

Covenant Sermon

Should we interpret the Bible literally? Is it just a bunch of stories randomly tossed together? I will let you decide that for yourself as we jump into a brief study of Biblical covenants.

Two halves to this book, Old and New Testaments
Testament is the writing down/recording of a covenant.

What is a covenant?

Contract, promise, mutual agreement. Provides a clear statement of one's purposes and intentions and was expressed in such a way as to bind those persons by solemn oath to perform what they had promised.

Can be between men or between God and Man—but on this one **God always initiates**

These two testaments record five covenants between God and Man, and several between men

Today, we are going to look at two.

15 Century BC

Mosaic Covenant (Old Covenant):--To set Israel aside as law keepers to shine for other nations. This is the law covenant with blessings and curses and a system for the atonement of sins.

TABERNACLE PICTURE

The old covenant was centered on the tabernacle, and served as an integral part of the Old Covenant.

This is where the **Ark signified the Lord's presence.**

Priests served here, sacrifices were made here and sins atoned here.

The Hebrew word for TENT/TABERNACLE is **Mishkan**. Mish-sh-k-n.

The prefix mish is the place where something happens. Sh-k-n is the root to dwell.

Put together it is a place where God dwells.

God's instructions were to be specific and exact because it was a divine picture of God's dwelling place with humans.

OUTER COURTYARD

The Children of Israel could enter through the door (which always faced East) into the outer courtyard.

LAVER

The laver was where the priests washed their hands and feet daily. They could not enter the Holy Place without washing.

HOLY PLACE

Only the priests could enter the Holy Place. They would do so daily. This was also called the tent of meeting.

CANDLESTICK (Golden Lamp stand)

A seven-branched candlestick made of pure gold. It burned olive oil night and day, serving as the only light in the tabernacle and without this light they could not see God in His Holy Place. In darkness the other articles would have been impossible to see.

TABLE OF SHOWBREAD

Was to the right as one entered the Holy Place. On it were 12 loaves of bread representing God's covenant people, Israel. The table was a place of communion and fellowship. The table was a center of fellowship, just as it is today. God and persons communed at the table of showbread.

GOLDEN ALTER (ALTAR OF INCENSE)

Used to burn incense. Its fragrance wafted across the mercy seat and above the other furniture. The incense burned on the altar continuously. The incense on the altar represented prayer and speaks to us on intercession. Coals to heat this altar came from the altar of sacrifice after the blood of the sacrifice dripped on them. God's supremely holy altar.

HOLY OF HOLIES

Included in the tabernacle proper. Was separated from the Holy Place by a veil. This part of the tabernacle was only entered by the High Priest on one day of the year, the Day of Atonement.

VEIL (Curtain)

Made of blue, purple and scarlet fine and twined linen. No priest could enter except through the veil. It was the only way to approach the ark of the covenant. If you passed thru it without being sacrificially clean, God would strike the high priest dead. God cannot have sine in His presence.

ARK OF THE COVENANT

Occupied the Holy of Holies. On top of the ark was a lid called the mercy seat. Hovering above the mercy Seat were two cherubim with outstretched wings. The ark contained the tablets of stone, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded.

One time a year, on the Day of Atonement, the blood of a goat was placed on the Mercy Seat to cover the sins of the people. **It was there above the Mercy Seat that God hovered in the pillar of cloud. In His MERCY and in connection with the blood of the offering, the lord COVERED or forgave Israel's sins.**

PRIESTS

The priests were mediators. The priestly and Levitical offices were fixed by birth. The High Priest was the head priest.

SACRIFICE

Yearly, an unblemished lamb was slaughtered for the covering of sins of the individual. They would place their hands on the lamb, symbolically transferring their sins to the lamb that would be slaughtered for the covering, but not forgiveness, of sins.

800 YEARS LATER

Jeremiah/New Covenant/Why need new covenant?

The ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel went into Assyrian captivity about 722 BC. Why? Jeremiah said the curses of breaking God's covenant of Law laid out in Deuteronomy 28-30 had come upon the northern kingdom of Israel and in Jeremiah's day they were to come upon the southern kingdom of Judah.

