast there are points of resemblance.

3. Relation to Exodus 24:

It is most significant that Christ here connects the "new" covenant with His "blood." We at once think, as doubtless the disciples would think, of the transaction described in Ex 24:7, when Moses "took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people" those "words," indicating God's undertaking on behalf of His people and what He required of them; "and they said, All that Yahweh hath spoken will we do, and be obedient," thus taking up their part of the contract. Then comes the ratification. "Moses took the blood (half of which had already been sprinkled on the altar), and

sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which Yahweh hath made with you concerning all these words" (verse 8). The blood was sacrificial blood, the blood of the animals sacrificed as burnt offerings and peace offerings (Ex 24:5,6). The one half of the blood sprinkled on the altar tells of the sacrifice offered to God, the other half sprinkled on the people, of the virtue of the same sacrifice applied to the people, and so the covenant relation is fully brought about. Christ, by speaking of His blood in this connection, plainly indicates that His death was a sacrifice, and that through that sacrifice His people would be brought into a new covenant relationship with God. His sacrifice is acceptable to God and the virtue of it is to be applied to believers-so all the blessings of the new covenant are secured to them; the blood "is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). He specifically mentions one great blessing of the new covenant, the forgiveness of sins-"which is poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Mt 26:28).

4. Use in Epistle to the Hebrews:

This great thought is taken up in Hebrews and fully expounded. The writer draws out fully the contrast between the new covenant and the old by laying stress upon the perfection of Christ's atonement in contrast to the material and typical sacrifices (Heb 9:11-23). He was "a high priest of the good things to come," connected with "the greater and more perfect tabernacle." He entered the heavenly holy place "through his own blood," not that of "goats and calves," and by that perfect offering He has secured "eternal redemption" in contrast to the temporal deliverance of the old dispensation. The blood of those typical offerings procured ceremonial cleansing; much more, therefore, shall the blood of Christ avail to cleanse the conscience "from dead works to serve the living God"-that blood which is so superior in value to the blood of the temporal sacrifices, yet resembles it in being sacrificial blood. It is the blood of Him "who, through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God." It is the fashion in certain quarters nowadays to say that it is not the blood of Christ, but His spirit of self-sacrifice for others, that invests the cross with its saving power, and this verse is sometimes cited to show that the virtue lies in the surrender of the perfect will, the shedding of the blood being a mere accident. But this is not the view of the New Testament writers. The blood-shedding is to them a necessity. Of course, it is not the natural, material blood, or the mere act of shedding it, that saves. The blood is the life. The blood is the symbol of life; the blood shed is the symbol of life outpoured--of the penalty borne; and while great emphasis must be laid, as in this verse it is laid, upon Christ's perfect surrender of His holy will to God, yet the essence of the matter is found in the fact that He willingly endured the dread consequences of sin, and as a veritable expiatory sacrifice shed His precious blood for the remission of sins.

5. The Mediator of the New Covenant:

On the ground of that shed blood, as the writer goes on to assert, "He is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15). Thus Christ fulfills the type in a twofold way: He is the sacrifice upon which the covenant is based, whose blood ratifies it, and He is also, like Moses, the Mediator of the covenant. The death of Christ not only secures the forgiveness of those who are brought under the new covenant, but it was also for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, implying that all the sacrifices gained their value by being types of Christ, and the forgiveness enjoyed by the people of God in former days was bestowed in virtue of the great Sacrifice to be offered in the fullness of time.

6. "Inheritance" and "Testament":

Not only does the blessing of perfect forgiveness come through the new covenant, but also the promise of the "eternal inheritance" in contrast to the earthly inheritance which, under the old covenant, Israel obtained. The mention of the inheritance is held to justify the taking of the word in

the next verse as "testament," the writer passing to the thought of a testamentary disposition, which is only of force after the death of the testator. Undoubtedly there is good ground for the analogy, and all the blessings of salvation which come to the believer may be considered as bequeathed by the Savior in His death, and accruing to us because He has died. It has, in that sense, tacitly to be assumed that the testator lives again to be His own executor and to put us in possession of the blessings. Still, we think there is much to be said in favor of keeping to the sense of "covenant" even here, and taking the clause, which, rendered literally, is: "a covenant is of force (or firm) over the dead," as meaning that the covenant is established on the ground of sacrifice, that sacrifice representing the death of the maker of the covenant. The allusion may be further explained by a reference to Ge 15:9,10,17, which has generally been considered as illustrating the ancient Semitic method of making a covenant: the sacrificial animals being divided, and the parties passing between the pieces, implying that they deserved death if they broke the engagement. The technical Hebrew phrase for making a covenant is "to cut a covenant."

There is an interesting passage in Herodotus iii. 8, concerning an Arabian custom which seems akin to the old Hebrew practice. "The Arabians observe pledges as religiously as any people; and they make them in the following manner; when any wish to pledge their faith, a third person standing between the two parties makes an incision with a sharp stone in the palm of the hand, nearest the longest fingers of both the contractors; then taking some of the nap from the garments of each, he smears seven stones placed between him and the blood; and as he does this he invokes Bacchus and Urania. When this ceremony is completed, the person who pledges his faith binds his friends as sureties to the stranger, or the citizen, if the contract is made with a citizen; and the friends also hold themselves obliged to observe the engagement"-Cary's translation.

