

I Will Make a Covenant with You: Rediscovering the Fullness of  
Our Covenantal Relationship with God

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## The Edenic Covenant

Both CRC and Presbyterian churches are classified as reformed so a logical question is; what does it mean to be reformed? Simply having roots in the Reformation is not enough to be identified as reformed since all Protestant denominations ultimately derive from the Reformation. To be identified as reformed historically involves holding to a certain set of defining beliefs. Those who identify themselves as reformed have a high view of the sovereignty of God, taking quite literally passages such as Psalm 115:3;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Psalm 115:3** But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

Those who identify themselves as reformed often refer to themselves as Calvinists, or Calvinistic. This does not imply agreement with Calvin on everything, nor does it imply that he or his writings hold any kind of authority, Scripture itself is our only authority, but simply that in large part the writings of Calvin generally reflect our own understanding of the teachings of Scripture. Ironically, Calvin himself would not like the term Calvinist because he did not want anybody to be a follower of him but rather wanted all to be followers of Christ alone.

One key reformed distinctive is holding to covenant theology. While all Christians acknowledge an importance of the covenants God has made with man, covenant theology sees them as central to our understanding of the whole of Scripture. A right understanding of the covenants provides the key to interpreting and understanding the Scriptures. Covenant theology gives a unity to the whole Bible by showing that from beginning to end it tells one unified story of God progressively building his eternal kingdom through the administration of the covenants he has made. Covenant theology emphasizes the corporate nature of God's relationship with his people rather than individual personal relationships. This does not deny that each Christian has a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ but rather recognizes that this personal relationship is within the context of a corporate relationship, the body of Christ which is the Church. Covenant theology also reminds us that although our relationship with God is by grace through faith we nevertheless have obligations before God.

A covenant is a binding contract which lays out the obligations, rights, and benefits of each party. Covenant was a common form of legal relationship in biblical times in the Ancient Near East. There were different forms of covenants with different characteristics, some involving agreements between equals and others involving a relationship imposed by a stronger party on a weaker party, some were conditional and others were unconditional. The biblical covenants show many similarities to the covenants of the cultural settings in which the people of the Bible lived but they also show differences. Historical and archaeological studies can help shed some light on the covenants of the Bible but ultimately each of the biblical covenants must be understood primarily within the context of the Bible itself.

In the Bible we find seven major covenants which God has made with man; Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New. Through these we learn how God relates to his people specifically and to mankind in general. They show us how God is building his kingdom. The one thing they all share is that they are all ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Covenant is how God has chosen to relate to man. In order to deepen our understanding of our relationship with God, and

therefore to deepen the relationship itself we will examine each of these seven covenants beginning with the Edenic Covenant.

The Edenic Covenant, also known as the Covenant of Creation or the Covenant of Works, is found in Genesis 1:26-31, 2:15-17.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." <sup>29</sup> Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup> And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground-- everything that has the breath of life in it-- I give every green plant for food." And it was so. <sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning-- the sixth day.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 2:15** The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Although this is not explicitly identified as a covenant up front, it demonstrates all of the characteristics of a covenant defining the initial relationship between God and man. God, speaking through the prophet Hosea later confirms that this in fact is a covenant;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Hosea 6:7** But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me.

This covenant establishes the rights of mankind, namely dominion over creation;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 1:26** Then God said ... let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

This covenant lists the benefits God will provide for man, namely everything needed for life and life itself in paradise;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 1:29** Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 1:31** God saw all that he had made, and it was very good ...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 2:15** The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

When God's assessment is that creation was very good that in fact means that it was perfect. In our English translations of Genesis 2:15 we read that God placed man in the Garden of Eden. In the original Hebrew this literally says "garden of pleasure" or "garden of delight". In the Septuagint, which was a later Greek translation of the Old Testament often used by Jesus and the New

Testament writers, this literally says “paradise”. Thus God provided life in paradise with all of the needs of life met.

This covenant lays out the obligation of man, namely actively exercising the right of dominion;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 1:28** God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

The Edenic Covenant also included a condition meaning the covenant itself was of a conditional nature;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 2:16** And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;<sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

As we all know the first people, Adam and Eve, failed to keep the one condition of the covenant and so the covenant was broken and paradise was lost;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 3:23** So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.<sup>24</sup> After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:21** that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.<sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Fortunately the Edenic Covenant has a happy ending. Where Adam failed, Christ stepped in and fulfilled the covenant in his place;

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:45** So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

A comparison of Philippians 2:5-11 to the Edenic Covenant confirms that Christ in fact fully and ultimately fulfilled the Edenic Covenant.

- I. In Adam, man was created in the image and likeness of God but in Christ God was made in the likeness of man;
 

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, ..." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Philippians 2:6** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

- II. With Adam God exalted man but in Christ God humbled himself;  
NIV **Genesis 1:26** Then God said, ... let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."  
NAS **Philippians 2:7** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself ...
- III. The Edenic Covenant required obedience or death. Adam disobeyed resulting in death. Christ fulfilled the obligations and conditions, obeying to the death and paying the penalty;  
NIV **Genesis 2:16** And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."  
NIV **Philippians 2:8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!
- IV. Adam was called to exercise the right of dominion but his failure led to the loss of dominion and paradise. By fulfilling the covenant and paying the penalty for Adam's failure Christ regained the exalted position of man and received eternal dominion over creation;  
NIV **Genesis 1:28** God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."  
NAS **Philippians 2:9** Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,

So by his ultimate fulfillment of the Edenic Covenant Christ has regained the lost paradise for the people of God;

NIV **Revelation 21:1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

NIV **Revelation 22:1** Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

Our understanding of the Edenic Covenant and its ultimate fulfillment in Christ gives us hope and strength to live out our lives. It enables us to recognize that suffering is a fact of life because Adam broke the Edenic Covenant. We find hope in the fact that where Adam failed Christ succeeded and

that in Christ we have the guarantee that when he returns we will then spend eternity with him in paradise as intended by God.

## The Adamic Covenant

With the Edenic Covenant we saw that mankind was placed in paradise, given dominion over creation, and provided with everything needed for a good life but as a result of the failure to keep the one condition of the covenant paradise was lost. The good news was that by ultimately fulfilling the Edenic Covenant Christ regained the lost paradise for the people of God. The first step on the road towards this redemption in Christ was the Adamic Covenant.

The Adamic Covenant is essentially a follow up to the Edenic Covenant and stemmed from the failure of man to keep the first covenant. Understanding the Adamic Covenant is the key to understanding how God deals with people. The Adamic Covenant comes on the heels of the fall in the garden and is found in Genesis 3:14-19.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 3:14** And the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly shall you go, And dust shall you eat All the days of your life; <sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." <sup>16</sup> To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you." <sup>17</sup> Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field; <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

As we would expect, this covenant includes obligations but the benefits and rights are absent. With respect to obligations, the Adamic Covenant includes a continuance of the obligations under the Edenic Covenant which were exercising dominion over creation;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 1:28** God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

We see the command to be fruitful and multiply alluded to in Genesis 3:16;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 3:16** To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

We see the obligation of exercising dominion over creation continued in Genesis 3:17-19;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 3:17** To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

The chief difference is that in the first covenant these would have been carried out in the context of the covenantal benefits of life in paradise with everything needed for a good life provided by God whereas in this second covenant they must be carried out in pain and difficulty as paradise has been lost and the covenantal benefits revoked. Not only have the benefits of the first covenant been revoked, but they have in fact been replaced by curses. The Adamic Covenant contains no benefits, instead we see a series of curses which effectively are opposite to the benefits of the first covenant as we see from Genesis 3:16-19.