Israel had failed to obey and be a nation that would save other nations, so Jeremiah announces a brand new covenant. Read JEREMIAH 31:31-34.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31"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, 32not 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.33"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. 34"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."

600 YEARS LATER (1400 since the institution of the Old Covenant), Jesus arrives.

Today we understand this covenant centered on the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. He shed His blood for the forgiveness of sin. The Old Mosaic Covenant was just a shadow of the real thing, Jesus Christ.

JESUS—THE ANSWER TO THE TEMPLE Heb.8,9,10 and...

Heb:8,9,10: Jesus is the substance, anti-type of the old temple.

Not only that,

Read

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only one from the Father, full of grace and truth."

The Greek word for dwell in Greek is skenoo. Notice the similarity with the Hebrew word for tabernacle? S-K-N.

The shadowy picture of the earthly tabernacle representing God dwelling with man has now become a reality. The shadow is now substance.

CHRIST IS THE DOOR (to enter the temple)

Jesus said, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved." John 10:9

CHRIST IS THE LAVENDER (laver was used to cleanse so the priests could enter the Holy Place into God's presence)

Peter said to Him, "Never shall you wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part of Me." John 13:8

CHRIST IS THE LAMPSTAND

Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12

CHRIST IS THE SHOWBREAD

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger." John 6:35

CHRIST IS THE ALTAR OF INCENSE (symbolizing intercession)

He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25

CHRIST IS THE VEIL (the priests had to go through the veil to get to God)

We have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh. Heb. 10:19, 20.

CHRIST IS THE MERCY SEAT (the seat was on top of the ark and the blood of goats was placed on the mercy seat for the covering of sins)

Jesus Christ, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. Romans 3:25.

CHRIST IS THE HIGH PRIEST

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens. Hebrews 7:26.

CHRIST IS THE SACRIFICE

By this we will have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hebrews 10:10.

So, whatya think?

10 steps to Cutting Covenant

Read I Samuel 18:1-5

1Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. 2Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. 3Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt. 5So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

Exchange of Robes/Outer Garments—

When Jonathan gave David his robe, David was symbolically “putting on Jonathan”. In covenant, two become one. This exchange was an outward sign of an inward commitment. In doing this exchange covenant partners were saying that they were receiving that person unto themselves. It was a total exchange of identity.

Exchange of Weapons—

Jonathon defended David even against his father, King Saul. By exchanging weapons, covenant partners symbolized their responsibility to defend each other against their enemies. They agreed to protect each other. In doing this, they were saying, “My weapons

are at your disposal, and I will lay down my life to protect you.” Jonathan was obligated to defend David’s life even if it meant going against his father, King Saul.

Exchange of Belts—

The belt of the garment held the weapons in place. It was a symbol of man’s strength and giving of the belt in covenant, signified the giving of your covenant partner your strength.

Cutting of Wrists

It is called in scripture “The striking of Hands”, which is a general expression of an agreement made. An incision was made and wrists were locked in such a way so that their blood would mix with each other. This co-mingling signified that they had become blood brothers, in essence, two had become one.

Taking of Oath: Sharing of Possessions/Blessings & Curses of Keeping & Breaking

While the hands were struck, an oath would be taken. They would speak an oath of curses and blessings of the covenant. In doing this, they would also name off all resources of the one’s making the covenant and say to his covenant partner: “All that I have is now yours.” Someone would be there to witness it, and write it down to record it. This was called: The Testament of the Covenant. See Deuteronomy 28.

Seal of the Covenant

Noahic: Rainbow

Abrahamic: Circumcision

After the taking of the oath and the cutting of wrists, the covenant partners would take sand or dirt and rub it deep in the wound so that a scar would develop. The scar or seal of the covenant was a constant reminder that a covenant was made.

Exchange of Names

Abram became Abraham

Sara became Sarah. They think the H was taken from God’s holy name.

God would get a new name also.... The God of Abraham.

Splitting of an Animal/Sacrifice

The covenant partners would split the animal in half and stand between it and would call upon God to do this and more to them if they broke the covenant agreement. They were making an oath of death. READ GENESIS 15:9-10.

