

Covenant

Webster's Dictionary defines covenant as "*a binding and solemn agreement by two or more persons, parties, etc. to do or to keep from doing some specified thing; a contract; or a compact.*" In law, it is "*a writing, under seal, containing the terms of agreement or contract between two or more parties.*" Synonyms are contract, stipulation, agreement, promise, engagement. The word "*law*" is sometimes used in place of the word covenant. The word "*law*" has many definitions, but the most appropriate ones in this context seem to be ... "*all the rules of conduct established and enforced by the authority, legislation or custom of a given community or other group (in this case God); a sequence of events in nature or in human activities that has been observed to occur with unvarying uniformity under the same conditions.*" In order to understand the full meaning of the biblical word covenant it is necessary to combine these definitions. God, as creator and therefore the authority over mankind and all the created order, established the terms of the covenant as well as the rewards for obedience and the penalties for disobedience. Mankind and all the created order are subject to the terms of the agreements as God said they were.

The first time the word covenant appears in the Bible is **Gen 6:18**, where God is making a covenant with Noah: *But with thee will I establish my **covenant**; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.* However, there are other covenants that were made before the use of the word appears. There was a covenant with creation or the created order, set forth in **Gen 1**. There was a covenant with mankind, which was the covenant with Adam. There was a covenant between Adam, Eve and God which we could call the marriage covenant, and there was clearly a covenant that God established that had to do with offerings set forth in **Gen 4**, and so there were other covenants made before the word actually appears in the scriptures.

The covenant with Adam, which is also the covenant with mankind, was entered into between God and Adam without Adam's consent. **Gen 1:26** ...and then **Gen 2:7**. God had the legal right to do that as the creator of Adam, and he had the legal right to give dominion and authority over all the created order to Adam because he was the author of all creation. However, in the creation of Adam he gave Adam the gift of choice, including the ability to choose whether or not he would obey and serve God. That was the gift that most distinguished Adam from the remainder of the created order, set him apart and above the remainder of the created order, and conformed him to the image and likeness of God. When Adam chose to sin, he broke the covenant with God and left God without a covenant man in the earth. That was significant because (1) God had given Adam dominion over all his created order, so God no longer had it, and (2) God could not legally create another man since he had given Adam the commandment to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth. Therefore, for God to reestablish a covenant relationship with a man, a man was going to have to choose to obey and serve God.

Abram was the man God chose to use for this purpose, for this reason: **Gen 18:19.....**
For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Note that the dynamic of covenant had now changed from God imposing the terms on man and man having a duty to obey to man's now having the right to choose whether or not to covenant with God.

God's desire was to have a covenant with man in the earth again. However, man now had the right to choose whether or not to obey and serve God, so the covenant could not just be unilaterally imposed on man, God now had to develop it in covenant with man. The story of Abram (later Abraham) is the story of the development of God's covenant with him that man still operates in today. **Gal 3:29 ...** *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Our covenant with God is still fundamentally the Abramic Covenant, it just is a newer and better version with better promises. **Heb 8:6 ...** *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*

So God begins to develop a covenant with man (Abraham). Now since man has the right of choice, Abraham has to consent to the terms of the agreement in order to have a binding covenant. A covenant is an agreement which involves offer and acceptance, just like a contract. **Gen chapters 12 through 25** is the story of the development of the covenant between God and man. Note that the dynamic of covenant has changed, and in order to submit to the duties and obligations of covenant, the value of the rights and privileges of covenant have to outweigh the obligations.

The parties of covenant normally combine to obtain the strengths and benefits offered by their association with the other party. Both parties expect to gain something when they enter into a covenant with one another. Certainly this was true as the covenant was developed between God and Abraham. This principle helps explain some things we will see as we look at the development of this covenant.

God begins by speaking to Abraham in **Gen 12** and the covenant is developed through **Gen 25**, but we want to focus on **Gen 14:17-24....***And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.*

Now Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Christ, and he was **the** priest of most high God. Abram is returning from a battle in which he has been supernaturally empowered to defeat the armies of five kings with only the 318 trained servants of his house and he is met by the priest of most high God with the elements of a covenant meal. It is clear the purpose of the meeting is to enter into and memorialize covenant between Abram (man) and God. Since Abram and God do not have the same nature, they must have an intermediary between them to intercede and unite both parties, and the pre-incarnate Christ is the intermediary. He blesses Abram with the *Blessing of God* (the supernatural authority and empowerment of God to use the ability and help of God in the earth) and he blesses most high God of Abram.