The promised death that was appended to the obligation of the first covenant (Genesis 2:17) has now become a reality in conjunction with this second covenant (Genesis 3:19);

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 2:17** but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 3:19** By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

The fact that Adam did not die the day he ate of the fruit as God warned cannot be ignored. Typically this sapphire discrepancy is dealt with by noting that he died spiritually and as a consequence all of his descendants are born spiritually dead. This is certainly true as the following scriptures illustrate;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 2:1** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

<sup>NIV</sup> **Matthew 8:22** But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 John 3:14** We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

There can be no doubt that this spiritual death is what God ultimately had in view with his warning of Genesis 2:17. Nevertheless that concept would have been incomprehensible to Adam and the statement of Genesis 3:19 clearly indicates that physical death was the immediate literal meaning. As is often the case in the covenants there is an immediate physical significance and an ultimate spiritual significance. So we cannot dismiss the fact that the warning of Genesis 2:17 included physical death. A closer examination of Genesis 3 shows that in fact God did carry out the forewarned penalty of physical death but in his wisdom and mercy he did so in a manner that would foreshadow the grace of the cross. Notice verse 21;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 3:21** The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

In order to make garments of skin it was necessary for God to first kill animals to obtain those skins. Thus in his first act of grace God took the lives of animals as substitutes for the lives of Adam and Eve. In this way God demonstrated both his justice and mercy as he delivered the death penalty due for sin in way in which the sinner was spared. This act was the first foreshadowing of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. As a teaching lesson this was repeated when God provided a ram for Abraham to sacrifice as a substitute for his only son Isaac, and it was repeated every time a sin offering was made under the Mosaic Law.

Starting in the Garden of Eden, carrying on through the Old Testament and continuing into the church age is the principle that the penalty for any sin is death, both physical and spiritual;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 2:17** but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."

<sup>KJV</sup> **Ezekiel 18:20** The soul that sinneth, it shall die ...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death ...

Also from the beginning, as we have seen, is the grace and mercy of God through his provision of substitutionary sacrifices to bring about forgiveness of the sinner;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 3:21** The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Although no rights were conferred in the Adamic Covenant, there was a promise of deliverance from the curses of the very same covenant. A bridge was provided between the paradise lost by Adam and the paradise won by Christ. This promise lies in Genesis 3:14-15 in what has been called the protogospel. The term protogospel literally means first gospel and reflects the recognition that the first occurrence of the gospel is here;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 3:14** And the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly shall you go, And dust shall you eat All the days of your life; <sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

The seed, or descendant, in view here is Christ as clearly demonstrated in the New Testament;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Hebrews 2:14** Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 John 3:8** He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

By fulfilling the Adamic Covenant Christ redeemed creation and all who would come to him in faith from the curse. He was the sacrifice for sins prefigured in the sacrifice of the animals in the garden, and he was the promised seed who would destroy the serpent and bring eternal redemption.

Besides being the foundation from which the gospel springs, the Adamic Covenant also introduces us to the core of how God relates to people, namely through federal headship. Federal headship refers to the idea that God at times has entered into a covenant with an individual who acts as a legal representative for an entire body of people. The individual with whom God has made the covenant is the federal head who represents and acts on behalf of those under his headship. This idea may seem strange to us in our culture of individualism nevertheless it is biblical. A modern analogy would be the president of a nation making decisions on behalf of the nation. Each citizen of the nation enjoys the benefits or suffers the consequences of the decisions of the president who is acting on behalf of the entire nation even though the citizens themselves played no role in the decision making process.

The Bible identifies two federal heads, Adam and Christ. Each person belongs to one or the other of these federal heads and therefore enjoys the benefits or suffers the consequences of the decisions and actions of their federal head who is acting on behalf of the entire group. A.W. Pink, theologian of the early 1900's, used an agricultural analogy to illustrate the federal headship of Adam. He said;

*God did not deal with mankind as with a field of corn, where each stalk stands upon its own individual root; but He dealt with it as with a tree, all the branches of which have one common root and trunk. If you strike with an axe at the root of a tree, the whole tree falls—not only the trunk, but also the branches: all wither and die. So it was when Adam fell. God permitted Satan to lay the axe at the root of the tree, and when Adam fell, all his posterity fell with him. At one fatal stroke Adam was severed from communion with his maker, and as the result "death passed upon all men."*

The Bible uses a very similar analogy to describe the federal headship of Christ;

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 15:1** "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit ... <sup>4</sup> "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you, unless you abide in Me.

This concept of federal headship with Adam and Christ as the two heads recurs throughout the New Testament;

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:22** For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned ... <sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. <sup>16</sup> And the gift is not like *that which came* through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment *arose* from one *transgression* resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift *arose* from many transgressions resulting in justification. <sup>17</sup> For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. <sup>19</sup> For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

By birth all have Adam for their federal head. The federal headship of Adam is certainly very bleak;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Psalms 51:5** Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Psalms 58:3** Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Job 14:4** Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 2:3** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

It is easy to complain that the concept of federal headship is unfair when it comes to Adam, after all, why are we being punished for what somebody else did? That complaint however is rendered void by the fact that each of us has sinned all on our own;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Not only does our own sin render the complaint void, but it is exclusively because of the principle of federal headship that our own salvation is possible. If God did not deal with us through covenants with federal heads, Christ could not have done anything to redeem us. It is exactly because Christ is our federal head that we are delivered from our sins and brought into a right relationship with God;

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 8:3** For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

<sup>NAS</sup> **Galatians 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us ...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 5:2** and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Peter 3:18** For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God...

Because of the federal headship of Adam we are by birth God's enemies and we live lives of suffering but because of the covenant God made with Adam and fulfilled in Christ we have been released from the curse. When we come to faith in the gospel message we are united to Christ who becomes our new federal head. From that moment forward God no longer sees us in our sin and weakness but in Christ. All that Christ is and all he has done is credited to our account. Although practically we are a work in progress, and we fail regularly to live up to God's holy standard, we can take heart that if we truly have faith in Christ he is our federal head and so in him we are secure.

## The Noahic Covenant

Chronologically, the third covenant God made with humanity was the Noahic Covenant. Noah stands as the link between the world as it was created and as it is now having lived in both;

<sup>KJV</sup> **2 Peter 3:6** Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: <sup>7</sup> But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

On the surface the Noahic Covenant may seem the least significant of all the covenants since at first glance it does not appear to carry any relevance to us but a closer look shows it to be one of the richest of the covenants and indeed deeply relevant. In the Adamic Covenant we saw the first promise of grace to humanity in the promise of the seed. In the Noahic Covenant we find the first demonstration of grace to humanity. This is clearly evidenced through a comparison of Genesis 6:5-8 with Ephesians 2:8;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 6:5** Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." <sup>8</sup> But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Ephesians 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

The word translated *favor* in Genesis 6:8 is literally *grace* and so the deliverance of Noah from the consequences of the sins of mankind was by the grace of God just as is our deliverance from our own sins. Out of this grace God promised to make a covenant with Noah;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 6:17** "And behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. <sup>18</sup> "But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark-- you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

That promise of a covenant was followed by the flood through which God preserved Noah and then God delivered Noah;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 7:24** The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days. **8:1** But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.

This sets the backdrop for the Noahic Covenant which we find in Genesis 9:1-17. Due to the chapter divisions many people miss what in fact triggers the initiation of the covenant. Originally there were no chapter and verse divisions in the Bible. These were added later to make referencing Bible content easier but they are artificial and do not always represent the original flow of thought. Based on the writing itself, Genesis chapter 8 should end at verse 19 and verses 20 and 21 should go

at the start of chapter 9. From our experience with modern books we are used to treating a chapter as a standalone unit of thought so it is almost by instinct that we take Genesis 9:1 as introducing a new line of thought and not as a direct continuation of 8:20-21. We can discover the fullness of the Noahic Covenant of Genesis 9 only if we recognize that it is the response specifically to Genesis 8:20-21;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 8:20** Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup> And the LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

The making of the covenant in chapter 9 was the response to the offering, and this offering like all Old Testament offerings points to the ultimate offering of Christ. The similarity of the offering language of Genesis 8:21 with references to the offering of Christ is very striking;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Ephesians 5:2** and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a soothing aroma.

<sup>Lit.</sup> **2 Corinthians 2:15** For we are an aroma of Christ unto God ...

