

# Introduction to The Covenants



## 39) What is a covenant?

- A. The English word "covenant" means "a binding agreement between two or more parties which promises the performance of some action."
  - 1. Examples of a covenant would be a business or legal contract, a written agreement, a will (last testament), a treaty, or a pledge.
- B. The Hebrew word most often translated "covenant" means "a compact."
  - 1. The making of a covenant was a serious event. When covenants were made in Old Testament times, an animal was killed to solemnize the contract. The animal was split in two, then both parties walked between the halves to demonstrate their intent to keep the commitment. This is where we get the phrase, "cut a deal" or "cut a covenant."

"So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." [10] Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ... [17] When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces."

GEN 15:9-10, 17 NIV

"The men who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces."

JER 34:18 NIV

- C. The Greek word most often translated "covenant" means "to dispose of property by a will; a contract." It has the idea of making and keeping a promise.

"Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) - [12] remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world."

EPH 2:11-12 NIV

**40) What are the different kinds of covenants?**

- A. Covenants between men who are equals.
- B. Covenants between men who are not equals.
- C. Covenants God makes with man.

**41) What are the characteristics of a covenant made between equals?**

- A. Equals can negotiate an agreement, both having input into the process. They establish what each is required to do and what each will receive in return.
- B. An example would be a defensive treaty which would list who would come to your aid in time of battle.

"One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram."

GEN 14:13 NIV

"Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us." ... [50] If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me." [51] Laban also said to Jacob, "Here is this heap, and here is this pillar I have set up between you and me. [52] This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me. [53] May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." So Jacob took an oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac."

GEN 31:44, 50-53 NIV

**42) What are the characteristics of a covenant made between men who are not equals?**

- A. When two parties, who do not have equal strength or influence, enter into a covenant, the one with greater strength or influence can impose the terms of the agreement on the weaker.
- B. An example would be a treaty between the victor and the vanquished. The victor dictates the terms and the vanquished is forced to accept. Also, a deceased person's will is often imposed on the recipients without their consent.

"However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, [4] they resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. ... [6] Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us." ... [15] Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath. [16] Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbors, living near them. [17] So the Israelites set out and on the third day came to their cities: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath Jearim. [18] But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the LORD, the God of Israel. The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders, [19] but all the leaders answered, "We have given them our oath by the LORD, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now. [20] This is what we will do to them: We will let them live."

so that wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them." [21] They continued, "Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community." So the leaders' promise to them was kept."

JOS 9:3-4, 6, 15-21 NIV

**43) What happens when a covenant is violated?**

- A. Once a covenant was established it was not to be changed or set aside.
- B. A covenant is violated when one of the two parties fails to uphold its terms. In that instance, all parties are released from the conditions of the covenant. Further, the covenant breaker is held liable for breaking the covenant.
- C. When a covenant is made in God's name, God watches over its fulfillment and will punish those who violate it.

"Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case."

GAL 3:15 NIV

"He despised the oath by breaking the covenant. Because he had given his hand in pledge and yet did all these things, he shall not escape. [19] "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: As surely as I live, I will bring down on his head my oath that he despised and my covenant that he broke. [20] I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare. I will bring him to Babylon and execute judgment upon him there because he was unfaithful to me."

EZE 17:18-20 NIV

**44) What are the characteristics of a covenant made by God with men?**

- A. God and man are not equals. God's greatness far exceeds that of man. Man is not in a position to bargain with God.
- B. God has originated every covenant He has ever made with man. Man can only accept or reject the covenant God offers.

**45) What is a conditional covenant?**

- A. A conditional covenant is one with an "if..then" clause. God will fulfill His obligation only if man fulfills his.

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

2CHRON 7:14 NIV

**46) What is an unconditional covenant?**

- A. An unconditional covenant is one that God promises to fulfill even if man fails to fulfill his obligation. It takes the form of an unconditional promise.

"The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time [16] and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, [17] I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, [18] and through your offspring all

## Building Firm Foundations

nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

GEN 22:15-18 NIV

"When your (King David's) days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. [13] He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. [14] I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. [15] But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. [16] Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

2SAM 7:12-16 NIV

### 47) How does God identify His role in establishing covenants with man?

#### A. He is a covenant making God.

1. God offers a covenant relationship with man. It is never the other way around.

"But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark - you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you."

GEN 6:18 NIV

"I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you"

GEN 9:9 NIV

"But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year."

GEN 17:21 NIV

#### B. He is a covenant keeping God.

1. God is faithful and trustworthy. He will not violate the covenants He makes with Man.

"Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands."

DEU 7:9 NIV

"He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. ... [9] He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever - holy and awesome is his name."

PSA 111:5, 9 NIV

#### C. He is a covenant revealing God.

1. God takes the initiative to invite man into a relationship with Him.

"He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets."

DEU 4:13 NIV

"The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them."

PSA 25:14 NIV

**D. He is a covenant enabling God.**

1. Not only does God reveal His covenant to us, but He then gives us the strength and power through Jesus Christ to fulfill it, something we could never do without His help.

"Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) - [12] remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."

EPH 2:11-13 NIV

**48) What are the parts of a covenant?**

- A. Each covenant God makes with man has three major components:
  1. The words of the covenant.
  2. The blood (sacrifice) of the covenant.
  3. The seal of the covenant.
- B. Each person of the triune Godhead is involved in a covenant.
  1. The Father originates and states the terms of covenant.
  2. The Son, by His shed blood, is the mediator of the covenant.
  3. The Holy Spirit is the one who carries out the terms of the covenant.

**49) What are the words of the covenant?**

- A. The words of the covenant are the terms or promises of the covenant. It may include promises, blessings for obedience, or a curse for rebellion.

**50) What is the blood (sacrifice) of the covenant?**

- A. As we have seen earlier, when a covenant was "cut," an animal lost its life. This association of blood with the making of a covenant shows how serious a covenant is. A covenant required a life or death commitment.
- B. When sacrifice was required, there needed to be a priest or other mediator to offer the sacrifice.
- C. The blood sacrifice made the very place of the covenant a holy place.

**51) What is the seal of the Covenant?**

- A. The seal was a lasting, tangible witness of the covenant that was entered into. It was something that could be looked at to remind the participants of the terms and responsibilities of the covenant.

**52) Why are covenants so important?**

- A. Covenants are all about relationships between people. Two or more people agree to do something. Commitments can be forgotten unless we make an effort to remember them. A covenant is a binding force to give that relationship life and security that the agreement will not be broken.

## Building Firm Foundations

1. The ceremony, the rings, the photo album, and the yearly anniversary are all designed to remind the couple of the solemn vows of their wedding day.
- B. When God makes a covenant with man, He uses it as a method to teach us what His will and purpose is for our life.

### 53) What covenants has God made with Man?

- A. Edenic covenant
- B. Adamic covenant
- C. Noahic covenant
- D. Abrahamic covenant
- E. Mosaic covenant
- F. Davidic covenant
- G. The New Covenant

### 54) What is the connection between the different covenants God made with man?

- A. Through these covenants, God shows us what He intended for man. After man failed through sinful rebellion, God progressively revealed His redemptive plan in the covenants until, through the blood of Jesus, we can enter the New Covenant and find salvation for our souls.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Group Leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Homework for Chapter 5

Please answer the following questions from the textbook in full sentences and return to your Group Leaders next week.

- 1) Explain what the word "covenant" means.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2) List three kinds of covenants.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Explain the characteristics of a conditional covenant.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Explain the characteristics of an unconditional covenant.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5) List and explain the three parts of a covenant with God.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Why are covenants so important?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_