

THE COVENANTS

A Biblical Study



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2017*

Preface

The core of Christian belief is that God has offered salvation to all through his Son. But God did not just suddenly one day proclaim his offer. Rather, he unfolded his plan carefully and purposefully. From the beginning, all mankind knew that God loved them - his grace was, and is still, abundant. So, it is not a surprise that God would offer salvation, but, even in hindsight, it is surprising how God did it.

We might suppose that the mere offer of salvation would be sufficient for men and women everywhere to anxiously give God their allegiance. Yet, God knows us better than even we do, and he wanted us not only to receive his offer, but also to accept it. Persons of free will can easily be persuaded to act contrary to their best interest. We are so full of pride and selfishness that it would take more than the simple offer of salvation for us to give up our desires and align ourselves with God's desires.

In his infinite wisdom, God knew that he first had to create a *relationship* with us if he would be effective in his appeal to us. And that is what God did and he did it by forming *covenants* with people. Indeed, it would not be wrong to think that the story of Scripture is the story of God's covenants. Some view the covenants as analogous to a structure – the frame of a building, or the backbone of the human frame – on which all else in Scripture is constructed.

The term *covenant* is not very common in modern use, although it still finds some use in legal contexts (e.g. real estate law and marriage law). It is sufficiently unfamiliar that its use in Scripture has been misunderstood. But, in ancient times, it was a very common word that was used to describe all kinds of relationship. Men regularly made covenants with other men. So much so, that when God offered to enter a covenant relationship with man, they knew exactly what God was offering.

Most students of Scripture have correctly seen the central importance of covenants in understanding what God has done. Still, there are differences of understanding (some drastically different) as to how God's covenants work in bringing about his purpose. Since it should be accepted as a truism that God is clear in his revelation, any differences of understanding can only be due to a misreading of Scripture. Consequently, the goal of this course of study is to read carefully what has been recorded in Scripture concerning the covenants that God formed so we fully appreciate, and accept, what God has offered.

The *English Standard Version* (ESV; Text Edition 2011*) will be used as the basis of this study. Other translations will be consulted.

May God bless our study.

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Front Cover

Rembrandt van Rijn, Moses, 1659

Germaldegalaerie, Staatliche Museen, Preussischer
Kulturbesitz, Berlin

http://www.rembrandtpainting.net/rmbrndt_1655-1669/moses.htm

Course Outline

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Lesson 1

Introduction to the Covenants

Covenant

The word *covenant* is the common English translation of the Hebrew word *berit* which occurs about 300 times in the Old Testament. The precise etymology of the Hebrew word is uncertain, but from the usage of the word in the Old Testament, *covenant* basically means an agreement for the purpose of forming a relationship. More formally, it can be defined as "an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance" [Mendenhall, *YABD*, p.1179]. But, agreements occurred under very different circumstances and between individuals as well as nations. Mendenhall identifies three basic types of covenants:

- 1) *Treaties*. Treaties between equal parties are called *parity treaties* and those where a superior party imposes his will on another party (i.e., unequal parties) are called *suzerainty* [SOO zuh RUHN tee] *treaties*. Treaties typically were formed by parties which had a common background or need. Hence, both parties agreed to the treaty, and blessings as well as curses were associated with the treaty.
- 2) *Loyalty Oaths*. Loyalty oaths are *imposed* by the stronger party on the weaker party; consequently, they do not contain blessings for the weaker party, only curses.
- 3) *Charters (or Royalty Grants)*. Charters are given to unique individuals.

1. For each of the following accounts, note the parties, the type, and the terms of the covenant:

<i>Covenant</i>	<i>Parties to the Covenant</i>	<i>Type of Covenant</i>	<i>Terms of the Covenant</i>
Genesis 21:22-32			
Joshua 9:3-27			
1 Samuel 18:1-3; 20:1-16			
2 Samuel 3:12-13			
1 Kings 20:30-34			
1 Chronicles 11:1-3			
Malachi 2:14			

- a. Are the covenants entered voluntarily by both parties?

- b. What were the purposes of making a covenant?
- c. How serious was the covenant to be treated?

The Form of a Covenant/Treaty

The covenants found in the Old Testament accounts are very much like covenants found in other ancient documents that have been discovered in the past 100 years. In the 1950s, Mendenhall was the first to note the similarities of the Sinai covenant between God and Israel to Hittite suzerainty treaties in the 14th and 13th century BC (and even to treaties hundreds of years earlier). Kitchen expanded upon Mendenhall's work by also noting the similarity of early law codes (late third and early second millennium) to both the Hittite treaties and the Sinai covenant. Thus, OT covenants, especially the covenant at Sinai, fit well within their cultural setting.

By comparing all these accounts, the following components of a covenant/treaty have been discerned [Mendenhall, *YABD*; Thompson, *Ancient Near Eastern Treaties*]:

- 1) Preamble Identifying the Parties
- 2) Historical Prologue
- 3) Stipulations (terms or conditions)
- 4) Provisions for Deposit and Periodic Public Reading
- 5) Sign(s) or Witness(es)
- 6) Promises (Blessings or Curses)
- 7) Ratification Ceremony/Oath

All these components may not be explicitly stated in every covenant account, but they are often implied. Further, as Wiseman ("Is it Peace?") advises there is much more flexibility in the form of the covenants than many have suggested. Consider the covenants studied in Question 1 above in answering the following questions:

2. Are conditions at times required by one party of the other before the covenant is established?
3. Are oaths pronounced ratifying the covenant?
4. Are signs or witnesses of the covenant stated?

Covenant/Testament

In the Septuagint (LXX), *berit* is translated by the Greek word *diatheke* which carries the meaning of "testament" or "last will". However, *berit* does not have this meaning, and even when it is used in the New Testament, *diatheke* has the meaning of *covenant* instead of *testament* (with three possible exceptions: Gal 3:15, Heb 9:16-17). [McCaig, p.797]

Although the word *diatheke* only occurs 33 times in the New Testament, the concept of a covenant remains a central part in God's relationship to his people. It was this understanding that led the Scriptures to be divided into the *Old* and *New Testaments* (although a more proper labeling would be *Old* and *New Covenants*, cf. 2 Cor 3:14).

Notes:

- 1) Of the 33 times *diatheke* occurs in the New Testament, the KJV translates it 'covenant' 20 times and 'testament' 13 times. Modern translations generally use the term 'covenant' for all the New Testament occurrences except that they vary in their translation of the Galatians 3:15 and Hebrews 9:16-17 passages.
 - 2) The Greeks had another word, *syntheke*, which means a covenant, but it is never used in the New Testament. So the question must be asked, why *diatheke* was used instead? One reason suggested has been that the covenant "that God makes with men is not fully mutual as would be implied in *syntheke*" [Estes, p.793; Berkhof, p.262-263; Payne, p.1000].
 - 3) The division of the Scriptures into the *Old* and *New Testaments* began with Jerome and his translation, the Latin *Vulgate* (last revision AD 405).
5. What is the essential difference between a *covenant* and a *testament*?
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-
-
-
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6. What other English words do we use that has the same basic meaning as a covenant? In what contexts are these words used?

Covenants between God and Man

Noah (Gen 6:18) and all humans and animals (9:9-17)

Abraham (Gen 15:1-21; 17:1-14); renewed with Isaac (26:3-5; 24) and Jacob (28:13-15; 35:9-15); Ex 2:24; 6:4-5; Acts 3:25; 7:8; Gal 3:17)

Israel (Ex 19:5; 24:3-8; 31:16 (Sabbath); 34:10, 27-28; Lev 26:40-45; Dt 4:13; 5:2; 29:1-30:20; Josh 24:1-28; 2 Kgs 13:23; 2 Chr 15:8-15)

Aaron (?) (Num 18:8-10; Neh 13:29; Mal 2:1-9)

Phinehas (Num 25:10-13)

David (2 Sam 7; 23:5; 1 Chr 17; 2 Chr 13:5; Ps 89:3; 19-39; 132:11-12; Jer 33:21)

Joash (Jehoiada; 2 Kgs 11:4, 17; 2 Chr 23:1-3, 16)

Hezekiah (2 Chr 29:10)

Josiah and Judah (2 Kngs 23:3; 2 Chr 34:29-33)

Ezra and the People (Ezra 10:1-5)

Nehemiah and the People (Neh 9:38)

Future People ("new covenant" Jer 31:31-34; "covenant of peace" Is 54:6-10; Ezek 16:59-63; 34:23-31; 37:21-28; Hos 2:16-23)

Jesus and New Covenant (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; Rom 11:27; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 7:22; 8:6-13; 9:1-20; 10:16, 29; 12:24; 13:20)

Covenants between Men

Abraham and the Amorites (Gen 14:13, ESV "allies" = literally "owners of the covenant")

Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:22-32)

Issac and Abimelech, Ahuzzath, and Phicol (Gen 26:28-31)

Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:43-54)

Israel and Gibeonites (Josh 9:3-15)

Jonathan and David (1 Sam 18:1-4; 20:12-17; 22:8; 23:18)

David and Abner (2 Sam 3:12-16)

David and Israel (2 Sam 3:21; 5:3; 1 Chr 11:3)

Solomon and Hiram (1 Kgs 5:12; ESV "treaty" = "covenant")

Asa and Benhadad (1 Kgs 14:18-20; 2 Chr 16:2-5)

Ahab and Benhadad II (1 Kgs 20:34)

Assyria and Israel (2 Kgs 17:1-5; Hosea 12:1)

Tyre and Edom (Amos 1:9)

Babylon and Judah (Ezek 17:11-21)

Zedekiah and Judah (Jer 34:8-20)