Whatever the particular application of the word in Ge 15:17, the central idea in the passage is that death, blood-shedding, is necessary to the establishment of the covenant, and so he affirms that the first covenant was not dedicated without blood, and in proof quotes the passage already cited from Ex 24, and concludes that "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb 9:22).

See COVENANT, IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

7. Relation to Jeremiah 31:31-34:

This new covenant established by Christ was foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, who uses the very word "new covenant" in describing it, and very likely Christ had that description in mind when He used the term, and meant His disciples to understand that the prophetic interpretation would in Him be realized. There is no doubt that the author of He had the passage in mind, for he has led up to the previous statement by definitely quoting the whole statement of Jer 31:31-34. He had in Jer 7 spoken of the contrast between Christ's priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek" (verse 11) and the imperfect Aaronic priesthood, and he designates Jesus as "the surety of a better covenant" (verse 22). Then in Jer 8, emphasizing the thought of the superiority of Christ's heavenly high-priesthood, he declares that Christ is the "mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises" (verse 6). The first covenant, he says, was not faultless, otherwise there would have been no need for a second; but the fault was not in the covenant but in the people who failed to keep it, though perhaps there is also the suggestion that the external imposition of laws could not suffice to secure true obedience. "For finding fault with them he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." The whole passage (Jer 8-12) would repay careful study, but we need only note that not only is there prominence given to the great blessings of the covenant, perfect forgiveness and fullness of knowledge, but, as the very essence of the covenant-that which serves to distinguish it from the old covenant and at once to show its superiority and guarantee its permanence-there is this wonderful provision: "I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them: and I

will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." This at once shows the spirituality of the new covenant. Its requirements are not simply given in the form of external rules, but the living Spirit possesses the heart; the law becomes an internal dominating principle, and so true obedience is secured.

8. To Ezekiel:

Ezekiel had spoken to the same effect, though the word "new covenant" is not used in the passage, Eze 36:27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them." In chapter 37 Ezekiel again speaks of the great blessings to be enjoyed by the people of God, including cleansing, walking in God's statutes, recognition as God's people, etc., and he distinctly says of this era of blessing: "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them" (verse 26). Other important foreshadowings of the new covenant are found in Isa 54:10; 55:3; 59:21; 61:8; Ho 2:18-23; Mal 3:1-4. We may well marvel at the spiritual insight of these prophets, and it is impossible to attribute their forecasts to natural genius; they can only be accounted for by Divine inspiration.

The writer to the Hebrews recurs again and again to this theme of the "New Covenant"; in Heb 10:16,17 he cites the words of Jeremiah already quoted about writing the law on their minds, and remembering their sins no more. In Heb 12:24, he speaks of "Jesus the mediator of a new covenant," and "the blood of sprinkling," again connecting the "blood" with the "covenant," and finally, in Heb 13:20, he prays for the perfection of the saints through the "blood of an eternal covenant."

9. Contrast of Old and New in 2 Corinthians 3:

In 2 Co 3 Paul has an interesting and instructive contrast between the old covenant and the new. He begins it by saying that "our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Co 3:5,6). The "letter" is the letter of the law, of the old covenant which could only bring condemnation, but the spirit which characterizes the new covenant gives life, writes the law upon the heart. He goes on to speak of the old as that "ministration of death" which nevertheless "came with glory" (2 Co 3:7), and he refers especially to the law, but the new covenant is "the ministration of the spirit," the "ministration of righteousness" (2 Co 3:8,9), and has a far greater glory than the old. The message of this "new covenant" is "the gospel of Christ." The glory of the new covenant is focused in Christ; rays forth from Him. The glory of the old dispensation was reflected upon the face of Moses, but that glory was transitory and so was the physical manifestation (2 Co 3:13). The sight of the shining face of Moses awed the people of Israel and they revered him as leader specially favored of God (2 Co 3:7-13). When he had delivered his message he veiled his face and thus the people could not see that the glow did not last; every time that he went into the Divine presence he took off the veil and afresh his face was lit up with the glory, and coming out with the traces of that glory lingering on his countenance he delivered his message to the people and again veiled his face (compare Ex 34:29-35), and thus the transitoriness and obscurity of the old dispensation were symbolized. In glorious contrast to that symbolical obscurity, the ministers of the gospel, of the new covenant, use great boldness of speech; the veil is done away in Christ (2 Co 3:12 ff). The glory which comes through Him is perpetual, and fears no vanishing away.

Ray Stedman On The Future Of Israel

[The Faithfulness of God](#)

A sermon delivered by the late Ray C. Stedman on February 23, 1992. Emphasizes the New Covenant as instituted by Jesus with Israel, through the disciples, and in effect for us today.