At minimum the language of Noah's offering points to the offering of Christ, as the sacrifice of the animals in the Garden of Eden pointed to the sacrifice of Christ, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that when God viewed Noah's offering he was viewing the offering of Christ through it. Although the offering of Christ took place at a specific moment in history, it is occasionally spoken of in a perpetual sense;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Revelation 13:8** ... the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 3:25** whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

If this is the case then the covenant that God made with Noah, triggered by Noah's offering, was in reality based on the cross.

Not only does Noah's offering point to the offering of Christ but Noah's deliverance symbolizes our salvation;

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Peter 3:20** who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, <sup>21</sup> and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Furthermore, Noah's fresh start in a cleaned and renewed creation symbolizes ours that is to come;

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

The covenant begins in 9:1 with the first blessings recorded in the Bible since the creation of man, and using nearly the exact same language;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 9:1** And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup> "And the fear of you and the terror of you shall be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 1:28** And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

This shows the continuity of God's relationship with man as aspects of the Edenic Covenant are picked up and extended in the Noahic Covenant. The difference is that now, post fall, this new beginning is on the basis of Christ. The blessings of the first rested upon the original innocence of man whereas the blessings of the second rest upon the grace of God.

The details of the covenant as found in Genesis 9:9-17 are straightforward;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 9:9** "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; <sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. <sup>11</sup> "And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." <sup>12</sup> And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; <sup>13</sup> I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> "And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, <sup>15</sup> and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup> "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." <sup>17</sup> And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

The overarching emphasis is on the fact that this is a one sided covenant made by God where he binds only himself and imposes no conditions or requirements upon man. This covenant is pure unchangeable grace. The remaining question is of the significance of this covenant. What is the significance of the promise to Noah to never again destroy the world with a flood?

To Noah, the immediate significance was the reassurance that he and his family would never go through this again. We need to consider this from Noah's perspective. Prior to the flood it had never rained;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 2:5** ... for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth ... **2:6** But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

The first time Noah experience rain it resulted in the death of every person and animal except those on the ark and the destruction of the entire face of the earth. Imagine the terror the next rain cloud

would bring if it were not for God's promise that he would never again destroy the world with a flood. Then as a reminder of this promise God appointed the rainbow as the sign of the covenant so that Noah. Having a tangible physical sign would serve to strengthen his faith, not unlike the role of the sacraments in the church.

The ultimate significance to us goes far beyond the immediate significance to Noah. The true significance of the Noahic Covenant is that based on his grace and rooted in the offering of Christ God will never bring judgment upon his own people to destroy them. No matter how difficult the circumstances, God will ultimately deliver his own people. This might seem like a reach if it were not for the fact that the Bible itself applies the Noahic Covenant in this very way;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Isaiah 54:5** For your Maker is your husband-- the LORD Almighty is his name-- the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth... <sup>7</sup> "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. <sup>8</sup> In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer. <sup>9</sup> "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. <sup>10</sup> Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

This is all the more powerful when we realize it comes on the heels of Isaiah 53 which carries a prophetic portrait of Christ and the cross more graphic than any found in the gospel accounts. Therefore the spiritual significance of the Noahic Covenant goes far beyond just a promise of no second global flood. It is the promise that God will never withdraw his grace from his people for any reason.

In this covenant we do not find a promise that we will not face adversity, in fact it presupposes that we will. Instead it is the promise that no matter how great our struggles or sufferings, they will not destroy us but rather God will ultimately deliver us. The next time we see a rainbow we should see it as a reminder of God's promise that his grace is unchangeable, unbreakable, unlosable, and eternal;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:38** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## The Abrahamic Covenant

We have seen the thread of grace woven through the Edenic, Adamic, and Noahic Covenants. With the Abrahamic Covenant the focus shifts to the identity of the recipients of the grace of God as the true people of God are now defined. Although this covenant was exclusively between God and Abraham, as we will see if Christ is our federal head then we are the recipients of the promises through the covenant made with Abraham.

The covenant that God would make with Abraham, and the promises therein that would extend to his seed, was foreshadowed through the blessings Noah pronounced on his sons following the establishment of the Noahic Covenant;

<sup>ASV</sup> **Genesis 9:26** And Noah said, Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. <sup>27</sup> God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant.

Noah cursed Ham and his son Canaan because of Ham's actions (9:25). Verses 26 and 27 allude to the fact that the gifts of grace and the blessings of salvation would come through the line of Shem, which would include Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. The descendants of Japheth, the Gentiles, would be full participants in these blessings under the umbrella of the line of Shem as they figuratively dwell in the tents of Shem. Interestingly, verse 26 is the first scriptural reference to God being the God of a specific person, the God of Shem. This is the biblical introduction to God not just as the God of creation but as a personal God in personal relationship with his true people. Noah refers to God by his personal name Jehovah, a name very often used in the context of God's covenantal relationship with his people. He is not God in an abstract and distant sense to his own people, but to his people he is a personal God with a personal name by which his own people can call upon him.

The covenant God made with Abraham was entirely by grace;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 12:1** Now Jehovah said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; <sup>2</sup> And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup> And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

A common misconception is that God called Abraham and made a covenant with him *because* Abraham was a faithful follower of God. On the contrary, God called Abraham and made a covenant with him *in spite of* the fact that Abraham was entirely given over to idolatry and the worship of false gods;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Joshua 24:2** And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, *namely*, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. <sup>3</sup> 'Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the

River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

Thus the Abrahamic Covenant was rooted entirely in the sovereign grace of God as Paul would later allude to;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 11:5** So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. **6** And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Although God made the covenant with Abraham, it was the seed of Abraham who would ultimately receive the promises contained in the covenant;

<sup>ASV</sup> **Genesis 12:7** And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him.

This covenant made by grace was received by faith;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 12:4** So Abram left, as Jehovah had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. <sup>5</sup> He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. <sup>6</sup> Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Hebrews 11:8** By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

This would establish the perpetual pattern through which people enter into a personal relationship with God and which in time would be at the core of the gospel;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 2:8** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith ...

As was the case with the Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant was one sided;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 15:17** And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, *there appeared* a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. <sup>18</sup> On that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

It was a common practice in ratifying a covenant for both parties to sacrifice an animal, cut the carcass in half and then to pass through the middle (e.g., Jeremiah 34:18-19). The fact that here God alone passed through the middle of the sacrifices signifies that he bound himself alone to the covenant. It was a one sided covenant of grace to which God alone was bound.

Like the Noahic Covenant with the rainbow, the Abrahamic Covenant also had a sign, circumcision;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 17:9** Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. <sup>10</sup> This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> For

the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner-- those who are not your offspring.<sup>13</sup> Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.<sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

Abraham was circumcised as a sign of the covenant between him and God, his descendants were to be circumcised to identify themselves as his descendants and heirs of the covenant.

The New Testament reveals that the Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled in Christ, not in the nation of Israel. The Apostle Paul notes that God made his covenant with Abraham 430 years before the nation of Israel even existed. It is a commonly taught error that the Abrahamic Covenant was a covenant with the nation of Israel but it was Christ who was the seed of Abraham to whom the promises applied and all who are in Christ, the seed, are the heirs of those promises regardless of physical descent.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Galatians 3:16** Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.<sup>17</sup> What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.<sup>NIV 29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 9:7** Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."<sup>8</sup> In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.

The fact that not all physical descendants of Abraham were included in the covenant was apparent almost from the beginning. Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, and Isaac was a descendant according to the promise while Ishmael was rejected. Christ was the promised seed and all in Christ are joint heirs of the promise.