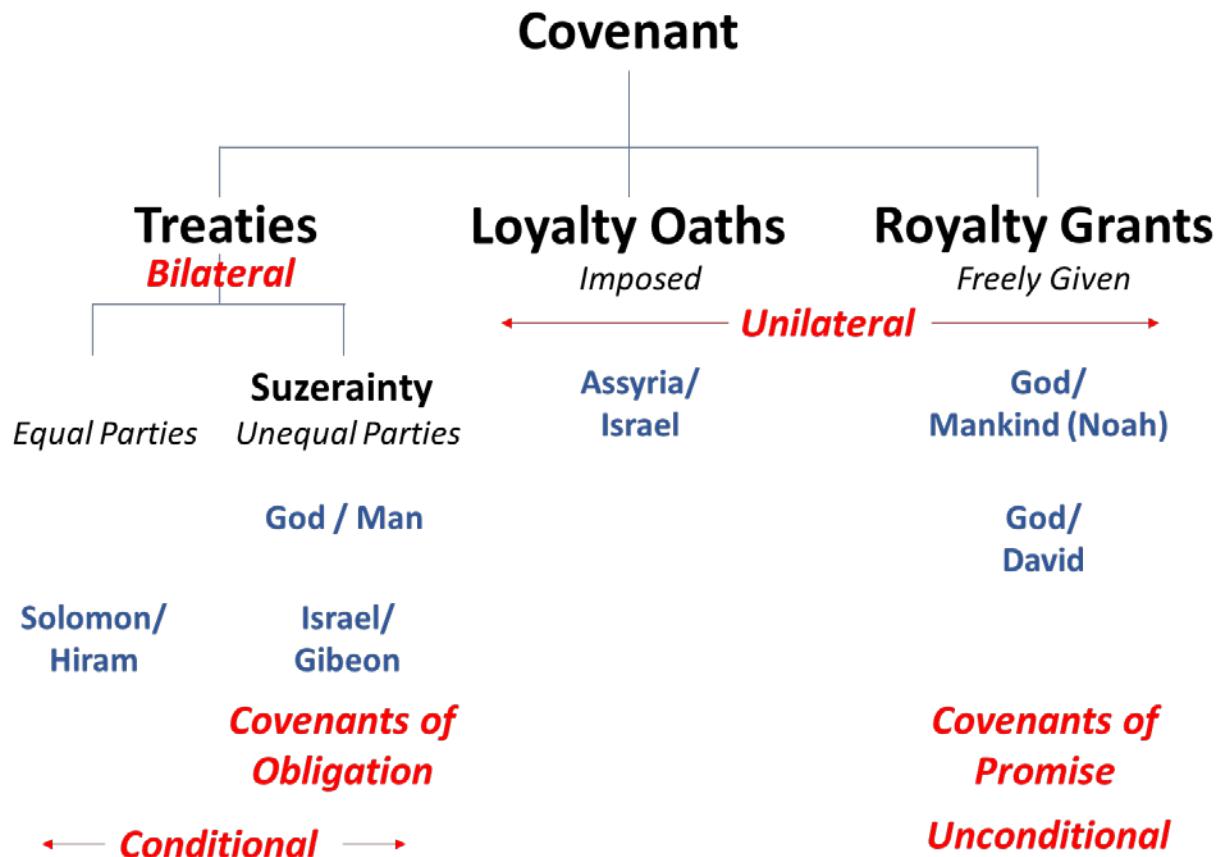
The "anointed one" and many (Dan 9:27)

Other Covenants

Lord with Day and Night (Jer 33:20)

Marriage (Prov 2:17; Mal 2:14)

Job with his Eyes (Job 31:1)



Lesson 2

The Covenants with Adam and Noah

The Covenant with Adam

The first five chapters of Genesis that record the life of Adam do not explicitly mention that God had a covenant with Adam. However, one possible translation of Hosea 6:7 is "*But like Adam they transgressed the covenant: there they dealt faithlessly with me*" (ESV, ASV sim., NASV sim., NIV sim.).

1. If this translation is correct and God had a covenant with Adam, what, do you suppose, was the nature of that covenant? Read Genesis 1-3 and note any blessings God may have promised or obligations God expected of Adam.
2. Is it necessary for the word *covenant* to be used in the text for there to have been a covenant?
3. Many believe God made a covenant with Adam. The prime reason is that their overall understanding of Scripture demands it. Reformed theologians, for example, use the covenant with Adam as the basis of their view of original sin. If there was no covenant, then their understanding quickly disintegrates.

For Further Study Two other possible translations of Hosea 6:7 have been suggested:

- (1) "*But like men they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt treacherously with me*" (NKJV; KJV sim.) [Note that the same Hebrew word is translated "Adam" or "man".]
- (2) "*At Admah they violated the covenant, there they played me false*" (REB; NRSV "at Adam")

Do either of these translations have merit in the context of this passage? Which translation does the most justice to the last phrase in the verse: "*there they ...*" ?

The Covenants with Noah

Read Genesis 6:5 - 7:5 Within a few short verses, the Scriptures tell of the "*wickedness*", "*evil*", and "*violence*" that characterized all of mankind, except Noah. Thus, God decides to destroy both man and beast off the face of the earth.

3. Who is the initiator of the covenant described in v.18?
4. Is the covenant being established at this time or at a future time ("*I will establish*")? cf. Genesis 9:9 (NAB, "*I am now establishing*"), 11 (ASV, NAB "*I will establish*")
5. Who, exactly, will God "*establish*" his covenant with?

Why does God select this individual as his partner in a covenant?

How is the character of Noah described? (cf. also Ezek 14:14,20)

Does the character of Noah have anything to do with God establishing his covenant with him?

6. What is God's motivation in establishing this covenant?
7. What is the purpose of the covenant? (i.e., what are its blessings/promises?)
8. Does Noah have any obligations to enjoy the blessings/promises of the covenant?

Read Genesis 8:20 - 9:17 With the destruction of the earth by water completed, God again "establishes" a covenant.

9. With whom does God establish the covenant described in 9:9ff?

10. What are the blessings/promises of this covenant? (8:21; 9:11)

11. What is the sign of this covenant?

To whom is this sign a reminder?

12. What is the duration of this covenant?

13. Are there any terms or conditions that man must meet for the covenant to be maintained? (In other words, is this a *unilateral* or *bilateral* covenant?)

Who is the only one bound in this covenant?

For Further Study Changes take place on the earth in the post-flood era. Compare the following passages:

1:28 // 9:1, 7

1:29-30 // 9:3-7

3:17-19 // 5:29; 8:20-22

What does the name "*Noah*" mean? (cf. Gen 5:29)

What is the significance of his being given this name?

"To Cut a Covenant"

The standard Hebrew expression (*kārat bērīt*) to indicate the formation of a covenant is literally "to cut a covenant" (occurring about 90 times in the OT), but it is usually translated "make a covenant." It is generally agreed that the Hebrew expression is based on the ancient ceremony of cutting an animal into two pieces. We see this in Genesis 15:9ff when God made a covenant with Abraham. The practice is also alluded to in Jeremiah 34:18-19 where we learn that the parties (or at least one of the parties) pass between the two halves of the animal. The symbolism suggested by the ceremony is debated, but it may simply be that the parties entering the covenant are placing curses upon themselves should they break the covenant; their treason would justify their death. At least in Jeremiah 34, that is the penalty the Lord was going to inflict upon those who had broken his covenant!

There is another Hebrew expression (*hēqîm bērīt*) that is also translated "make (or establish) a covenant." Although not all agree, but many scholars suggest the difference is that *kārat bērīt* is used when a covenant is initiated and that *hēqîm bērīt* is used on subsequent occasions when a covenant is confirmed (Wenham, Arnold, Gentry & Wellum). Thus, for example, in Genesis 15:18 *kārat bērīt* is used on the first occasion where God says he will make a covenant with Abraham, but in Genesis 17:7, 19, and 21 *hēqîm bērīt* is used (a different word is used in Genesis 17:2).

In the case of Noah, it is interesting that in all four texts where it is said that God makes a covenant with Noah (and others; Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17) the Hebrew expression is *hēqîm bērīt*. The text never says that God 'cuts a covenant' (*kārat bērīt*) with Noah. That could simply suggest that God and Noah were already in a covenant relationship that is not disclosed in Scripture. Some (Dumbrell, Gentry & Wellum) believe that the covenant with Noah is a *continuation* of a previous covenant with Adam. There are many interesting parallels between the Adam at the creation and Noah during the flood (see below – from Gentry & Wellum, p.162-163), but it seems a stretch to use these parallels as an argument for a covenant with Adam. It is easy to suspect that some other motive is at play in wanting there to be a covenant between God and Adam. We will see.

<i>The Creation Genesis 1</i>	<i>The 'New Creation' Genesis 8:1 - 9:7</i>
<i>Spirit Hovers Over Waters</i> 1:2 "earth" "deep" "Spirit" "waters"	<i>Wind Blows Over Waters</i> 8:11b-2 "wind" "earth" "waters" "deep"
<i>Waters Divided</i> 1:6-8 "waters" "expanse"	<i>Waters Divided</i> 8:2 "fountains...deep" "windows...heavens"
<i>Dry Ground Appears</i> 1:9 "waters" "dry ground" "appear"	<i>Dry Ground Appears</i> 8:3-5 "waters" "tops of mountains" "seen"
<i>Birds Fill Sky</i> 1:20-23 "birds" "above the earth"	<i>Birds Fill Sky</i> 8:6-12 "raven" "dove" "from the earth"
<i>Animals Created by God's Word</i> 1:24-25 "living creatures" "livestock" etc.	<i>Animals Brought Out by God's Word</i> 8:16-17 "living things" "birds" "animals" etc.
<i>Creation of Man in God's Image</i> 1:27 "God created man in his own image"	<i>Creation of Man in God's Image</i> 9:6 "God made man in his own image"
<i>God's Blesses</i> 1:28 "God blessed them" "Be fruitful..."	<i>God Blesses</i> 9:1 "God blessed Noah/sons" "Be fruitful..."

Lesson 3

The Covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Introduction For all practical purposes, the Biblical narrative begins with the life of Abraham (Abram). The creation and history of the world prior to Abraham are briefly summarized, whereas God's dealings with Abraham are carefully detailed.

The Covenant with Abraham

Read Genesis 12:1-9 After a brief description of Abraham's genealogy in the closing verses of chapter 11, we read of God making extensive promises to Abraham.

1. In verse 1, what command does God give Abraham?

How old is Abraham at this time?

2. In verses 2-3, what are the seven (7) promises that God makes to Abraham?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)

Which of these promises are highlighted in the New Testament? (Acts 3:25; Gal 3:8,14)

Note: The last phrase in v.2 reads in the ESV as: "*so that you will be a blessing*" (following the KJV; sim. NASU, NIV, NRSV, HCSB). That takes the form as one of the promises God makes to Abraham. However, the phrase could be translated as a command: "*be thou a blessing*" (ASV; "*you are to be a blessing*" NJB). In that case, there are two commands ("go", "be a blessing") with three promises associated with each command.

3. When Abraham arrives in Canaan, what additional promise is given? (verse 7)

Note: These promises are often grouped as three promises: (1) the Nation Promise, (2) the Land Promise, and (3) the Seed Promise. Others group the Nation Promise and the Land Promise together as one promise (the Nation/Land Promise).

4. Is Abraham a faithful follower of God at the time of his call? (cf. Josh 24:2; Neh 9:7-8)

Read Genesis 15:1-21

5. Abraham noted that the only heir he had was Eliezer. Did this show a lack of faith? (Are you sure?)

6. How does God further explain what he meant when he had earlier told Abraham that he would make "*of you a great nation*" (12:2)?

7. The text says "*on that day*" (15:18) God "*made a covenant*" with Abraham.

a. What is the blessing/promise associated with this covenant?