Genesis 15:9-10

9So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

10Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.

Walk of Death

After pieces of the sacrificial animal were laid opposite one another, the covenanting partners would walk between those pieces signifying a walk into death. This walk into death was a testimony of their intention to die to their own independent living. Now they were to live always in consideration of the other and the covenant they had made. READ GENESIS 15:17-19.

Genesis 15:17-19

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 offspring 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,

Covenant Meal

This was a celebration. Each partner would even feed one another.

Do the modern day practices in weddings and marriage vows have any covenant symbolism in them?

2 become 1

Seal of the covenant—wedding ring

Sharing of possessions

Exchanging of names

Covenant meal—wedding reception, also the feeding of cake to each other

The New Covenant was cut at great expense for the complete forgiveness of our sins. Let's re-examine this new covenant in light of our new understanding of the seriousness of cutting a covenant.

Remember, covenant is a two way street.

Step #1: AN EXCHANGE OF ROBES OR OUTER GARMENTS

When Jonathan gave David his robe, David was symbolically "putting on Jonathan." In covenant, two become one. When you and I repent and trust Jesus Christ, we enter into the New Covenant of Grace, merging ourselves in Him. In doing so, we, in essence, put on His robe.

Romans 13:14

14But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts

Galatians 3:27

27For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Remember, this exchange was an outward sign of an inward commitment. In doing this exchange covenant partners were saying that they were receiving that person unto themselves. It was a total exchange of identity.

“To be clothed with a person” is a Greek phrase signifying to take upon the interests of another, to enter into his views; and be wholly on his side, imitating him in all things. **WE NEED TO BE IMITATORS OF CHRIST.** Colossians 3: 1-17

Was Jesus, our covenant partner, ever clothed with our likeness?

Read Philippians 2:5-8

He put on our human flesh and became a man. But it goes even deeper than that.

Philippians 2:5-8

5Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Read II Cor. 5:21

Our sin was put on Him and in exchange He offers us righteousness for our sins, something immeasurably worthy for something worthless.

II Corinthians 5:21

21He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

STEP #2: THE EXCHANGE OF WEAPONS

By exchanging weapons, covenant partners symbolized their responsibility to defend each other against their enemies. They agreed to protect each other. In doing this, they were saying, “My weapons are at your disposal. I will lay down my life to protect you.”

Jonathan was obligated to defend David’s life even if it meant going against his father.

Let’s look at a biblical reference to God defending us in our covenant relationship with Him.

Read II Thessalonians 1:5-7, what is God going to do to a Christian’s enemies?

II Thessalonians 1:5-7

5This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

6For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

7and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.

If God is going to defend His children, **how do we respond to our enemies? Read Romans Romans 12:17-21**

17Never pay back evil for evil to anyone Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. 20"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." 21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
Covenant is a two-way street what about taking on God's enemies?

READ JAMES 4:4

James 4:4-6

4You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? 6But He gives a greater grace Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

Every time we partner with the world, we are partnering with God's enemies and thereby, siding against God. How might you be doing that? What is your pet sin? What is the vice you struggle to give up? Perhaps this will help....go ahead, keep doing it... and remember you are siding against your covenant partner.

STEP #3 THE EXCHANGE OF BELTS OR GIRDLES

The belt of the garment held the weapons in place. It was a symbol of man's strength and giving of the belt in covenant, signified the giving of your covenant partner your strength. Does God give us strength to endure persecution?

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:13

13I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

How do we give our covenant partner our strength? We can't give God our strength we have none, only our weaknesses, WHAT A GREAT EXCHANGE!!!!

STEP #4 THE CUTTING OF WRISTS—ONENESS

It is called in scripture "The striking of Hands", which is a general expression of an agreement made. An incision was made and wrists were locked in such a way so that their blood would mix with each other. This co-mingling signified that they had become blood brothers, in essence, two had become one.