It is true that circumcision was a sign of the covenant with Abraham, and that all of his physical descendants were required to be circumcised but it is important to note that circumcision was a sign following the blessings of the covenant, not the source of them;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 4:9** Is this blessing only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.<sup>10</sup> Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!<sup>11</sup> And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.<sup>12</sup> And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

In other words, the promises were not exclusive to the nation of Israel since Gentiles of faith are also heirs of the promise in fulfilment of the blessing of Noah that Japheth would dwell in the tents of Shem. Similarly the promises were not to all in the nation of Israel because physical circumcision

alone did not make one an heir, but faith like Abraham was also required. This reaffirms the fact that Christ was the promised seed and all in Christ are joint heirs of the promise. One could object that Genesis 17:14 states that all males who are not circumcised are cut off from the covenant. This seemingly poses a problem for Gentiles who do not take the sign of the covenant. It also creates a situation where females are seemingly second class participants in the covenant since they cannot take the sign of the covenant. These problems are resolved when we learn that the physical circumcision of the Abrahamic Covenant, like so many other elements of the Old Testament, was a mere shadow outwardly pointing towards an inward reality;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Colossians 2:11** In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,

There is no need for outward circumcision when the true circumcision is inward, paving the way for the full and equal inclusion of Gentiles and females in the kingdom of God. For this reason Paul could rejoice that;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

God would ultimately deliver the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant to his seed, Christ. All who are in Christ are heirs of the promise, and there are no heirs outside of Christ. Christ is our federal head, not because we chose him, but because God in his grace chose us as he did Abraham. As with Abraham, God did not choose us *because* of our virtue but *in spite of* our sin. Faith like Abraham's, a faith that bears the fruit of obedience, is our evidence that we are heirs of the promise in Christ.

Although he would physically become a father of many nations, his descendants would possess Canaan, and kings would arise from him, the true promise was ultimately the spiritual one that through his seed God would call for himself a people by grace through faith who would dwell in his kingdom as his people forever. This was the land God promised to lead Abraham to;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Acts 7:5** He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Hebrews 11:9** By faith Abraham made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.<sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. **16** ... they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Like Abraham, and as his spiritual descendants, we're on a spiritual journey to a place we don't know. We don't know where it is, or how to get there and at times we struggle and seem lost but like Abraham we believe God and trust him to get us there. Abraham didn't get to the promised land in his lifetime but by the grace and faithfulness of God he did arrive;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Matthew 22:31** "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying,<sup>32</sup> 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 8:56** Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

Abraham arrived and so will we.

## The Mosaic Covenant

We saw that ultimately the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant was that in Christ God would call for himself a people by grace through faith who would dwell with him in his kingdom as his people forever. Now we fast forward 430 years to the covenant God made at Sinai through Moses with the nation of Israel, the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant.

Correctly understanding the Mosaic Covenant is critical to correctly understanding every single book in the Bible, Old and New Testament, after the book of Genesis. More importantly, correctly understanding the Mosaic Covenant is critical to correctly understanding how God has dealt with mankind from the time of Sinai onwards. The Mosaic Covenant does not cancel, alter, or replace the Abrahamic Covenant but rather is subservient to it. There were two distinct purposes of the Mosaic Covenant. One was that it provided the system of religion and government for the nation of Israel. The second was that it provided the system of preparation for the coming of Christ.

The Mosaic Covenant served as the system of religion and government for the nation of Israel. It was never intended as a means of salvation for either the nation or for individuals. This is evidenced by the fact that it was made following their deliverance from their bondage in Egypt to become the visible people of God, not as the condition for it;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Exodus 19:1** In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt-- on the very day-- they came to the Desert of Sinai. <sup>2</sup> After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses went up to God, and Jehovah called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: <sup>4</sup> 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Deuteronomy 4:37** Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength, <sup>38</sup> to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Deuteronomy 7:7** Jehovah did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. <sup>8</sup> But it was because Jehovah loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Thus the Mosaic Covenant was made with the nation after it had been called and delivered from Egypt to instruct the nation how to live as the people of God in the promised land in partial fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant. The purpose was not to show them *how to become* the nation of God but *how to live as* the nation of God which they now were. The covenant was a covenant of works for the nation as a whole;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Exodus 19:5** Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, <sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

The language of address including *my treasured possession, a kingdom, a holy priesthood*, is clearly collective language addressing the Israelites as a nation and not individually. The opening words, *now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant*, show that is a covenant conditional upon them doing the covenantal works God commands of them. The collective response of the Israelites demonstrates that they understood this covenant was with the nation as a whole, that it was conditional, and that they accepted the terms;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Exodus 19:8** And all the people answered together and said, "All that Jehovah has spoken we will do!" ...

If the nation would be collectively faithful to this covenant, God would bless the nation;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Deuteronomy 7:12** If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then Jehovah your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your forefathers. <sup>13</sup> He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land-- your grain, new wine and oil-- the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land that he swore to your forefathers to give you. <sup>14</sup> You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless, nor any of your livestock without young. <sup>15</sup> Jehovah will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you. <sup>16</sup> You must destroy all the peoples Jehovah your God gives over to you. Do not look on them with pity and do not serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you.

As was the case with the institution of the covenant itself, the language of the covenantal blessings is collective in nature indicating they only apply to the nation collectively and not to individuals (e.g., *you will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless*). Recognizing that the promised blessings and curses applied only to the nation as a whole and not to individuals resolves a number of difficulties which are summed up by the writer of Ecclesiastes;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ecclesiastes 7:15** In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.

In the Mosaic Covenant blessings are promised for obedience and curses for disobedience and yet there are many righteous who suffer and many wicked who prosper. This has led many to conclude that God is at best indifferent and at worst unjust. Habakkuk lamented the wickedness which was rampant in the nation and challenged God to act in faithfulness to the covenant;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Habakkuk 1:1** The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received. <sup>2</sup> How long, O Jehovah, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? <sup>3</sup> Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. <sup>4</sup> Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

God answered with an answer that seemed worse than the original problem;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Habakkuk 1:5** "Look at the nations and watch-- and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. <sup>6</sup> I am raising up the

Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own.

Habakkuk was shocked at the thought of God using an even more wicked pagan nation to carry Judah off into captivity as punishment. This seemed to be contrary to the Abrahamic Covenant and seemed to subvert justice even more. By repeatedly addressing God by his personal covenant name of Jehovah Habakkuk is implicitly appealing to the covenant keeping faithfulness of God;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Habakkuk 1:12** Art Thou not from everlasting, O Jehovah, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. Thou, O Jehovah, hast appointed them to judge; And Thou, O Rock, hast established them to correct. <sup>13</sup> *Thine* eyes are too pure to approve evil, And Thou canst not look on wickedness *with favor*. Why dost Thou look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why art Thou silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?

When this prophecy was eventually fulfilled, the righteous remnant within the nation experienced the same curses at the hands of the Babylonians as did the wicked about whom Habakkuk lamented. The same thing happened earlier when the Assyrians took the northern kingdom of Israel into exile. The combination of righteous individuals suffering while wicked individuals prosper, along with righteous individuals suffering the same horrors as the wicked when other nations were brought against God's people in judgment is utterly unintelligible if the Mosaic Covenant applied to individuals. All of these difficulties however are resolved with the recognition that it was strictly a national covenant. It wasn't the sins of individuals that led to the repeated downfalls of the nation, it was the failure of the nation collectively to deal properly with these sins that led to the downfall. The nation was punished for its collective disobedience and tolerance of sin. Because nations are temporary the blessings and curses of the covenant were executed in this world. When the nation collectively was faithful it was blessed and prospered as a nation and when it collectively was unfaithful it was cursed and suffered. This is why superficial obedience of the nation was rewarded. For individuals obedience must flow from a heart of faith and that would be rewarded in the world to come thus the temporal suffering of the righteous would be made right as they were rewarded in the world to come. Similarly the sins of the wicked would be properly dealt with in the world to come thus the temporal prosperity of the wicked would be made right and they would be punished in the world to come. The Mosaic Covenant did not replace the Abrahamic Covenant and true believers were still ultimately dealt with individually under the covenant of grace.

Although the Mosaic Covenant was a covenant of works that does not mean it did not include a provision for grace for the nation;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Leviticus 26:40** "But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers-- their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, <sup>41</sup> which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies-- then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, <sup>42</sup> I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land... <sup>46</sup> These are the decrees, the laws and the regulations that Jehovah established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelites through Moses.

In his grace God left room for repentance of the nation. Under the Mosaic Covenant there was provision for the nation to be restored to a state of blessing if they collectively repented. It was on this very basis that Habakkuk appealed to God;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Habakkuk 3:1** A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. <sup>2</sup> Jehovah, I have heard the report about Thee *and* I fear. O Jehovah, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.