It is this blessing that is often highlighted in the Old Testament: Gen 50:24; Ex 6:2-8; 33:1; Dt 1:8; 34:4; 1 Chr 16:12-18; Ps 105:5-11.

b. Is the making of the covenant somehow associated with God saying "*Know for certain*" (v.13)?

c. The Biblical expression "*make a covenant*" literally means 'cut a covenant' (see *excursus* at end of *Lesson 2*). A possible meaning of this expression is illustrated by God having Abraham cut the animals into two pieces. It is believed that both parties passed between the pieces to bind themselves to the covenant (cf. Jeremiah 34:18). But, in this case, what (who?) passed between the pieces?

d. Is Abraham under any obligation? That is, is this a unilateral or a bilateral covenant?

Read Genesis 17:1-21

8. As God restates his covenant with Abraham in verses 1-7, what new features about this covenant are introduced?

9. How old is Abraham at this time?

10. What does the God mean when he says that he had made Abraham "*a father of many nations*"? (Careful, cf. Gen 17:15-16; Rom 4:17)

11. Note that God declares that his covenant with Abraham is "*an everlasting covenant*." What else in this context is said to "*everlasting*"?

12. What does God give as a "*sign of the covenant*" (v.10-11)?

13. When God tells Abraham that Sarah is going to be the mother of his descendants, Abraham "*laughed*". Since God earlier had rejected Eliezer as the promised son, how had Abraham thought that God was going to fulfill his promise? (cf. Gen 16:1-16)

How long did Abraham think that Ishmael was the promised son?

The Covenant with Isaac and Jacob

Read Genesis 26:1-5, 24 (Isaac) and 28:13-15; 35:9-15 (Jacob)

14. Are these new and different covenants that God made with Isaac and Jacob or are these a restatement of the covenant with Abraham?
15. Is the character of Isaac or Jacob mentioned as part of the reason that God makes a covenant with them?

For Further Thought

15. The term "*covenant*" does not occur in the account of Genesis 12; it does occur in Genesis 15 and 17. Does that mean that a covenant with Abraham was not made in Genesis 12? (cf. Lk 1:72-73; Gal 3:15-18)
16. Was the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob conditional (i.e., did they have any obligations, which, if violated, would have broken the covenant)? (cf. Gen 18:17-19; 22:16-18; 26:5)

For example, in Genesis 22, if Abraham had refused to offer Isaac as a sacrifice would God not kept his promises to Abraham?

"And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness"

This statement in Genesis 15:6 becomes a key to understanding how God expects all people to respond to him. It comes immediately after God tells Abraham that the promise about him becoming a great nation was going to be fulfilled through his "very own son" and not Eliezer, a servant. It is quoted three times in the New Testament, and, interestingly, it is used to make a different point each of the three times:

- 1) Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 in Romans 4:3 noting that this was said of Abraham while he was still uncircumcised. Paul wants his readers to understand that acceptance with God depends on faith and not on some external rite like circumcision.
- 2) Paul also quotes Genesis 15:3 in Galatians 3:6. In addition to making the point that Abraham was uncircumcised when God accepted him, Paul further notes that the law (which Paul's opponents in Galatia urged to be followed) came 430 years after Abraham was given the promise of all nations (Gentiles) being blessed. Thus, the law was secondary and could not annul the promise.
- 3) James quotes Genesis 15:3 in James 2:23 to make the point that Abraham's faith was accompanied by works; in particular, his willingness to sacrifice Isaac.

Abraham is consistently presented as a man of faith throughout his sojourn with the Lord. This powerfully makes the point that faith in God is not a one-time act, but rather something that characterizes one's entire life. Further, faith impacts what we do, and do not do. Faith is revealed in our obedient trust in God's promises. This is also the thrust of Hebrews 11. It was true of Abraham, and it must be true of us.

Lesson 4

The Covenant with Israel

Introduction Being faithful to the covenant he made with Abraham, God made a covenant with Isaac and then with Jacob. As foretold to Abraham, the descendants of Jacob were enslaved for 400 years [according to Genesis 15:13 (Acts 7:6), but more exactly (?) 430 years, Exodus 12:40 (Gal 3:17); also, four generations (Gen 15:16) = Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses, Exodus 6:16ff].

Read Exodus 2:24-25 This statement is made immediately before God revealed Himself to Moses.

1. In what way does God "remember" his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?
2. What is the meaning of v.25 which the ESV renders fairly literal: "*God saw the people of Israel – and God knew*"?

Read Exodus 6:1-9 After Moses' initial meeting with Pharaoh and his cruel response, God appears again unto Moses.

3. What new revelation does God give to Moses?
4. What are the three blessings that God holds out to the children of Israel? (6:6-8)
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)

Read Exodus 19:1-9 When the people arrive at Mt. Sinai (Horeb), God speaks to Moses.

5. If the Israelites keep the covenant, what blessings are in store for them? (v.5-6)
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
6. Are the people willing to accept God's offer of blessings on his terms?

Read Exodus 20:1; 21:1; 24:3-8 God speaks "words" and "rules" to Moses, who in turn speaks them to the people.

7. What is the people's response when Moses relays Gods words unto them? (24:3)
8. What is the book called in which Moses writes all these words of God?
9. How is the covenant ratified?

Read Exodus 31:12-17

10. What is called a "sign" between the Lord and the people? Was this 'sign' given to other peoples as well?

11. What is the purpose of this sign?

12. What is the duration of this sign?

Read Exodus 32:1-19 The people quickly break the covenant while Moses was on the mountain.

13. God in his anger says to Moses "*Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you*" (v.10). Could God have done that and kept his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? (v.13)

14. Is it a fair statement to say that Moses' breaking of the tablets was symbolical of the people's breaking of the covenant?

Read Exodus 34:1-10; 27-28 As instructed, Moses returns to the mountain with new tablets.

15. What is the significance of the way in which the Lord 'proclaims' himself to Moses? (v.5-7)

16. How does God demonstrate that he is a God of mercy and grace?

17. What are the "Ten Commandments" (literally, *Ten Words*) called?

And where were the "Ten Commandments" stored?
(Ex 25:10-16; Dt 10:3,8)

Steadfast Love

The Hebrew word *chesed* is used repeatedly in the OT of God's continuing care and faithfulness to those with whom he bound by covenant. The KJV uses a variety of words in translation, but primarily *mercy*, *kindness*, or *lovingkindness*. The NASB uses *lovingkindness* and the ESV uses *steadfast love*.

Chesed is only used in the context of a covenant that has previously been formed. Although it refers to the faithfulness both parties are to have to the terms of the covenant, it is most often used to speak of God's faithfulness (e.g. Ex 34:6-7). He does not forget his covenant.

Read Numbers 14:11-24 Based on the spies' report, the people refuse to enter Canaan.

18. What does this episode teach about who would enjoy the blessings in God's covenant with Israel?

Read Deuteronomy 4 - 11 Moses speaks to the people before his death.

19. What condition does Moses repeatedly state as necessary for Israel to remain in the land of Canaan? *Note the major passages.*

20. What two reasons does Moses rule out as the basis on which God established a covenant with Israel? (7:7; 9:4-6)

- 1)
- 2)

Why, then, did God establish his covenant with Israel? (7:7-8)

Scan Deuteronomy 27-28; read Deuteronomy 29:1, 9-13; 30:19-20 Moses enumerates the blessings and curses of the covenant.

21. Why is God establishing yet another covenant with Israel at this time? (cf. 29:1)

Are there different conditions or blessings/curses associated with this covenant compared to that established earlier at Horeb?

In Lesson 1, it was noted that ancient Near Eastern treaties (covenants) followed a consistent format. God's covenant with Israel is similar in form. There are three passages in Exodus that demonstrate this similarity. Also, some see the entire book of Deuteronomy as following this format.

Treaty Component	Exodus 19	Exodus 20	Exodus 24	Deuteronomy
Preamble Identifying the Parties	3	2a		
Historical Prologue	4	2b		Chapters 1 – 4
Stipulations	5a	3-17	3a	Chapters 5 - 26
Provisions for Deposit/Public Reading			4q	
Signs or Witnesses				
Promises (Blessings or Curses)	5b-6	5-7, 12		Chapters 27 - 30
Ratification Ceremony/Oath	8		3b, 4b-8	

Lesson 5

The Covenant with David

Introduction When the Israelites cried out for a king, the Lord chose Saul after the manner of their desire (cf. 1 Sam 8:18; 9:2; 10:24). But Saul sinned and thus was rejected by God (1 Sam 15:24-26).

Read 1 Samuel 13:13-14; 16:1, 7; Acts 13:21-22

1. How does God describe the character of David?

2. Was this crucial to God's selection of David?

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-29 (1 Chr 17 is similar) David desires to build a house (temple) for God. Instead, God builds David a house (dynasty).

3. Summarize what God says he had done for David. (v.8-9)

4. What does God say that he will do for Israel? (v.10-11a)

5. What does God say that he will do for David? (v.8-16)

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

6. Is God establishing a covenant with David? (cf. 2 Sam 23:1-7; Ps 89:3-4)

7. What is the duration of this covenant?

Read Psalm 89 A psalm of Ethan the Ezrahite according to the Psalm's prologue. The writer of Kings implies that Ethan was noted for his wisdom, yet he was not as wise as Solomon (1 Kings 4:31).

8. What characteristic of God is Ethan extolling? (v.1-2)

9. Ethan speaks of the covenant between God and David.
 - a. What is the main feature of the covenant that Ethan is emphasizing? (v.28-37)

 - b. Is this covenant conditional upon David's or his son's obedience? (cf. Jer 33:20-22)

 - c. Assuming the answer to *Part b* is "no", how do you explain the conditionality implied in 1 Kings 2:3-4, 8:25-26, and Psalm 132:11-18? (cf. 2 Chr 21:7)

Read 1 Kings 5:1-7; 8:14-21

10. Did Solomon understand that he was the one of whom the Lord said that would build him a house? (cf. 1 Kgs 2:1-4; 1 Chr 28:1-10)

11. Was the Lord faithful to his word?

Of Related Interest

12. David formed covenants with several individuals. Note the individual and the purpose of the covenant in each of the following passages:
 - a. 1 Samuel 18:3; 20:16; 23:18

 - b. 2 Samuel 3:12f

 - c. 2 Samuel 5:3; 1 Chronicles 11:3

Lesson 6

The Covenant in the Kingdom Years

Introduction "For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father." (1 Kgs 11:4).

Read 1 Kings 11:9-13

1. What punishment did God give for Solomon breaking His covenant?
2. Yet "for the sake of David" what two concessions did God give?
 - 1)
 - 2)

Covenant Renewals

We read of at least four covenant renewals during the history of Israel:

- 1) Joshua at Shechem (Josh 24:1-28)
- 2) Asa (2 Chr 15:12ff)
- 3) Josiah (2 Kgs 23:1-3; 2 Chr 24:31-32)
- 4) Ezra (Neh 8 – 10)

After the division of the kingdom, the Northern Kingdom of Israel refused to follow the Lord.