In keeping with the oneness of blood brothers, consider Col. 1:27, and note how it shows the oneness that is ours with Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:27

27to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

STEP #5 THE TAKING OF AN OATH

While the hands were struck, an oath would be taken. They would speak an oath of curses and blessings of the covenant. In doing this, they would also name off all resources of the one's making the covenant and say to his covenant partner: "All that I have is now yours."

Does God share His possessions with us? **READ PHIL. 4:19**

19And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

What possession do we have the God could want? **READ ROMANS 12:1**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

STEP #6 SEAL OF THE COVENANT

After the taking of the oath and the cutting of wrists, the covenant partners would take sand or dirt and rub it deep in the wound so that a scar would develop.

The scar or seal of the covenant was a reminder of the covenant (i.e.: circumcision and rainbow)

God's seal in the New Covenant is the Holy Spirit. **READ EPH 1:13**

13In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

Our outward "seal of the covenant" with the new covenant is to walk in the newness of life. Do we bear any physical marks of the covenant? **Read Gal. 6:17**

17From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

STEP #7 THE EXCHANGE OF NAMES

The covenant partners exchanged names. When we enter into covenant with God, our names also change. Remember Abraham and Sarah? What about us?

Read Eph. 2: 1-3

1And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

We become “child of God” versus “Child of Satan”

Does God’s name change? He becomes “God of _____.”

STEP #8 SPLITTING OF AN ANIMAL

The covenant partners would split the animal in half and stand between it and would call upon God to do this and more to them if they broke the covenant. They were making an oath of death.

Read John 1:29, what did John call Jesus?

29The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

As we become a true Christian, it is a commitment unto death. **Read Gal. 2:19-21**

19"For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. 20"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. 21"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

The Christian walk is not about fulfillment, it is about death to self and new life in Christ.

Read Colossians 3:5-10

5Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, 7and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him--

II Corinthians 5:14b-15,17

14b...having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. 17Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Before and sometime during the “walk of death” between the pieces of the sacrifice, there was the understanding that if the covenant were broken by either party, **they were calling upon God to “do so to me as has been done to the animal if I break this covenant.” In other words, “If I fail to keep this covenant, may I die even as this animal has died.” Or to put it more succinctly: “God kill me if I break this covenant.”**

Have you correctly entered the covenant with God?

Why did you become a Christian?

How did you become a Christian?

Uh, oh,....what should I do?

>Ten Commandments....Jesus died to pay fine...REPENT and TRUST.

STEP #9 WALKING THROUGH THE PIECES OR THE WALK OF DEATH

After pieces of the sacrificial animal were laid opposite one another, the covenanting partners would walk between those pieces signifying a walk into death. This walk into death was a testimony of their **intention to die to their own independent living**. Now they were to live always in consideration of the other and the covenant they had made.

Do we “pass through the pieces” when we covenant with God? We know that Jesus’ blood is the blood of the New Covenant. **Read John 14:6**

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”.

He is our way, the only way. Despite what the world says. Do you see how detailed this is?

Can you imagine God allowing another way when He went to this length to provide a way?

The Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies represented the throne of God. According to Hebrews 8:1-5, the tabernacle was made according to the pattern of the real sanctuary of God in heaven. Only on the Day of Atonement was the priest allowed to go into the Holy of Holies and put the blood on the sacrifice on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. The people themselves could not appear in the Holy of Holies, in the presence of God; the veil shut them out.

Do you remember what happened to the veil when Jesus died on Calvary? **READ MATT:27:51**
51And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

What does that mean to us?

READ Hebrews 10: 19-20.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus 20by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

We have access to Him! Forgiveness and everlasting life. No more outer courtyard!!!

STEP #10 THE COVENANT MEAL

As you recall, the covenant partners would feed each other a piece of bread that was dipped into wine. The bread represented their body and the wine their blood. This was symbolically saying: My life I am giving unto you.

Read Matthew 26:26-28

26While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

Communion.

If you and I are both covenanting with Jesus, then aren't you and I in covenant together? What are our responsibilities to one another as far as meeting each others' needs: **READ II COR 8:14.**

II Corinthians 8:14

But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want that there may be equality.

In light of this, should a child of God ever have to go outside the church to have his or her needs met? Is it the government's responsibility or ours because of covenant?