Thus by recognizing that the Mosaic Covenant was strictly a national covenant, and that individuals would be dealt with in the world to come we resolve these age old difficulties and recognize with the Psalmist that God is not indifferent or unjust but in fact his covenant keeping faithfulness, or lovingkindness as the Old Testament refers to it, is perfect;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Psalm 118:1** Give thanks to Jehovah, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting. <sup>2</sup> Oh let Israel say, "His lovingkindness is everlasting." <sup>3</sup> Oh let the house of Aaron say, "His lovingkindness is everlasting." <sup>4</sup> Oh let those who fear Jehovah say, "His lovingkindness is everlasting."

<sup>ASV</sup> **Psalm 103:17** But the lovingkindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, And his righteousness unto children's children;

<sup>ASV</sup> **Psalm 136:1** Oh give thanks unto Jehovah; For he is good; For his lovingkindness *endureth* for ever.

Many of the problems Jesus addressed in his interactions with the Pharisees and Sadducees were the result of the people personalizing what was a national covenant. This covenant could not save nor was it intended to do so. The problem was that Israel elevated the Mosaic Covenant to the position that the covenant of grace should have held and ended up making what was strictly a national covenant the grounds for individual relationships with God. The covenant was twisted from showing how the nation should live as the people of God into the means of salvation for individuals. This is exemplified in a well-known exchange between Jesus and a Jewish scholar of the Mosaic Covenant;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Luke 10:25** On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" <sup>27</sup> He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" <sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

Many have taken passages such as this as evidence that Jesus taught a salvation by works. Those who hold this position fall into the same error as the lawyer in this passage which is averted by the recognition of the national nature of the covenant. Jesus is not teaching that we need to keep the Mosaic Covenant to inherit eternal life, but rather Jesus is granting the lawyer the error of personalizing the covenant and then pointing out that if he wants to use it as a means of eternal life it would be necessary to keep it perfectly. *If* he were to keep it perfectly he would live. The problem is he will *not* do this and therefore he will *not* live. We misunderstand Jesus if we take his words as pointing towards the Mosaic Covenant as the means of individual salvation, his words are implicitly pointing us away from it as the means of salvation and instead towards the grace of God. James addresses both the folly and the impossibility of attempting to gain salvation through the Mosaic Covenant;

<sup>NIV</sup> **James 2:10** For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

Paul puts the final nail in the coffin;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Thus the words of Jesus "*Do this and you will live*" is true in principle but impossible in practice and therefore powerfully points us away from works and towards grace as the only grounds for a relationship with God.

Nevertheless this error has persisted. It crept into the early church and even today there are those who view the Mosaic Covenant, or the Law, as a pathway to individual salvation. Paul makes it clear that this is not now nor ever has been the case;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Galatians 2:16** nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

He then goes on to use the analogy of Abraham with Hagar and Sarah to steer everyone away from the Mosaic Covenant as a means of salvation showing that if one attempts that the result will not be salvation but slavery;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Galatians 4:21** Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? <sup>22</sup> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. <sup>23</sup> His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. <sup>24</sup> These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. <sup>25</sup> Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. <sup>26</sup> But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. <sup>27</sup> For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband." <sup>28</sup> Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. <sup>29</sup> At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. <sup>30</sup> But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." <sup>31</sup> Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Not only was the Mosaic Covenant strictly a national covenant for Israel, never intended for personalization, but it was subservient to the Abrahamic Covenant. Furthermore it was temporary and would expire with Christ;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Galatians 3:16** The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. <sup>17</sup> What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. <sup>18</sup> For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. <sup>19</sup> What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come ...

The covenant was temporary and was only due to last until the promised seed of Abraham, who we have seen is Christ, had come. Jesus affirms this fact himself. The public teaching ministry of Jesus began with the Sermon on the Mount in which he said;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Matthew 5:17** "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."

Jesus concluded his public ministry on the cross with these words;

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 19:28** After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I am thirsty ... <sup>30</sup> When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.

A comparison of the underlined words which bracket his ministry on Earth points to the conclusion that the Mosaic Covenant came to an end on the cross. In other words, as Paul said in Galatians 3:19, with Christ the promised seed of Abraham the planned duration of the Mosaic Covenant had come to an end. It had served God's purposes and now in Christ its goals had been fully achieved and it had come to an end;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 10:4** For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

In addition to providing the system of religion and government for the nation of Israel, the Mosaic Covenant also provided the system of preparation for the coming of Christ. This covenant kept the nation of Israel separate from all other nations in order to maintain the pure lineage of Shem and of Abraham from which Christ would come in order to bring to pass the blessing of Noah upon his son and the ultimate fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The failure of Israel as a nation to keep the Mosaic Covenant was not a failure in God's plan, he in fact predicted that this would happen;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Deuteronomy 32:35** It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them."

On a side note, this verse was the central text of Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. This sermon played an important role in the Great Awakening of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, prompting many people to turn to God in repentance seeking grace in Christ, demonstrating that the Mosaic Covenant continues to bear fruit for the kingdom of God long after the national failure of the nation of Israel. The failure of Israel was not a failure of the covenant itself. As Paul would write after the termination of the national covenant with Israel;

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:8** We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

The Mosaic Covenant was necessary to point us to Christ, the promised seed of Abraham and our redeemer and it continued to serve that purpose even after its time as a national covenant had come to an end;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Galatians 3:23** But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

This covenant continues to teach mankind about sin, and therefore about our need of a savior;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 3:20** because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 7:7** What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. **12** So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

By teaching us about sin it continues to teach us how to live as God's people, striving for holiness with a humility that depends upon God's grace. Perhaps surprisingly to many, this covenant also teaches us how to truly love;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Matthew 22:34** Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. <sup>35</sup> One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Jesus affirms that our two greatest responsibilities in day to day life are to love God and love our neighbor. He points out that the entire corpus of commandments and admonitions contained within this covenant and expounded upon by the prophets are centered on these two responsibilities. In other words this covenant teaches us in practical and tangible ways how we can fulfill these responsibilities. Loving God and neighbor does not merely entail feeling warmly towards them but rather in conducting ourselves within our relationships in a way that reflects the standards set out by God. We don't keep God's commandments to earn salvation but in gratitude for our salvation. In Christ God didn't free us from obedience, he freed us for obedience. We keep God's commands because we love him, and we love him by keeping his commands;

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 14:15** "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 14:21** "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 15:10** "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 John 5:2** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. <sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

All of the elements related to the Mosaic Covenant; the exodus from bondage in Egypt, the sacrificial system, the priesthood, the rites of cleanliness and holiness, the temple, and the festivals are all shadows pointing us to the reality of Christ (see for example Hebrews 10:1-25). Christ has led us on an exodus from our bondage to sin into the true promised land of the kingdom of heaven, he himself upon the cross was the ultimate sacrifice, he is our great high priest, in him we are holy and

clean, and collectively as the body of Christ we are the true temple of God in the Holy Spirit. Even the nation of Israel itself was a mere shadow pointing to the reality, the eternal kingdom of God. Reflecting this Paul refers to the Church as the Israel of God;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Galatians 6:16** Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

If it were not for this national covenant with the nation of Israel we could never understand the fullness and the true nature of our relationship with God in Christ. Thus the Mosaic Covenant points us to the reality which is that in Christ we have been brought;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Hebrews 12:23** to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect

The Mosaic Covenant was never a means of salvation, 430 years earlier the Abrahamic Covenant taught us that salvation was by grace through faith. It was strictly a national covenant and so the blessings and curses only applied to the nation of Israel not to individuals and as a covenant it expired with Christ, the promised seed of Abraham and of the Adamic Covenant. It did however maintain the pure lineage of Shem and Abraham through whom Christ would come. It also kept the nation of Israel separate through whom God would send the prophets and apostles who would record the word of God through the writing of Scripture. It points us to Christ, teaches us about sin and shows us our need of a savior, reveals the holiness of God, and teaches us how to love God and neighbor. It reminds us that Christ's obedience has not rendered ours unnecessary but makes it acceptable in all its weakness if it comes from faith. As a covenant, the Mosaic Covenant came to an end with Christ but it continues to lead us to the gospel, makes the gospel intelligible, and by the grace of God through the Holy Spirit compels us to embrace the gospel through faith to our salvation and to the glory of God. The law is good if one uses it properly.