3. For a time, the Lord was gracious and did not destroy Israel. Why? (2 Kgs 13:23)
4. However, later the Lord used the Assyrians to destroy Israel. Why? (2 Kgs 18:9-12)
5. Why was Assyria not able to destroy Judah at the same time? (2 Kgs 19:15-19, 32-36; 20:6)

Some of the kings of Judah were faithful to the covenant while others were not. Note the following accounts from the book of 2 Chronicles.

6. Read 2 Chronicles 15:1-15. Asa was the third king following Solomon (Rehoboam – Abijam – Asa). What did he do that was noteworthy? (v.12f)

[Yet, later in life he put his trust (1) in the King of Syria when attacked by Israel, (2) in physicians when struck with a disease. In addition, he took "sacred gifts" into the house of the LORD. See 2 Kgs 15:14-23; 2 Chr 16.]

7. Read 2 Chronicles 21:4-7. Jehoram is an example of a king of Judah who was unfaithful to the covenant. Why did the Lord not take the kingdom away from Jehoram and his sons?
8. Read 2 Chronicles 34:1-3, 8, 14-19, 26-33. Josiah, like his grandfather Hezekiah, "did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of his father David."
 - a. What was Josiah's reaction when the Book of the Law [= Book of the Covenant] was found and read to him?

- b. After reading the Book to the people, what did Josiah do?

During these years, God spoke to people through his servants, the prophets.

9. The prophets in the following passages emphasize which command of the Law?

Isaiah 56:2-4
Isaiah 58:13-14
Jeremiah 17:21-27
Ezekiel 20:10-26

Why this command more so than other commands?

10. Read Jeremiah 11:1-11. Judah, like Israel, would be destroyed. Why?

11. Although the prophets of Judah clearly proclaim the coming destruction, they just as clearly tell of God's continued mercy. Reference is frequently made to a "remnant" and to the covenant with David. Note the following passages within their context:

Isaiah 1:9
9:6-7
10:20-23
11:1-4, 10-16
Jeremiah 23:1-7
30:5-11
33:4-22
Ezekiel 34:11-13, 23-25
Hosea 3:5
Amos 9:11-15
Zechariah 12:10 – 13:1

12. In exile, Nehemiah understands the reason for the things that has happened to God's people.

- a. On what basis does Nehemiah believe that God's people should return to the land? (Neh 1:1-11)
- b. Back in the land, the people under Nehemiah and Ezra reestablish proper observance of the Law. A good summary of God's dealings with his people is given in Nehemiah 9:5-38.

Lesson 7

The New Covenant Foretold

Introduction Jeremiah 31:31 is the only passage in the Old Testament that specifically foretells a “*new covenant*”, although other prophets speak of it using other language. Recall that Jeremiah prophesies to Judah shortly before their destruction.

Read Jeremiah 31:1-34

1. Jeremiah’s statement can only be understood by considering its historical context.
 - a. What was the primary content of Jeremiah’s message given to him by the Lord? (e.g. see 1:4-19 at the time of his calling)
 - b. What future event is the prophet looking forward to throughout chapters 30 and 31? (30:3, 8-11, etc.; 31:3-4, 7-8, 17, 23)
2. With whom is this new covenant made?
3. By calling this future covenant a “*new*” covenant, the Lord implies that some covenant is old that either has expired or is being replaced. Which covenant is identified as the “*old*” covenant?
4. What are the features of this “*new*” covenant? (v.33-34)
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)
 - 5)
 - a. What is the essential difference between the ‘old covenant’ and the “*new covenant*”? (consider Dt 6:4-9; Is 54:13 and Jn 6:44-46)
 - b. What is the significance of “*all*” knowing the Lord “*from the least of them to the greatest*”?
5. Jeremiah again speaks of this covenant in Jeremiah 32:36-44. What additional features of the covenant does he give?

Read Selections from Other OT Prophets

6. Note the various features of the covenant/promises discussed.

Hosea 1:10-2:1, 2:16-23; 3:4-5

Isaiah 54:7-10 (*"covenant of peace"*)

Ezekiel 11:16-21

Ezekiel 16:59-63 (*"everlasting covenant"*)

Ezekiel 36:24-32

Ezekiel 34:23-31 (*"covenant of peace"*)

Ezekiel 37:21-28 (*"covenant of peace"*, *"everlasting covenant"*)

Note: Only four covenants are said to be *"everlasting"*: Noah (Gen 9:16; Is 24:5); Abram (Gen 17:7,19; Ps 105:10; 1 Cor 16:17); David (2 Sam 23:5; 2 Chr 13:5); New (Is 55:3; 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ez 16:60; 37:26); plus the covenant signs (Gen 17:13; Ex 31:16; Lev 24:18).

7. Is the covenant foretold by Jeremiah the same as that foretold by these other OT prophets?
8. Without trying to get to far ahead of our study, a very important question must be asked: Are we or the children of Israel the intended recipients of this future covenant?

The People of God

When the Lord established his covenant with Abraham he said concerning Abraham's seed that *"I will be their God"* (Gen 17:8). When he appeared to Moses and told of the covenant he would establish with Israel, the Lord said *"I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God"* (Ex 6:7). This notion of *"my people"* and *"your God"* becomes the standard way of describing the covenant relation between God and Israel. It is recorded multiple times in Jeremiah (7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:33, 38; 32:38), but also in other prophets (Ezek 11:20; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech 8:8).

Clearly, God's motivation in extending covenants to man was for the purpose of creating a relationship with them. It is humbling that the same language is used in the NT to refer to the relationship that the Lord wants with us (2 Cor 6:6; Heb 8:10). But with that extension of grace comes the responsibility to be solely loyal to God, to love his ways, for we are *'his people'* and he is *'our God'*.

Lesson 8

The Covenants in the Gospels and Acts

Introduction God's covenants did not end with the close of the Old Testament. Reference to and teaching on the covenants continues to be prominent in earliest records of the ministry of Jesus and His apostles.

The Covenants in the Gospels

1. Note the covenant that is in the background of these passages concerning the birth of Jesus.

a. Jesus' genealogy: Matthew 1:1 (also, note v. 6, 20)

b. The announcement of Gabriel: Luke 1:26-33

It is instructive to compare v.32-33 with 2 Samuel 7. Note the points of contact.

c. The prayer-hymn of Mary: Luke 1:50-55

d. The prophecy of Zechariah: Luke 1:67-80

e. The birthplace of Jesus: Luke 2:4, 11

2. Several passages speak of the Law. Read each of the following passages and note the teaching concerning Christ's work and the law.

a. Matthew 5:17-20

b. Luke 16:16-17

3. Read the following passages that allude to the seed of Abraham. How did the Jews view themselves? What assurance did that give them?

a. Matthew 3:1-10 // Luke 3:3-14

b. John 8:31-59

The Covenants: A Biblical Study

4. Read the Gospel accounts where Jesus institutes His Supper: Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, and Luke 22:14-23 (and Paul's account in 1 Cor 11:23-26).
 - a. What is the significance of Jesus describing the cup as the "*blood of the covenant, which is shed for many*" (Mark)?
 - b. The adjective "*new*" to describe the "*covenant*" occurs only in passages by Luke and Paul. Is the meaning any different?
5. It is obvious that the Jews of Jesus' day understood that the Messiah was to be the "*Son of David*" and that many of them believed Jesus to be the Messiah.
 - a. Read Mt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; Jn 7:42
 - b. Does Jesus accept this title? (see Mt 21:9 // Mk 11:10; Mt 22:41-46 // Mk 12:35-37 // Lk 20:41-44)

**Frequency of
"Son of David"**

Matthew	10
Mark	3
Luke	3
John	-
Acts	-

The Covenants in Acts

6. In the early gospel sermons recorded in Acts, the covenants continue to take an important place. What points are made in the following instances?
 - a. Acts 2:30-39
 - b. Acts 3:24-26
 - c. Acts 7:2, 8, 38
 - d. Acts 13:16-41
 - e. Acts 15:13-18

Lesson 9

The Covenants in the New Testament Letters

The Covenants in the Writings of Paul

As an "apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom 11:13), Paul argues that Gentiles who have faith in Christ have received the promised Abrahamic covenant blessings. The covenant with Israel at Sinai was secondary and therefore could not place burdens upon Gentile converts. So much of Paul's efforts with his fellow Jewish believers was to show the proper role of the Law of Moses.

1. Note the progression of Paul's logic in Galatians 3. Paul is arguing against Judaizers, i.e. Jewish believers who believed there were certain tenets of Judaism Gentiles had to accept upon becoming a Christian.
 - a. What is the cardinal truth regarding Abraham's standing before God? (v.6)
 - b. Consequently, what was God foretelling when he told Abraham that "*in you shall all nations be blessed*"? (v.8-9)
 - c. Thus, what can the Law of Moses, which was given later than the promise, not do? (v.11, 17)
 - d. So, what was the purpose of the Law? (v.19, 24)
2. In a more systematic way, Paul makes similar points in his letter to the church at Rome – a church composed of both Jews and Gentiles.
 - a. Paul 1) states his thesis in 1:16-17, 2) argues that both Gentile and Jew are under the condemnation of sin for violating God's law and hence accountable to God (concluded in 3:19), and 3) restates his thesis (3:21-26). Read the passages noted.
 - b. In chapter 4, Paul bases his thesis upon what Scriptures says about God's dealings with Abraham.

How was Abraham justified (= counted righteous)? (v.3)

What significance does Paul assign to the fact that Abraham was still uncircumcised at the time he was counted righteous? (v.9-12)

Why can the covenant that God made with Israel not supersede the covenant God made with Abraham? (v.13-16)

3. Who are the true Israelites (i.e., Abraham's seed, people of God)? (Rom 2:11-29; 9:1-8; Gal 3:26-29)
4. In Galatians 4:21-31, Paul gives an analogy to put the covenants in proper perspective. Explain.

The Covenants in Hebrews

Addressing Jewish believers, the writer of Hebrews especially brings out the superiority of the new covenant.

5. In the following passages concerning God's covenant with Abraham, what is the main point?

- a. Hebrews 6:13-20
- b. Hebrews 11:8-19

Explain the apparent contradiction between Hebrews 6:15 ("Abraham ... obtained the promise") and Hebrews 11:13 ("not having received the things promised").

6. The "*new covenant*" prophecy of Jeremiah is quoted twice in Hebrews.

- a. What application does the Hebrew writer make in each instance?

Hebrews 8:7-13 (*Note: the quotation from Jeremiah in v.8-12 is the longest OT quotation in the NT*)

Hebrews 10:11-18

- b. What is Jesus' role in the New Covenant? (Heb 9:15; 12:24; 10:10-12, 29)

7. How is the Law of Moses described?

- a. Hebrews 7:18-19
- b. Hebrews 10:1

8. Contrasts are made throughout the letter between the Old and New Covenants. What are the main contrasts in the following selections?