Now in a covenant ceremony there are three things that happen that need to be pointed out here. The first one is that covenant ceremonies involve a meal, and Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine for the purpose of the meal. See again **Gen 14:18**. This was to indicate that when Christ came to the earth, he would be the covenant and his body and blood would represent the covenant meal. **John 6:50-58** *I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove amongst themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.*

The second thing that happens is that an exchange of gifts takes place. God is a spirit, and therefore his gift had to be spiritual. God's gift then was the supernatural authority and empowerment of God to use the ability and help of God in the earth. In order for this gift to have value, it had to work in every realm, both the spiritual realm since spiritual law governs creation and the natural realm since it had to work where Abram was, otherwise the gift would have no value to Abram. On the other hand, man's gift needed to be from this realm, but it had to touch spiritual realms as well since God is a spirit, so Abram gave him tithes (a tenth) *of all*. The gift of Abram had to encompass all that he had in order to connect with God at all points and in all realms. Since the gift is to bind and represent the party who gives it to the covenant, the gift has to come from the realm of the giver.

The final thing is that in covenant the enemies of each party become the enemies of the other party. Notice again **Gen 14:20...** *And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.* God has already made provision for us for the defeat of our enemies. **2 Cor 10:3-6** *.. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* There is an empowerment by God for the defeat of our enemies, that are in reality spirits. Poverty is a spirit, disease is a spirit, and all of

the enemies of God and the divine nature are spiritual enemies and they are defeated with spiritual weapons. Although they may manifest themselves in carnal ways that we can see, in the beginning and the end they are spirits.

In this passage, the king of Sodom is a representation of satan, and he is the enemy of God. Notice again **Gen 14:21...** *And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.* Satan wants what God wants, which is the souls of men. Our covenant duty is to work with God to defeat the works of satan and to help God obtain the souls of men.

There was a problem with this covenant as it was developed, which was on the part of man and not on the part of God. When Adam fell, he took on the nature of sin and all mankind after him had the nature of sin on the inside of them. The covenant between God and man required obedience to the law of God, so righteousness came by works or obedience to the law. Man, because his nature was sin and death, had no ability to obey the law of God and therefore was incapable of attaining righteousness. It was therefore necessary for God to intervene and help man to obey the law and thereby become righteous. Because man is incapable of attaining righteousness without the intervention of God, righteousness is necessarily a characteristic of God and therefore at its root *it is a deposit of God*. God has the authority as the creator of all things to say what is righteous and what is not, so he could establish the terms of righteousness. This was an element of spiritual law established by God, that he would accept something in place of obedience in order to establish righteousness, and the something God chose was faith.

Gal 3:6-9... *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are children of Abraham, and the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

This is a powerful scripture that indicates that Abraham was justified by faith. Now faith must have something to attach to in order to be developed, grow, and come to pass, so Abraham had to have faith *in the promise (word) of God*. **Romans 4:13-25** *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth forth those things which be not as thought they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his*

sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised up again for our justification.

The promise to Abraham was the foundation of covenant between God and man for the next four hundred and thirty years. Then, as the children of Abraham and the covenant people of God left Egypt (the land of bondage) and moved into the wilderness, God gave Moses the first written covenant. The Ten Commandments represented the first written covenant between God and man, and were written by God on tablets of stone. These commandments were expanded in the Pentateuch, which are the first five books of the Bible, to 613 “commandments,” which were called “The Law.” This was the basis of what we call the “Old Covenant,” which was entered into between God and his chosen people, Israel, and by definition was the covenant between God and man until it was replaced with the “New Covenant” ushered in by Jesus Christ.

Gal 3:19-26...*Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

John 1:1-4 ...*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. **John 1:14...** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. We see clearly from these scriptures that Jesus was in the beginning, and he was before all things, he was and is the Word of God and he is in all things.*

Since God and his Word are one, and his Word was the Law, and the commandments were the Law, and God is love, the commandments were to be a description of love. In order to fulfill the commandments and requirements of the Old Covenant man had to love God and his fellow man. In the fallen state of man, that was not possible. **Gen 6:5** *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* Man was incapable of love and therefore incapable of fulfilling the requirements of love unless his nature was changed. God, who alone was love, would have to rescue his people with love. Love would have to come to the rescue. God himself would have to rescue man. His purpose was not so much to create a New Covenant as it was to empower man to fulfill the Old Covenant and so to live the law of love, because God and the law of love had never changed. *When love becomes the driving force behind the covenant, the requirements of the law change their nature in the eye of the beholder and they are no longer*

commandments, but they become exceeding great and precious promises that make you a partaker of the divine nature. 2 Peter 1:4

In order to empower man to live the law of love, the first thing that God had to do was to recreate the spirit of man; and not just recreate it, but make it over in the image and likeness of God, because God is love. Our covenant with God is a spiritual force and so it must be discerned spiritually and operated with spiritual tools. While the spirit of man was separated from God it was not possible for man to even understand his covenant with God, let alone live it. God had to prepare the spirit of man to receive revelation of the covenant in order for him to begin to live it. Here is how God did that:

Hebrews 8:8-10....*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*

In introducing the New Covenant, Jesus emphasizes it is a covenant of love. **John 13:34** *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* It was not really a new commandment, it was just that Jesus put a new emphasis on love. **Mt. 22:34-40**...*But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* The commandment was not new and Jesus was not changing either the commandment to love nor the order of love, which must be God first and man closely behind. He was reemphasizing the priority of love as the force behind the covenant.