## The Davidic Covenant

We saw that the Mosaic Covenant was a system of religion and government for the nation of Israel and it was a system of preparation for the coming of Christ. It was strictly a national covenant and so the blessings and curses do not apply to individuals and as a covenant it expired with Christ. Although it was never a means of salvation, it does teach us of sin and our need for a savior, and it teaches us how to love. As we look at the Davidic Covenant it will be important to keep these things in mind if we are to understand its true significance.

To understand the context of the Davidic Covenant we need a brief recap of the history of the nation of Israel from the time of Moses to the time of David. Because of their persistent disobedience in the wilderness the first generation that left Egypt was cursed to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all who left Egypt as adults died. Moses forfeited his right to lead the people across the Jordan into the promised land because of an act of disobedience on his part. After the last of the first generation died Joshua was appointed by God to lead the people across the Jordan;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Joshua 1:1** Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of Jehovah that Jehovah spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. <sup>3</sup> "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. <sup>4</sup> "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun, will be your territory. <sup>5</sup> "No man will *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. <sup>6</sup> "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

The book of Joshua chronicles the beginning of the conquest of the promised land under the leadership of Joshua. Under his leadership the nation was faithful to God and they prospered in their conquest. The book closes with the death of Joshua;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Joshua 24:31** And Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of Jehovah which He had done for Israel.

The book of Joshua is followed by the book of Judges which chronicles the ongoing conquest under the leadership of various judges who served as leaders of the nation. This marked a period of drastic ups and downs. The people would fall away from God, face a time of curses, repent, and then God would appoint another judge to deliver them from their oppressors and this cycle would repeat. The book of Judges ends with this ominous note;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Judges 21:25** In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

The book of Judges is followed by 1 Samuel which records the life of Samuel. Samuel was the last of the judges of Israel. He was the son of Hannah, born as the answer to her prayers for a child and in so gratitude she dedicate him to the service of God;

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Samuel 1:27** I prayed for this child, and Jehovah has granted me what I asked of him. <sup>28</sup> So now I give him to Jehovah. For his whole life he will be given over to Jehovah." And he worshiped Jehovah there.

While serving under Eli the priest Samuel was personally called to service by God and he would become judge over Israel. Arguably Samuel was the best leader of Israel since Moses but late in life he appointed his sons as his successors, unfortunately his sons were bad;

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Samuel 8:1** And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. <sup>3</sup> His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.

This greatly concerned the people of Israel and prompted them to ask for a king;

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Samuel 8:4** Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; <sup>5</sup> and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations."

Understandably Samuel took this personally but God assured him that this was just a continuation of the longstanding pattern of the nation rejecting God himself;

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Samuel 8:6** But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to Jehovah. <sup>7</sup> And Jehovah said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. <sup>8</sup> "Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day-- in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods-- so they are doing to you also

God granted their request by appointing Saul as the first king of Israel. From a human perspective he was everything they could want, he was a good looking powerful giant of a man;

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Samuel 9:1** There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup> He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites-- a head taller than any of the others.

Although physically he was all they could want in a king, he was a colossal failure. His cowardice showed from the beginning. At his public coronation this mighty giant of a man could not initially be found because he was hiding in a pile of luggage;

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Samuel 10:22** So they inquired further of Jehovah, "Has the man come here yet?" And Jehovah said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the baggage." <sup>23</sup> They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others.

For a time Saul relied upon God and he and the nation had success against their enemies. In time however he would fall into significant disobedience which would ultimately lead to his demise as king and constant war for the nation. His cowardice would rear its ugly head again in the face of the challenge of Goliath;

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Samuel 17:10** Again the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together." <sup>11</sup> When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

This giant king of Israel given to the nation at their request to deliver them from their enemies cowered in the face of this challenge. As everyone knows, instead of being delivered by their physically impressive king they were delivered by the much younger and less physically impressive David. David demonstrated that deliverance did not depend upon physical might but rather upon the might of God;

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Samuel 17:45** Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. <sup>46</sup> "This day Jehovah will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,

In time Saul would die and the king chosen in light of what the nation wanted would be replaced by David chosen in light of what God wanted. On the surface it may look like the choice of Saul was a failure on God's part and that David was some sort of contingency plan. To the contrary, God intentionally chose Saul, destined to fail, as punishment for the nation for their rejection of God as king;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Hosea 13:11** I gave you a king in My anger, And took him away in My wrath.

The people sinned by rejecting God as king in favor of a human king and so the punishment was that they were given a human king and forced to live with the results. They were not a normal nation, they were the special covenant nation of God himself but they weren't happy with that, they wanted to be like the other nations so God gave them a taste of that. This reflects a common mode of punishment by God. Often the punishment for sin is that God removes his restraining influence and turns the sinner over completely to their sin so that they will suffer the natural consequences of their sin. In other words, the punishment for sin is often being allowed to sin more vigorously as the following examples demonstrate;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Exodus 9:12** But Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as Jehovah had said to Moses.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 1:24** Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. <sup>25</sup> For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen ... <sup>28</sup> And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

It is somewhat ironic that the downfall of national Israel began and finished with their rejection of God as their king. In 1 Samuel they rejected God as king for the first time by asking for a human king so they could be like the other nations. At the trial of Jesus they rejected God as king for the final time by proclaiming as a nation that they had only one king, Caesar;

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 19:14** It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. <sup>15</sup> But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered. <sup>16</sup> Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

The kingship of David marked the end of God's punishment for the people's request for a king and signaled a return to the ongoing fulfilment of the land promise under the Abrahamic Covenant. There are two accounts of the Davidic Covenant, the original in 2 Samuel 7:8-17 and a later account in 1 Chronicles 17:1-15. We will focus primarily on the original account of 2 Samuel. The Davidic Covenant is effectively an outworking of both the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants as God appoints David and his descendants as king over the nation in the promised land.

The language of the calling of David is reminiscent of the language of the calling of Abraham and is an application of the Abrahamic Covenant to set apart and bless Abraham and his descendants of promise;

<sup>NAS</sup> **2 Samuel 7:8** "Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, "Thus says Jehovah of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be ruler over My people Israel. <sup>9</sup> "And I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth.

David would be a tool for the outworking of the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant and for the administration of the Mosaic Covenant as the system of religion and government for the nation of Israel in the promised land;

<sup>NAS</sup> **2 Samuel 7:10** "I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, <sup>11</sup> even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Jehovah also declares to you that Jehovah will make a house for you.

The covenant included the central promise that a descendant of David would be king over God's people forever;

<sup>NAS</sup> **2 Samuel 7:12** "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, <sup>15</sup> but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. <sup>16</sup> "And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.""

We should note that neither the 2 Samuel nor the 1 Chronicles account of the establishment of this covenant actually use the word covenant. Nevertheless the language is certainly covenantal and scripture elsewhere confirms that this in fact is a covenant;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Psalm 89:3** "I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, <sup>4</sup> I will establish your seed forever, And build up your throne to all generations."

Interestingly this is the third covenant in which the central promise ultimately will be fulfilled in a seed. The Adamic and Abrahamic covenants would also be fulfilled through a seed, which as we saw was Christ and as we will see this is also the case here. Christ is the promised seed of the Adamic, Abrahamic, and Davidic Covenants. Contrary to the dispensationalists who wrongly view the church as an aside in God's plan for Israel, a close look at the covenants plainly demonstrates that Israel is an aside in God's eternal plan for his people which has been centered from the beginning on Christ the promised seed and his body the Church which is made up of all true believers from all ages and all nations.

Since we have already learned that the Mosaic Covenant, and therefore the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles, expired with Christ it must necessarily follow that the Davidic Covenant cannot ultimately be about kings of the nation of Israel. There is a clue to this found implicitly in a comparison of the two accounts of the Davidic Covenant. These two accounts contain a subtle yet crucial difference related to the sonship of the descendant of David;

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Samuel 7:14** 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. <sup>15</sup> But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Chronicles 17:13** I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor.