4:14 – 5:11

7:1-22

8:1-2

9:1-11

9:16-22

The Gentiles in God's Plan

God's promised Abraham that in him "*all the families of the earth shall be blessed*" (Gen 12:3). Following his "test" of Abraham concerning Isaac, God restates his promise using the language "*in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*" (Gen 22:18). "*Nations*" in the Bible generally refers to the Gentiles, i.e. people who were not Israelites (see *Terminology* below). Thus, from the very beginning, God intended for his blessings to ultimately include the Gentiles.

God's intention is even clearer in the prophetic writings. Take, as an example, this passage from Isaiah:

"It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,³ and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.⁴ He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." [Isaiah 2:2-4]

This teaching is scattered throughout the prophets (e.g., Isa 25:6-8; Mic 4:1-3; Zech 8:20-23) and is reinforced by Jesus in his teaching (e.g., Mt 8:11//Lk 13:29).

Now we understand the goal of the covenants - to make all one in Christ. Paul says it best:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." [Galatians 3:28-29]

But it is at the end of his letter to the Romans where Paul eloquently speaks of God's mercy to the Gentiles and the ministry that God gave him (Rom 15:8-21). It is not a coincidence that this comes immediately after Paul's teaching in Romans 14 and the first of part of 15 where he insists that both Jewish and Gentile believers are to receive each other as brothers in Christ.

Terminology The Hebrew word, *goyim* (pl.), is almost always translated "*nations*" in the ESV as in Gen 22:18. It generally (if not always) refers to people outside Israel. Since English, unlike Hebrew or Greek, has the word "*Gentile*" which uniquely refers to all non-Jews, the KJV and ASV translate it a few times as "*Gentiles*." The singular (*goy*) can refer to Israel.

The LXX uses the Greek word *ethnē* to translate *goyim* and in the NT *ethnē* is usually translated either as "*nations*", or more commonly, "*Gentiles*". Jews are usually designated in the NT by the Greek word *laos* (sing.; ESV translates as "*people*"); a term that is eventually used of Christians (e.g., Acts 15:14; 18:10; Rom 9:24-25).

Lesson 10

Universal Moral Law

Introduction The Old Testament primarily records God's dealings with the children of Israel. We read of the Law that was given to them through Moses at Mount Sinai. But what about other people who were not in the lineage of Abraham? Were they accountable to God? If so, to what law?

Before the Law of Moses

1. We read of several individuals who apparently knew that there were some things acceptable to God and some things that were not. And, these were not always descendants of Abraham. In fact, there is no indication that Abraham and his children were held to a different moral standard than others they encountered.
 - a. Cain knew murder was wrong (Gen 4:7, 11).
 - b. Noah apparently knew what God expected (Gen 6:8-9).
 - c. Abraham knew and kept God's laws (Gen 26:4-5).
 - d. Melchizedek, king and priest, knew and worshipped God (Gen 14:18-20).
 - e. Pharaoh (Gen 12:11-20), Abimelech(s?) (Gen 20:2-18; 26:6-11), and Potiphar (Gen 39:1-20) knew God's law concerning adultery.
 - f. Job was a faithful servant of God.
 - g. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was a priest of God (Ex 18:1,12).

After the Law of Moses

2. The Prophets of God did not exclusively speak to the children of Israel. They were also sent to the nations, or they pronounced judgment on the nations, which only makes sense if the nations had violated known laws of God. Consider the following:
 - a. Obadiah prophesied to Edom (1:1).
 - b. Jonah prophesied to Nineveh (1:1-2) with the result that they repented (3:4-10).
 - c. Nahum prophesied concerning Nineveh (1:1-3).
 - d. Zephaniah pronounced judgment against the Philistia (2:4-7), Moab and Ammon (2:6-11), Cush (2:12), and Assyria (2:13-15).
 - e. A large section of Isaiah contains "oracles" against all the surrounding nations (13:1 – 23:18).
 - f. Jeremiah pronounces God's judgments on the surrounding nations (46:1 – 51:64).
 - g. Ezekiel pronounces God's judgments on the surrounding nations (25:1 – 32:32).
3. In the NT, there are some Gentiles who appear to be acceptable to God: the Syrophoenician woman (Mk 7:25-29); centurion with sick servant (Mt 8:5-13); Cornelius (Acts 10).

Natural Law (moral) is a broad and somewhat ambiguous term referring to objective moral standards derived from human *nature* or *reason*. Consequently, proponents considered them universal. (There is a corresponding, but independent, idea, *Natural Law (jurisprudence)*, in the area of legal and political theory, e.g. Thomas Jefferson and his "self-evident" truths: "all men are created equal," "they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," ...)

4. Some believe Paul is affirming Natural Law in Romans 1:18-32.
 - a. In line with this, how does Paul say that God revealed himself? (1:19-20)

- b. What did the Gentiles do with this knowledge? Were they accountable for their decision?
- c. In v.22-28, what specific sins does Paul mention that they committed?
- d. On the other hand, what other sins did they also commit? (1:29-31)

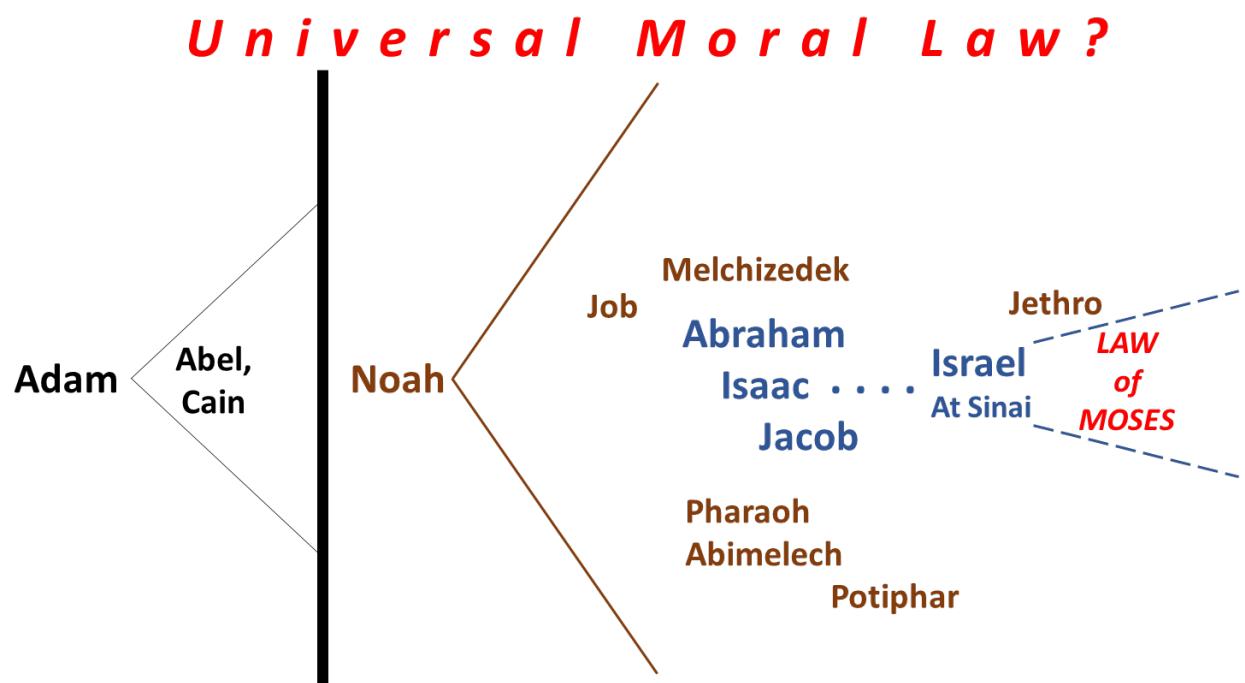
Can these be known by nature or reason?

- e. So, is there Natural Law?
5. In Romans 2:6-16, Paul argues that both Jews and Gentiles will be judged on the basis of what they have done (which shows God's impartiality). If Gentiles can be judged, what must necessarily be true?
6. Read Romans 5:12-14, 20-21
 - a. Did sin exist prior to the giving of the law to Moses?
 - b. Thus, did positive law exist that could be violated?
7. From the above passages is it fair to say that all people of all time have been accountable to laws originating with God? Would it be appropriate to call this law a Universal Moral Law?
8. Consider two of Paul's speeches recorded in Acts.
 - a. *To those at Lystra* – 14:15-17: Does God's allowing the nations "*to walk in their own ways*" contradict the notion of an Universal Moral Law?
Is the concept of Natural Law supported by God "*not leav(ing) himself without witness*"?
 - b. *To the Athenians* – 17:22-31: What does Paul mean by "*the times of ignorance God overlooked*" (v.30)? Is this the same sort of "*ignorance*" Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4:18?

After the Coming of Jesus

9. There are those who say that the Universal Moral Law is still the law by which unbelievers will be judged. That until unbelievers submit to the gospel (i.e., become believers) they are not under law to Christ. What do you think? What does Scripture say?

Thought Question: What are the particulars of the Universal Moral Law?



Lesson 11

Covenant Relationships

Introduction Many see the covenants as central to understanding Scripture, but differing conclusions have been reached. Among Protestant groups, the two main views are called *Covenant Theology* and *Dispensationalism*. The debate between these two systems continues, but common to both views is that they see an antithesis between Law (works) and Grace (faith). Of course, disagreements exist within each of these camps, and, in recent years, progressives within both camps have proposed changes that minimize the differences between the camps. It should also be noted that the Biblical covenants are not a significant organizing principle in Catholic and Lutheran thought.

Covenant Theology "Reformed theology sees the drama of the Bible in the form of two covenants: the *Covenant of Works* made with Adam, and the *Covenant of Grace* between the Father and the Son. After the sin and fall of Adam the *Covenant of Grace* comes into effect. All the covenants of the Old Testament are thus various forms of the one *Covenant of Grace*. Its final form is the *New Covenant* in Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament." [Ramm, p.27-28] Most adherents understand that there was a prior *Covenant of Redemption* that was formed between God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit where they agreed upon how they would relate to mankind.

- Tenets:*
1. God's *Covenant of Works* with Adam required perfect obedience on Adam's part in exchange for eternal life.
 2. All other covenants in the Bible (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New) are within the *Covenant of Grace* that has only one "plan of salvation", i.e., justification by faith alone.
 3. Since one covenant covers most of human history, Covenant Theology sees continuity throughout the Bible. Moral laws (such as the Ten Commandments) remain in effect, unless explicitly annulled. Hence, for example, the tendency to redefine the OT Sabbath as the NT Sunday. Or, circumcision is replaced with infant baptism.
 4. Promises to Israel (e.g. land) are fulfilled in a spiritual manner in the Church.
 5. Covenant Theology sees good works (obedience) as a necessary corollary to faith, but such works are only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 6. Most Covenant Theologians are amillennialists, but some are either postmillennialists or premillenniaists.