1 John 4: 7-21...*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at anytime. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his law is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that*

loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

Notice he did not change the law. God, who was and is God's Law and the Word of God, did not change. **Mt. 5:17-18** *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Jesus came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law.* However, **Hebrews 8:6** *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.* God is eternal and he changes not, and God and his law are one. The covenant was a better covenant with better promises because:

1. The New Covenant is a covenant between God and Jesus. Since Jesus was fully God and fully man, Jesus is able to enter into covenant with God because he is man and he is able to keep the covenant because he is God. Jesus actually **is** the New Covenant, and we are able to enter into covenant with God **through** Jesus Christ.
2. Man now has a recreated spirit that is capable of receiving wisdom, knowledge and understanding that he was not capable of before. He has the ability to know and to understand the covenant, to know and understand how covenant law is impacted by the law of faith, and to actually by faith fulfill the covenant with God: not by the faith of man but by the faith of God in man through Jesus Christ.
3. Man now has a helper, in the form of the Holy Spirit, who lives on the inside of man and who has a ministry helping man understand and fulfill his covenant with God.
4. Man now has an advocate in heaven, Jesus Christ the righteous, who ever liveth to make intercession for him and who also has a ministry helping man to fulfill his covenant with God through him.
5. Man's sin is not covered over and hidden from view as it was under the Old Covenant, it is removed from him as far as the east is from the west, and man now has access to God and his promises that he did not have before.

Gal 3:13-29 *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

So then the New covenant would come by faith; faith in God, faith in the promises of God, faith in the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ on the cross to pay the price for my sin and of my redemption, and faith in the ability of God to bring the promises to pass. It is imperative that I understand that there was a cost for my salvation, my redemption and my ability to enter into this covenant, but someone else (Jesus Christ) paid that cost for me so that I did not have to. Without an understanding of this cost I will never have a understanding of the value of a relationship with God, and I would never see the value

of the finished work of Jesus Christ for me. As with all of the things of God, there are two parts to the new covenant equation: God's part and my part. God's part was to pay the price for my sin and my redemption and my part was to accept that work on my behalf and the offer of covenant that God makes with all men.

As was said earlier, the new covenant was between God and Jesus Christ. Jesus was the earthly name of the messiah and it means "help of Jehovah." Christ was the title of the messiah and means "the anointed one" which we could expand to "the anointed one and his anointing." Jesus was able to enter into the covenant with God because he was fully man and he was able to enter into covenant with man because he was fully God. Therefore Jesus Christ *is* the covenant. **Gal 4:4-7...** *But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.* Therefore I am able to enter into covenant with God through Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ enters into me, and my covenant with God is through his Son, Jesus Christ. This was the revelation of a mystery**Col 1:27 ..** *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* In order to transform who I am, it needs to be more personal: Christ in **me**. **Gal 2:20 ...** *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* So Christ is in me and I am in Christ. **2 Cor 5:17** *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.* So the new covenant is between God and Jesus Christ, but Christ is in me and I am in him and a joint heir with him of the promises of God and the relationship with God. One of God's objectives of the New Covenant was the reestablishment of relationship with man, because with a relationship we have continuing access to the source of the promise and the one who has the ability to bring them to pass.

Since this new covenant is actually between God and Jesus Christ, my only choice is to accept the work of Jesus Christ on my behalf or not. I have no right to change the work, or to accept part of it or to modify it in any way. My only option is to accept this work as it was presented to me. **2 Peter 1:19-21...** *We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved on by the Holy Ghost.* Since the scriptures were written by holy men of God as they were moved on by the Holy Ghost, and they are not subject to any private interpretation, we must know and understand our covenant. As New Covenant believers it is imperative that we know and understand our covenant. **Romans 10:2** *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God,* and therefore will not inherit the promises of God. We have to know our covenant duties and obligations as well as our rights and privileges in order to fulfill our part of the agreement. As we should know, all of the promises of God are conditional and contain two parts, God's part and our part, and he will not do

our part and we cannot do his. In the next chapter we will discuss our covenant duties and obligations as well as our rights and privileges.