The difference is the underlined sentence in 2 Samuel which is completely missing in 1 Chronicles. Tradition tells us that 2 Samuel was written by Jeremiah around 586 BC while Ezra was written about a century later. Although we cannot know the authorship for certain, it is generally agreed that 2 Samuel is exilic while 1 Chronicles is post-exilic. This establishes a very different purpose for each. 2 Samuel was written to explain to the people the reason for the exile, the unfaithfulness of the people and the failure of the kings to administer the Mosaic Covenant. Solomon was the impetus that set the wheels of failure in motion. Contrary to the popular notion that he was a hero, Solomon arguably was one of the most wicked kings and was unquestionably apostate. He placed his glory above the glory of God and under the influence of his foreign wives he worshipped many foreign gods even going as far as sacrificing his own children to idols. The underlined sentence of 2 Samuel 7:14 indicates that the focus of the account itself is on Solomon primarily and that the failure of him and his successors played a large role in bringing about the exile. In contrast, 1 Chronicles being post-exilic, was written to explain the hope of the post-exilic nation. They had returned home under Ezra and Nehemiah and were rebuilding the kingdom. 1 Chronicles does not contain the punishment sentence because it is looking forward to the Messianic fulfilment of the Davidic Covenant. The exile is behind them, the failure of the kings to fulfill their obligation under the covenant is now of secondary importance to the people. The promise of God to fulfill the covenant is the primary focus. This is not to say that the 2 Samuel account does not ultimately look forward to Christ, but rather that 1 Chronicles strips away the temporal fulfilment and looks ahead to the

eternal. It is by comparing the two accounts in context that we see the Davidic Covenant is ultimately Messianic. The New Testament explicitly points this fact out;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Acts 2:30** But David was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. <sup>31</sup> Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

This Messianic promise was not original to the Davidic Covenant. It first occurred in the blessings of Jacob upon his sons, the chosen descendants of Abraham, which affirms that the Davidic Covenant is firmly rooted in the Abrahamic Covenant;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 49:10** The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

That the Davidic Covenant was ultimately Messianic and that it was fulfilled in Christ is plainly taught in scripture;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Isaiah 9:6** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Luke 1:31** You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Hebrews chapter 1 points to Jesus as the ultimate fulfilment of the Davidic Covenant. The author of Hebrews demonstrates how Jesus is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies related to the Davidic Covenant as the following comparisons of Hebrews 1 with certain prophecies demonstrates.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Hebrews 1:5** For to which of the angels did He ever say, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee"? ...

<sup>NAS</sup> **Psalm 2:7** "I will surely tell of the decree of Jehovah: He said to Me, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Hebrews 1:5** ...And again, "I will be a Father to Him And He shall be a Son to Me"?

<sup>NAS</sup> **2 Samuel 7:14** "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; ...

<sup>NAS</sup> **Hebrews 1:8** But of the Son *He says*, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Psalm 45:6** Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Hebrews 1:13** But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet "?

<sup>NAS</sup> **Psalm 110:1** Jehovah says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet."

The three Psalms referenced are Psalms of David and the author of Hebrews points to Christ as their fulfilment and the 2 Samuel reference is straight out of the Davidic Covenant. This can leave no doubt that Christ is the ultimate fulfilment of the Davidic Covenant.

In his covenant with David God promised there would be a descendant of David on the throne in Jerusalem for eternity. Christ is that descendant. Considering that the Mosaic Covenant as a national covenant with Israel expired with Christ, and given that Christ said his kingdom is not of here, it follows that the Davidic Covenant points to Jesus on the throne of the heavenly Jerusalem ruling for eternity over the kingdom of heaven in the new Earth. This theme is picked up at the end of the Bible in Revelation;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Revelation 7:16** Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. <sup>17</sup> For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The language here is an unmistakably obvious reference to Psalm 23, a Psalm of David, which also in addition to a message of temporal comfort has a forward looking Messianic motif;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Psalm 23:1** Jehovah is my shepherd, I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. <sup>3</sup> He restores my soul; ... <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Jehovah forever.

The book of Revelation and therefore the Bible itself closes with a foretaste of the ultimate fulfilment of the David Covenant;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Revelation 21:1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"

<sup>NIV</sup> **Revelation 22:1** Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

The Davidic Covenant plays a key role in our coming eternity in paradise and in fact that is what it points to. The true hope of the believer is not merely going to heaven when they die, it is spending eternity in our resurrection bodies in the new Jerusalem in the very presence of God in his kingdom; a kingdom promised in the Davidic Covenant and realized in Christ.

## The New Covenant

We have now come to the final covenant that God has made with mankind, the New Covenant. This is the final covenant both in the sense of our chronological progression through scripture but also in the sense of being the conclusion of God's eternal plan of redemption. We have examined the Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants and that has given us the background needed to understand the New Covenant.

The New Covenant is the replacement for the Mosaic Covenant, sometimes referred to as the Old Covenant, as the charter for the people of God. The New Covenant is the eternal covenant that the Mosaic covenant was a shadow of but it also embodies the ultimate fulfilment of the Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, and Davidic covenants. In other words, the New Covenant is the vehicle God is using to build his eternal kingdom and the gospel message is the proclamation of the fulfilment of the New Covenant. The New Covenant was first promised through the prophet Jeremiah;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Jeremiah 31:31** "Behold, days are coming," declares Jehovah, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,<sup>32</sup> not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares Jehovah.<sup>33</sup> "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares Jehovah, "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.<sup>34</sup> "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know Jehovah,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares Jehovah, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

<sup>NAS</sup> **Jeremiah 33:14** 'Behold, days are coming,' declares Jehovah, 'when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah.<sup>15</sup> 'In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.<sup>16</sup> 'In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety; and this is *the name* by which she shall be called: Jehovah is our righteousness.'

Ezekiel, whose ministry overlapped with that of Jeremiah, also made reference to the New Covenant;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Ezekiel 34:23** "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.<sup>24</sup> "And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, Jehovah, have spoken.<sup>25</sup> "And I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land, so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.<sup>26</sup> "And I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Ezekiel 36:25** "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.<sup>26</sup> "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.<sup>27</sup> "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Since the Jeremiah 31 account is the most complete and concise of these four passages that will be our focal point with the other three serving to fill in details. To understand the New Covenant we must deal with two matters, the recipients of the covenant and the content of the covenant. We will begin with the recipients.

Jeremiah 31:31 identifies the house of Israel and the house of Judah as the intended recipients of this covenant while verse 33 identifies specifically the house of Israel. With respect to national Israel, up until the time of Solomon the entire nation was referred to as Israel. Following his death the subsequent split of the nation resulted in two nations, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Since at the time of writing the northern kingdom had long disappeared at the hands of the Assyrians and only the southern kingdom remained it is reasonable to believe this shift in referents from both Israel and Judah in verse 31 to only Israel in verse 33 was meant to indicate that this prophecy was not exclusively for the southern kingdom of Judah to whom Jeremiah was a prophet. The divided kingdom would be a thing of the past and in verse 33 Israel was used in a collective sense.

On the surface then it appears that this is a covenant for national Israel which is how many dispensationalists interpret it. That however is problematic in light of our study of the six preceding covenants and with respect to two issues in particular. One issue is that the Mosaic Covenant was a national covenant for the nation of Israel which expired with Christ in whom there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. It is difficult to imagine the New Covenant, the last of the covenants and the pinnacle of God's eternal plan of redemption, would divide what Christ had united by reconstructing the torn down dividing wall and once again segregating national Israel. The other issue is that both Jeremiah 33 and Ezekiel 34 place David as the eternal king over the people of the New Covenant. This clearly is a reference to the ultimate fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant which as we saw was Christ on the throne for eternity in the new Jerusalem over all the redeemed from all ages and all nations. These two issues strongly imply that the New Covenant cannot be with national Israel. There is no question God says what he means and means what he says and he clearly says this covenant will be with Israel. Thus we need to now demonstrate from scripture that Israel does not always refer to national Israel.