Reformed churches are generally those that adhere to Calvinism (e.g. Presbyterians, Reformed Baptists), but many other Protestant groups accept some tenets of Covenant Theology. Theological schools associated with Covenant Theology: Westminster Theological Seminary, Covenant Theological Seminary, and Reformed Theological Seminary. Persons associated with Covenant Theology: Charles Hodge, B.B. Warfield, Herman Bavinck, J.I. Packer, Michael Horton, John Frame, R.C.Sproul.

1. Is there any Biblical justification for the two-fold distinction: *Covenant of Works* and *Covenant of Grace*? [Zwingli, Calvin, Bullinger and other early reformed theologians only spoke of the *Covenant of Grace*.]
2. From the covenant with Noah onwards, *Covenant Theology* sees all the covenants as simply an expression of "one" covenant.
 - a. Can the idea of one covenant be justified?
 - b. The point of this is to emphasize the "oneness" of the "plan of salvation," i.e. that there is a single plan of salvation. What is useful about this concept? What is misleading about this concept?

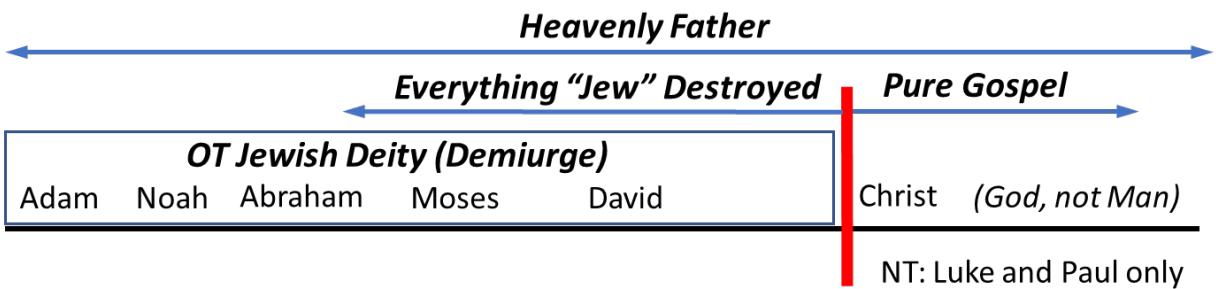
Dispensationalism "Dispensationalism is the system of interpretation and theology contained in the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible. ... The basic thesis of dispensationalism is that there are seven distinct economies of God in which God specifies certain conditions or terms and tests for men for his obedience to these terms. ... With the seven dispensations there are eight covenants. The expert interpreter will not only keep his dispensations separate but he will also be careful to apply covenantal terms only to those whom the covenants are made." Ramm, p.36-37.

- Tenets:**
1. The seven dispensations are often entitled (e.g. Scofield): (1) *Innocence*, (2) *Conscience*, (3) *Civil Government*, (4) *Promise*, (5) *Law*, (6) *Grace*, (7) *Kingdom*. These distinctions are somewhat arbitrary with some Dispensationalists holding to as few as four dispensations and some to as many as eight.
 2. Inherent within Dispensationalism is discontinuity between the dispensations. Laws and promises within one dispensation do not necessarily apply to another.
 3. The crucial distinction held by Dispensationalists is between Israel (in the *Dispensation of Law*) and the Church (in the *Dispensation of Grace*). Thus, OT prophesies generally refer to Israel, not the Church. Thus, the future *Kingdom Dispensation* is required wherein these prophesies can be fulfilled for physical Israel.
 4. Most Dispensationalists are premillennialists as well.

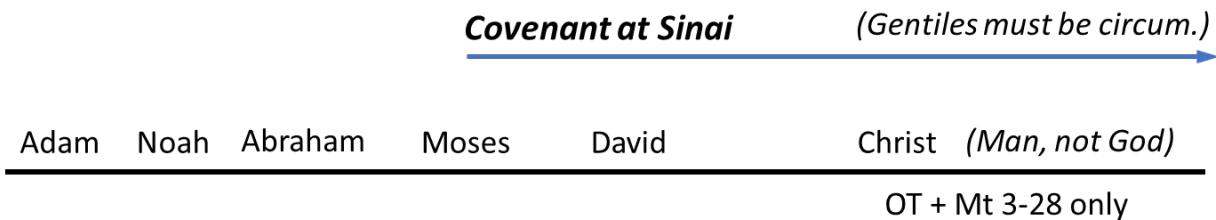
Theological schools associated with Dispensationalism: Dallas Theological Seminary, Moody Bible Institute, Talbot Seminary, Biola University. Persons associated with Dispensationalism: Lewis Sperry Chafer, John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, Charles L. Feinberg, J. Dwight Pentecost, J. Vernon McGee, John C. Whitcomb, Hal Lindsay.

3. Does the fact that Dispensationalists do not agree on the number of dispensations or on the precise point when dispensations change have any bearing on the truthfulness of *Dispensationalism*?
4. Enforcing a strict separation of Law and Grace, the Dispensationalist sees no grace within the *Dispensation of Law* and no law within the *Dispensation of Grace*. (In this regard, they are much like Lutherans, but Dispensationalists quickly qualify this statement.) Is this separation correct? Can grace and law coexist?
5. Some brethren have adopted the *language* of Dispensationalism. Emphasis is given to three dispensations: Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. What point is intended by this distinction? Is this a helpful distinction? What may be misleading about this distinction? For example, how does the covenant with Abraham fit within this scheme?

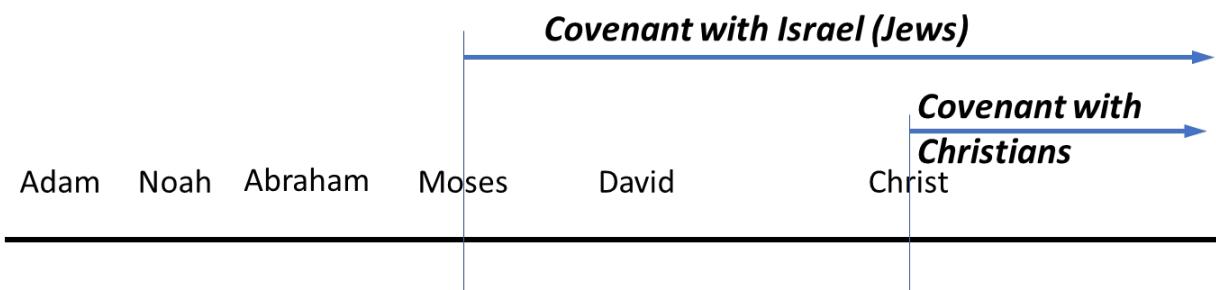
Marcionism (2nd – 5th Century)



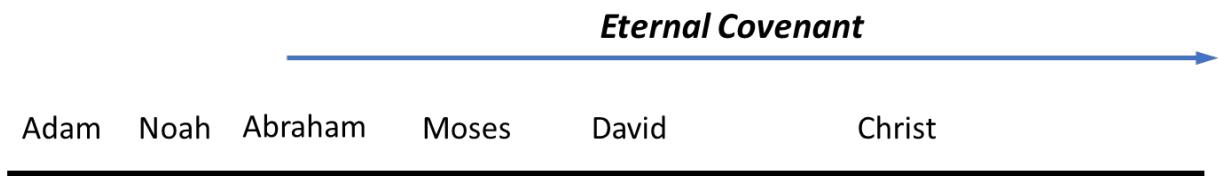
Ebionites (2nd – ? Century)



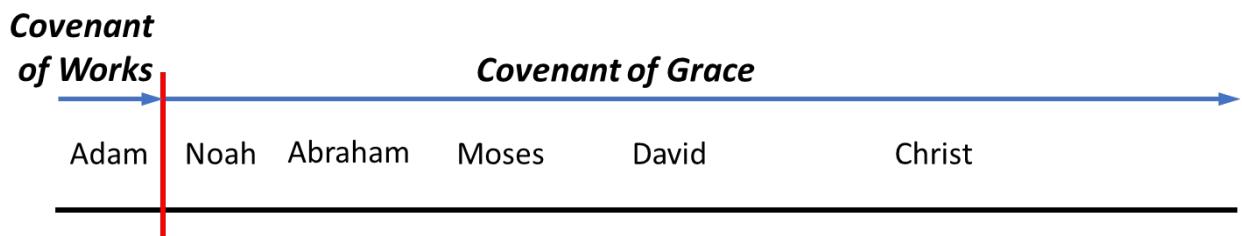
Dual-Covenant View



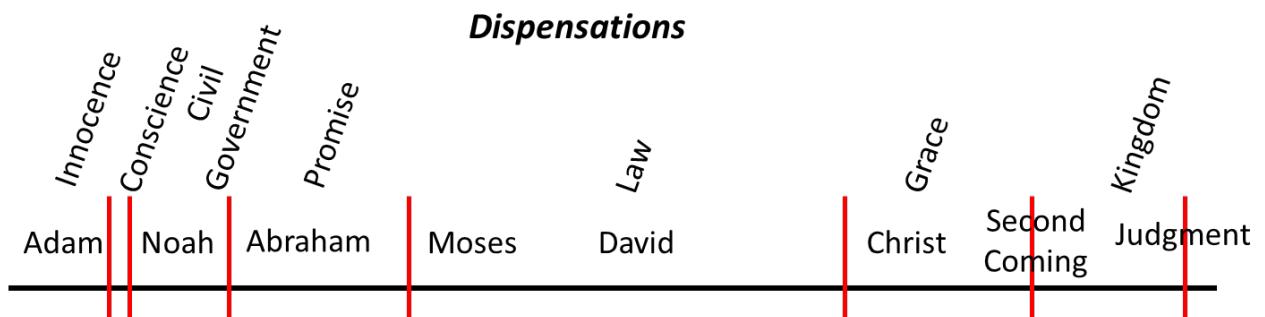
One Covenant



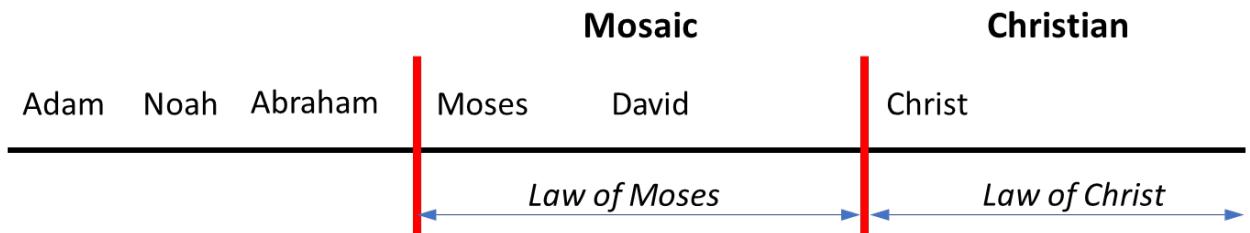
Covenant Theology (Reformed)