To demonstrate that the Israel of the New Covenant is not national Israel we will start with the origin of the name itself;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Genesis 32:28** And he said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."

Long before there was a nation of Israel, God gave Jacob the name Israel. The name preceded the nation by centuries. The nation of Israel who were physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob derived their name from the God given name of Jacob. This identified them as the physical lineage through which God was working out the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. As we saw, the true heirs of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant were not the descendants of Abraham by birth but his descendants by faith. Being born in his lineage did not automatically include one as an heir to the promise and similarly not being born in his lineage did not automatically exclude one as an heir. Christ was the promised seed and all in Christ, Jew or Gentile, are descendants according to the promise. Since there was both a physical and a spiritual lineage of Abraham, and since Jacob was a chosen heir according to the promise, it is reasonable to suppose that there is both a physical

house of Jacob and a spiritual house of Jacob. In other words there is both a national Israel and a spiritual Israel.

This distinction between a physical Israel and a spiritual Israel is maintained throughout the New Testament so this is not mere speculation. Jesus made this distinction in response to Jews who derived a sense of entitlement from being the physical descendants of Abraham;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Matthew 3:9** And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

Paul closed his letter to the Galatians, a largely Gentile church, with a reference to the Church as the true Israel;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Galatians 6:16** Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

In 1 Corinthians 10:18 Paul makes reference to "Israel according to the flesh," a reference which would make no sense if there were not an Israel *not* according to the flesh, or in other words a spiritual Israel. The Jews took pride in their circumcision as a badge of being God's people. Paul does not dispute circumcision as the sign of being God's covenantal people but notes that it is spiritual circumcision and not physical which is the true sign;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Philippians 3:3** For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—

If this is not enough to convince people that the true Israel of God is spiritual and not physical Paul explicitly teaches that the true Jews are not so physically but spiritually;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 2:28** For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. <sup>29</sup> But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Thus not only does Genesis 32:28 allow for a broader interpretation of Israel, but the New Testament clearly teaches that the true Israel of God is not national Israel but spiritual Israel. Our initial look at Jeremiah 31 in light of what we have seen with the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants implied that the Israel of the New Covenant was not national Israel and this confirms it. Just in case anybody still has doubts, the matter is closed by the fact that the New Testament explicitly identifies the Church as the recipient of the New Covenant;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Hebrews 8:6** But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. <sup>7</sup> For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. <sup>8</sup> For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant With the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; <sup>9</sup> Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers On the day when I took them by the hand To lead them out of the land of Egypt; For they did not continue in My covenant, And I did not care for them, says the Lord. <sup>10</sup> "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, And they shall be My people. <sup>11</sup> "And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, And everyone his brother, saying,

'Know the LORD,' For all shall know Me, From the least to the greatest of them. <sup>12</sup> "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more." <sup>13</sup> When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Notice that verses 8-12 are a direct quotation of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and that the author takes this New Covenant promise and applies it to Christ as the fulfilment. Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant, but he is the mediator of all people not just national Israel;

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 2:5** For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all men-- the testimony given in its proper time.

At the last supper Jesus identified his pending sacrifice on the cross as the sacrifice which would ratify the New Covenant, instituting the Lord's Supper as the means by which all of faith could be partakers of that sacrifice;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Luke 22:20** In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Therefore the New Covenant is not for national Israel but for all the redeemed in Christ from all ages and all nations. Now that we have identified the recipients of the New Covenant we can turn our attention to its content.

At its core the New Covenant is the gospel. It is the promise that in and through Christ God will regenerate, reconcile, give sanctifying knowledge, and forgive his true people. We will now return to Jeremiah 31 and consider each of these benefits more closely.

The promise of regeneration is found in verse 33;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Jeremiah 31:33** ... "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it...

This idea is also presented in Ezekiel 36:25-27;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ezekiel 36:25** I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

While the Old Covenant had words with no power, being external, the New Covenant has power because of the regenerating work of the Spirit transforming the person from the inside out;

<sup>KJV</sup> **1 Corinthians 4:20** For the kingdom of God *is* not in word, but in power.

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Thessalonians 1:5** for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction ...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 7:22** For in my inner being I delight in God's law;

The New Testament often speaks of this regenerating work of the Holy Spirit;

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Peter 1:1** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. <sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

<sup>NAS</sup> **Titus 3:5** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Corinthians 6:11** And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

In addition to the promise of regeneration, verse 33 also contains the promise of reconciliation;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Jeremiah 31:33** ... and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

We saw in our look at the Adamic Covenant that because of sin man became alienated from God but in Christ the New Covenant provides a reversal of this enmity;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Colossians 1:21** Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup> But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Although the Old Covenant conveyed knowledge about God that knowledge was powerless to produce change. The New Covenant however contains a promise of sanctifying knowledge;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Jeremiah 31:34** "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know Jehovah,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares Jehovah ...

There is something very interesting hidden in the language of this verse. Under the Old Covenant people taught each other to “know Jehovah” but that will not be necessary under the New Covenant because “they shall all know me.” Notice that the word know occurs twice. When we look at the original Hebrew text we see the same word for “know” in both spots. This word can take on a variety of meanings ranging from a generic knowledge to an intimate knowledge so no further insight can be drawn from the Hebrew text. If however we consider the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament often quoted by New Testament writers, we find two different words for “know.” The first word refers to knowledge in a generic sense but the second word refers to an intimate acquaintance. In other words, under the Old Covenant people knew about God but under the New Covenant we intimately know God. The knowledge of God promised in the New Covenant results in an intimate personal relationship with God, sanctifying the believer. This is exactly the type of knowledge of God the New Testament ascribes to the believer in Christ;

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 6:44** "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup> "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Luke 10:22** "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 17:26** I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:6** For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

The fourth promised benefit of the New Covenant is forgiveness;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Jeremiah 31:34** ... "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

God promises to forgive the iniquity of the recipients. The Hebrew word can be translated as iniquity or guilt while the Septuagint literally reads unrighteousness. The promise then is to forgive the state of sinfulness, or in other words the fallen nature inherited from Adam. This promise reflects a fulfilment of the Adamic Covenant bringing about a return to the state of innocence at the time of the Edenic Covenant. The second part of the promise is that God will remember our sin no more. This reflects forgiveness for the acts of sins we have committed. Thus this promise involves complete forgiveness both for our fallen nature and for our actions stemming from it. As with the other three promises, this too is realized in Christ;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 1:7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

<sup>NAS</sup> **Colossians 1:13** For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins

<sup>NAS</sup> **Colossians 2:13** And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

The New Covenant promises that in Christ we will be made something completely new;

<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Corinthians 1:30** But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption

The New Covenant not only contains the promise that in and through Christ God will regenerate, reconcile, give sanctifying knowledge, and forgive his true people. It also contains the promise that we will dwell securely for eternity in the promised land under the kingship of David thereby ultimately fulfilling the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants;

<sup>NAS</sup> **Jeremiah 33:15** 'In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. <sup>16</sup> 'In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety; and this is *the name* by which she shall be called: Jehovah is our righteousness.'

<sup>NAS</sup> **Ezekiel 34:23** "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> "And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, Jehovah, have spoken. <sup>25</sup> "And I will make a covenant

of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land, so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. <sup>26</sup> "And I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing.

The New Covenant is superior in every way to the Old Covenant it replaces. The Old Covenant was national, in letter only, and powerless. The New Covenant is personal, in Spirit, and it saves and transforms. People entered the Old Covenant by birth but we enter the New Covenant by regeneration through faith. The Old Covenant was conditional and temporary, the New Covenant is unconditional and eternal;

<sup>NIV</sup> **Philippians 1:6** being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 11:29** for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

The New Covenant is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not just the promise that God will deliver us from our sins and bring us into his eternal kingdom, it is the power by which he delivers us from our sins, the power by which he transforms us more and more into the image of Christ, and the power by which he transfers us into his kingdom;

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Corinthians 3:6** He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-- not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life...<sup>18</sup> And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.