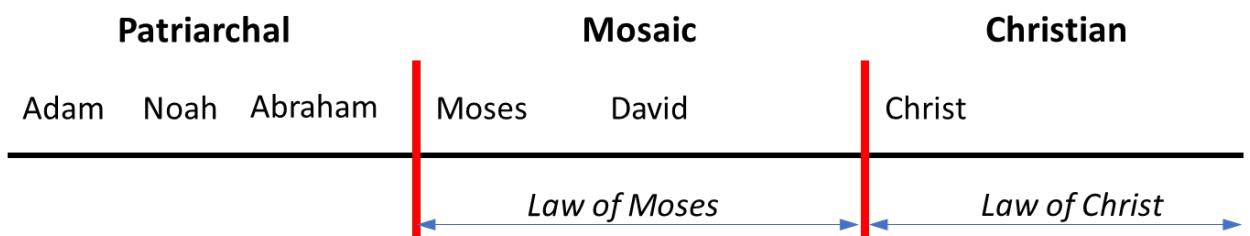
Dispensationalism



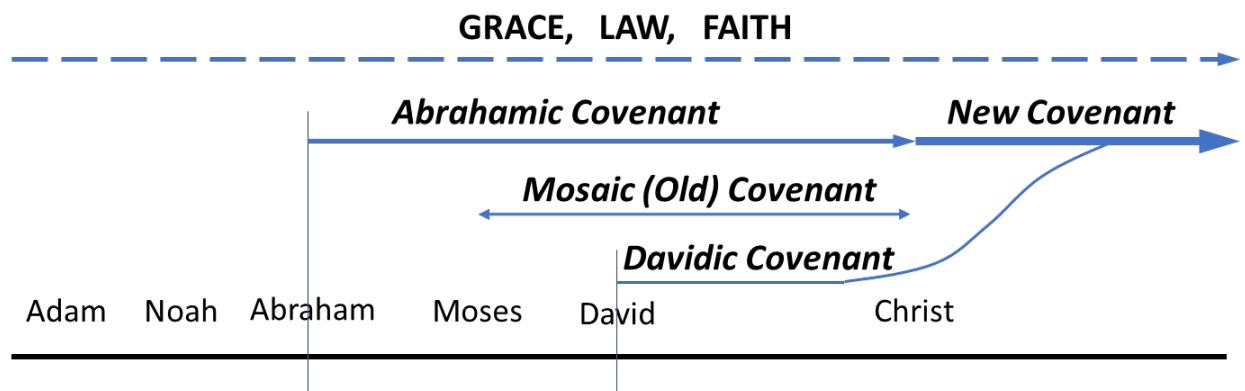
New Covenant Theology



Brethren Dispensations



“My Understanding”



Lesson 12

The Law and the Gospel

Introduction As the writings of the NT make abundantly clear, Christians are expected to live godly lives. Further, if they fail to do so, they will be judged accordingly (Rom 2:2-16; 1 Pet 1:17). By implication, there are laws or rules of conduct that Christians must obey or adhere to. But what are these laws? Are they the same universal moral laws that all people of all time have been expected to observe? Are they the laws written by God and Moses at Mt. Sinai? Or, are they laws enjoined by Jesus and his apostles?

Understanding Paul's view of the Law of Moses and its relation, if any, to the Christian is one of the most debated subjects in Pauline theology. There are four broad options that have been argued.

Lutheran Following Luther, Lutherans believe that the Mosaic Law was legalistic. That is, the Israelites had to keep the Law (i.e. perform works) in order to be justified, but since that was impossible it inevitably led to despair (which is exactly the same despair Luther had as a Roman Catholic priest). But in Christ, the Mosaic Law was abolished. The Law continues to be a guide, but has no part in our salvation.

Reformed The Mosaic law consisted of moral, ceremonial, and civil provisions. While the ceremonial portions (e.g. sacrifices) found their fulfillment in Christ and the civil laws were only applicable when Israel was an independent state, the moral laws were still binding upon the Christian, although they play no part in their justification which is through faith alone. [Some current evangelical scholars wrestle with the role of works in salvation and seem to be giving more emphasis upon obedience.]

Note: Both Lutheran and Reformed Christians speak of the "three uses of the law": 1) Curb – to restrain mankind from sinning, 2) Mirror – it reveals our sinfulness and hence our need for Christ, 3) Guide – serves a guide for Christian living. Lutherans emphasize the second use; Reformed theology emphasizes the third use.

Antinomian Like Lutherans, they believe the Law of Moses was abolished in whole with the coming of Christ. But they do not believe it has any role in the life of a Christian. Christians do good because of their internal desire to be like Christ, not because there is an external law demanding it. In the extreme, some antinomians hold that there is no obligation to do good.

New Covenant The Mosaic Law, as part of the Old Covenant, ended with the death of Christ. Christians are bound to the Law of Christ which was given by Jesus and the Apostles.

Before proceeding it may be helpful to look at a couple of preliminary questions.

What does the NT mean by the term Law? Different expressions are used: law, law of Moses, the law and the prophets, the law of the Lord.

1. It probably most often refers to the laws given by God through Moses: Leviticus, and portions of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy: Mt 22:36; Rom 7:7; 9:4; 10:5.
2. It can include the narrative portions of the Pentateuch: Sarah and Hagar, Gal 4:21-28; implied in the expression the Law and the Prophets, e.g. Mt 5:17; 11:13; Lk 24:44; Acts 13:15.
3. It can even include the Prophets and the Writings: in Jn 10:34 and 15:25 Jesus alludes to passages from Psalms (Ps 82:6 and Ps 69:4, respectively) as something 'written in the law'; in Rom 3:10-18 Paul cites passages from Psalms and Isaiah as examples of what "*the law says*" (3:19); in 1 Cor 14:21 he introduces a quote from Is 28:11-12 as "*in the Law it is written*".
4. It may at times refer generically to any law (although difficult to be certain); law as a principle: Rom 4:15.

What was the Problem with the Law of Moses? Four answers have been suggested:

- 1) The Law was a legalistic system designed for one to achieve righteousness solely by the performance of works. Since justification under the new covenant is through faith in Christ, the Law no longer has a role in salvation.
- 2) There was nothing wrong with the Law, but Mankind was unable to obey the Law perfectly.
- 3) There was nothing wrong with the Law, but with the ways that some Christian Jews used the Law to exclude Gentiles from the people of God.
- 4) The Law could not take away sin. Rather, the Law made sin clear and brought awareness for the necessity of atonement.

The first answer was Luther's, but does not find support in Scripture. This view is in line with the idea that the Law was only external, not a matter of the heart. That is not true. Genuineness of heart has always been expected: Lev 19:17-18; Dt 4:39; 5:28-29; 6:4-6; 10:12-13; 11:13; 2 Kngs 23:25; Ps 9:1; 37:30-31.

Regarding the second answer, the law's inclusion of provisions for forgiveness clearly shows that God did not expect the Law to be kept perfectly. This understanding gave rise to the idea that Christ, by living a perfect life, did what we cannot do, and we are justified by having his *righteousness imputed* to us. There is nothing in Scripture to support this idea. Rather, Scripture emphasizes that Christ died for us (which I think means he took our penalty). Those who give the second answer also argue that in the New Covenant God gives his Spirit to his people to empower them to follow the Law (e.g. Witherington, *Problem*, p.148). The third answer is given by those who hold to what is called the *New Perspective on Paul*.

It is the fourth answer that Paul repeatedly makes. Note the following passages:

Acts 13:39 *and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.*

Romans 3:20 *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

Romans 4:15 *For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.*

Romans 6:14 *For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

Romans 8:1-2 *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

2 Corinthians 3:6 *who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

Galatians 3:10-11, 13, 21 *For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." ... ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" ... ²¹For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.*

Considerations

1. Alexander Campbell preached a famous sermon entitled "Sermon on the Law" where he broke with the traditional Protestant (Reformed) view that moral portions of the Mosaic Law were still binding. He rejected the threefold division of the Law into the Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil. But he operated with the understanding that there has always been a universal moral law that was still binding upon Christians (and which he probably would have agreed was exactly the same

as the moral laws within the Mosaic Law). So, even the command to "*love God with all your heart*" was part of the universal moral law and thus still binding – not because it was in the Mosaic Law.

A later, well-respected restorer, Isaiah B. Grubbs, suggested "And here we lay down a fundamental principle touching the general relation which the Old and New Testaments sustain to each other. This is, that the silence of the New Testament in regard to any positive institution of the Old is, to such institution, the seal of condemnation" *Lard's Quarterly*, Vol. IV, p.27. Grubbs accepted both the threefold division of the Law and the existence of a universal moral law.

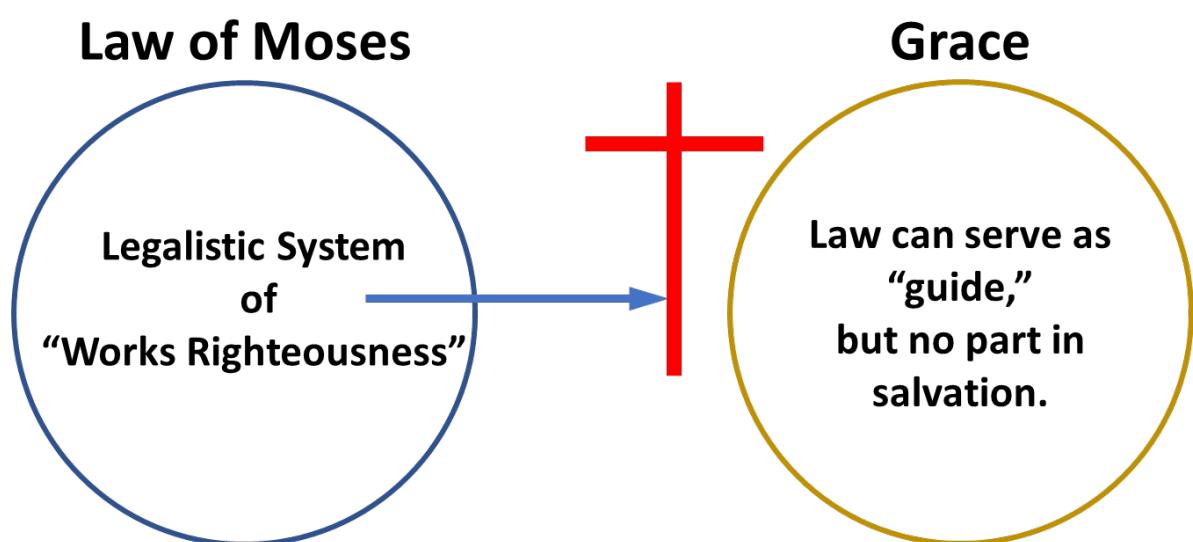
2. Passages such as Colossians 2:14 and Ephesians 2:15 are used to support the idea that the Mosaic Law was abolished. But it is not clear. In Colossians 2, it is the "*record of debt*" that is cancelled. That was a common term for a notice of a payment due (e.g. an I.O.U.). Our sin brought on the debt of death – it was that which was nailed to the cross. And in Ephesian 2:15, the Greek word (*katargeo*) translated "*abolished*" is the same word used translated "*overthrow*" in Romans 3:31: *Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.*
3. There is a possible dilemma in saying the Law of Moses was abolished with the death of Christ. If so, then was the teaching of Christ during his ministry for those under the Old Covenant or was it intended for us under the New Covenant? For example, when a man asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment of the Law (Mt 22:36; Mk 12:28) or when one asked what he must do to inherit eternal life (Lk 10:25), were Jesus' answers appropriate for us today? Or were they only applicable up to the time of his death? What about the Sermon on the Mount? Is it for us, or only for those he was teaching who were under the Old Covenant? Amazingly, there are some (even brethren) who say that all the teaching of Jesus was limited to those under the Old Covenant.
4. The Old Covenant expired with the coming of New Covenant (otherwise why was it called "old"). And the Covenant stipulated that the Israelites had to obey the Law of Moses in order to receive the blessings under that Covenant – which was life in the land. But the cessation of the Covenant does not say, one way or the other, what was to become of the Law itself.
5. Most Christians (including brethren) would accept the proposition that the Law of Christ is essentially the same as the moral provisions of the Law of Moses. (Can you think of a difference regarding how we are to conduct ourselves?) So, regardless of how we relate the Law to the Gospel, our practice in living a life pleasing to God is the same.
6. In fact, note the advice that Paul told Timothy:

¹⁴*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it* ¹⁵*and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁶*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* ¹⁷*that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* [2 Tim 3:14-17]

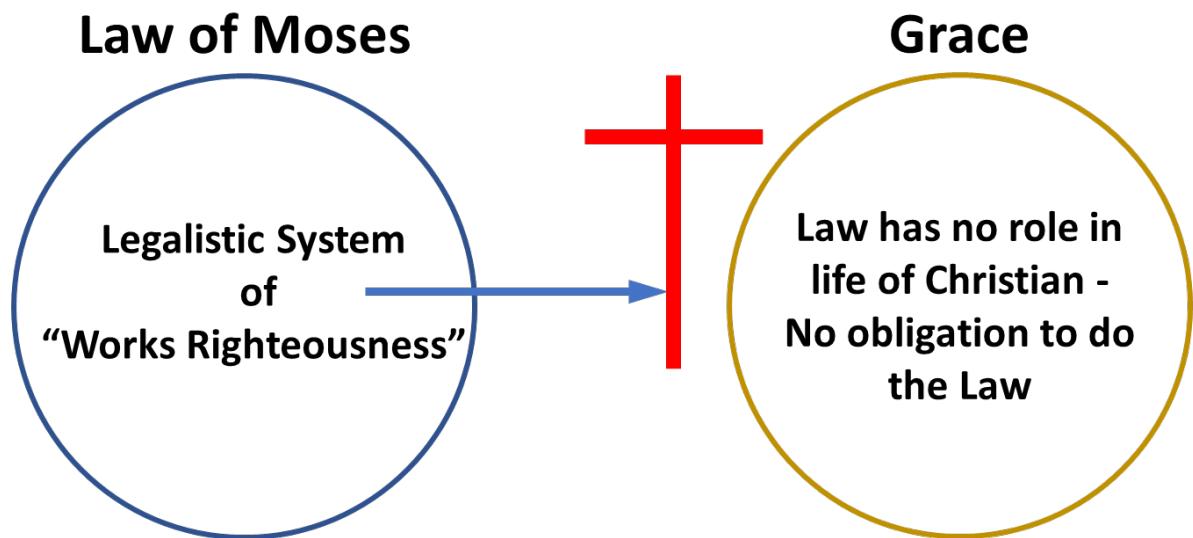
It is worthwhile to note that it is the OT Scriptures that Paul says are "*profitable*" and that makes "*the man of God* (even one like Timothy under the New Covenant, cb) *complete, equipped for every good work.*"

7. Other considerations are given in Lesson 12 of the study on *The Ten Words: A Study of the Ten Commandments* (at broadmoorchurch.com).

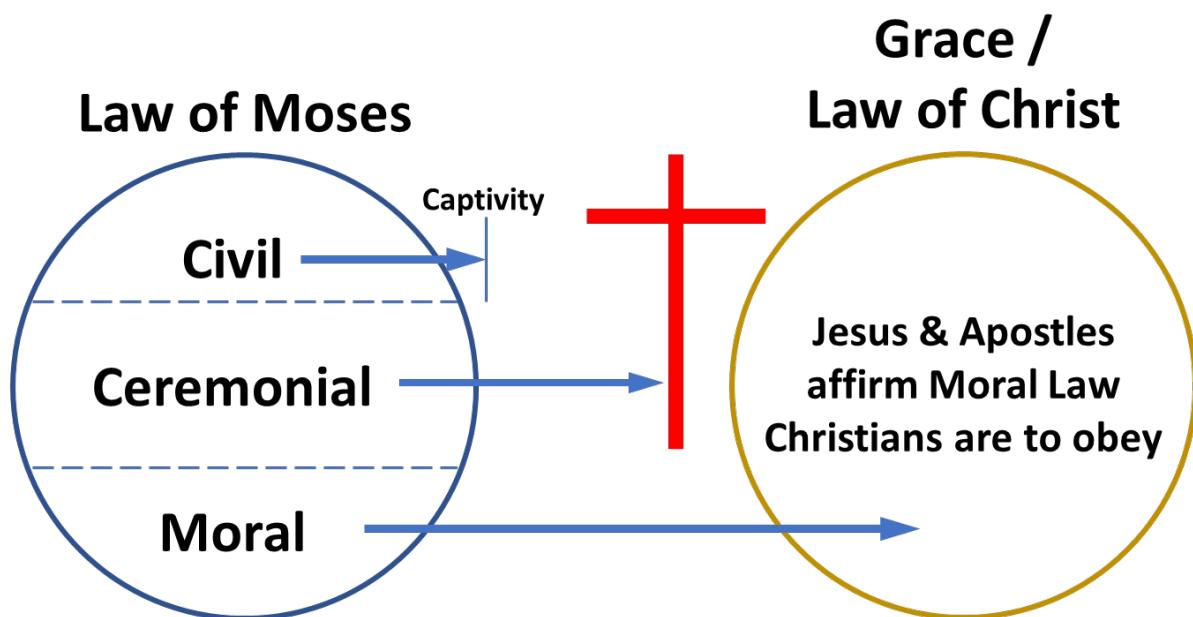
Lutheran



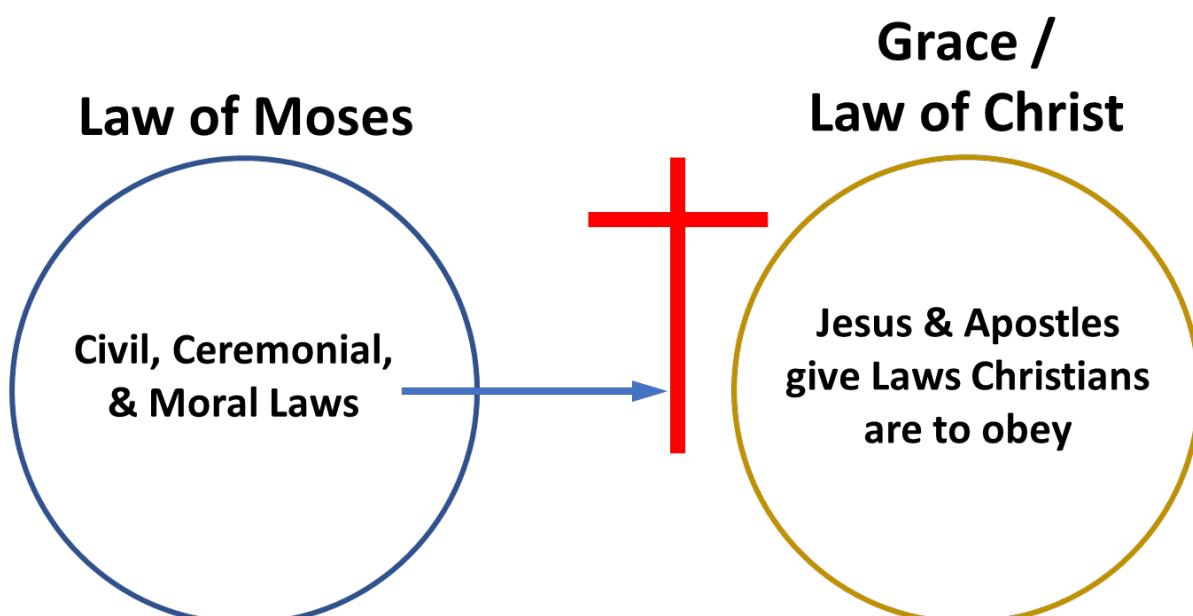
Antinomian

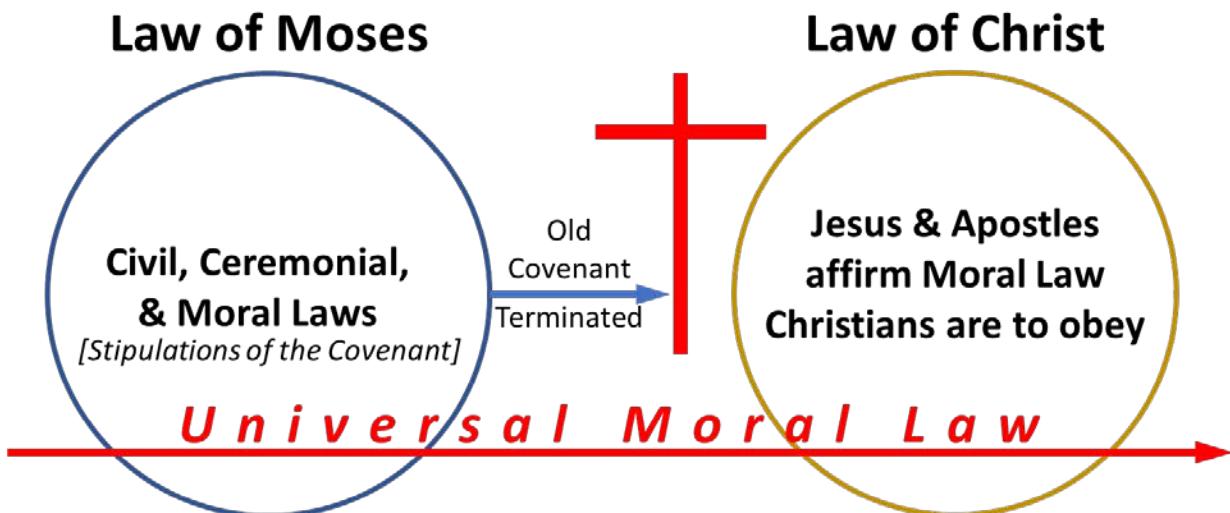


Reformed



New Covenant





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