

New Covenant Theology

An Introduction

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Thinking Biblically about Covenants

Genesis 8:20-9:17

The Bible's Many Themes

The Bible has many themes and analogies in it.

Covenant is one of the many themes/analogies in the Bible. Some of the others are kingdom, priest, tabernacle/temple, dwelling, blood, sacrifice, garden/city, etc

Christ is the central theme of the Bible. All of the Bible is ultimately about Him. All of the themes and analogies ultimately are fulfilled in Him.

The Bible's Promise-Fulfillment Structure

The Bible is written to show the unfolding of promise to fulfillment.

The Bible's Covenant Idea

Covenants are an important means by which God carries forward the promise-fulfillment structure. There are many covenants in the Bible: marriage covenants, treaties, covenants between people. *For our study, we will be looking only at the Covenants God has entered into.*

A Covenant is a recognized, formal agreement made between two parties binding one or both to promises sometimes entailing conditions on one or both with an accompanying sign uniquely connected to that covenant that is ratified by a sacrifice.

A Covenant is Recognized

The Bible declares when a covenant is to be treated as one. "And God made a covenant with..." is the common language.

A Covenant is Formal

A Covenant is an Agreement

A Covenant involves Promises

A Covenant may involve Requirements

If God does not require anything of the person or people, then the covenant is unconditional

If God requires the person or people to do something, then the covenant is a conditional one. Its fulfillment depends upon the obedience of the people

The person or people may be required to promise to do what God requires.

A Covenant has a Sign or Seal

Biblical Covenants all have a sign or a seal that is uniquely attached to that covenant.

A Covenant is Ratified by a Sacrifice.

Every covenant made by God is authenticated or ratified by a sacrifice.

A Covenant has a New Testament Fulfillment in Christ

All Old Covenants are fulfilled in Christ.

Centrality of Christ in the Covenants

Jesus is the full and final revelation from God. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Jesus is the culmination and the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the Covenants.

Luke 24:25-27

Luke 24:44 -49

John 5:37 -47

Interpreting the Scriptures

We teach a *promise-fulfillment hermeneutic*. The Old Covenant(s) are fulfilled in Christ who is also the sum and substance of the New Covenant.

Thinking it through...

The key to understanding the Bible is Jesus Christ. It is not Israel. It is not the church. The Bible is ultimately about Jesus.

The covenants are part of the way that God has revealed Himself to us. It is an important way, but not the only way.

The New Testament tells us what the Old Testament means. The Old Testament points us to Christ. The Old Testament Covenants then must be understood as the New Testament interprets them.

While some of this may be new to you, it is not hard. Once the Lord helps you to see it and to understand it, then you will be better able to handle the whole Bible.

All this must bring us to worship, love, believe and obey Jesus more.

The Noahic Covenant

Genesis 8:20-9:17

This is the Bible's first Covenant that is identified as a covenant. We have already discussed the issues surrounding whether there is a previous covenant with Adam and whether Genesis 3:15 constitutes a covenant. In the scriptures, this is the first clearly identified covenant.

Context:

Moses writing to Israel during the wilderness wandering

Giving them their identity: they are not pagans

Countering the pagan myths and religions around them

Relating the true history of what happened.

Noah's Pleasing Sacrifice (8:20)

The Lord's Inner Determination (8:21-22)

The Noahic Covenant (9:1-17)

This is a universal covenant under which all humans live

Its Law (v. 1-7)

There is a parallel structure

A - General precept to fill the earth with people (v. 1)

B - Protection for humans from animals (v. 2)

C- Permission to eat meat and plants (v. 3)

C' - Forbidden to eat blood (v. 4)

B' - Protection of human life from humans (v. 5-6)

A' - Personal precept to fill the earth with people (v. 7)

Its Promise (v. 8-11)

Recipients

All human and animal life. This covenant is a unilateral promise to all humanity.

Content

God will never again to destroy all life by water

Peter makes allusion to this in **2 Peter 3:1-13**

Its Sign (v. 12-17)

The Rainbow on Earth - Judgment is past...

It is a natural, existing physical reality...

It is assigned a special, spiritual meaning...

It is to comfort man...

It is to remind God (in human terms)...

The Rainbow in Heaven - Judgment is coming...

Over Christ on His Portable Throne (Ezekiel 1:26-28)

Over the Throne in Heaven (Revelation 4:1-3)

Around the Head of the "Mighty Angel" (Revelation 10:1-3)

Thinking it through

Be sure that your understanding of the covenants is directly from the text and Biblical. It is very easy to have a framework, a grid, a confession, a creed which governs how we understand the Bible.

There is grace and mercy in the midst of judgment for God will always deliver His people from His wrath.

When you see a rainbow in the sky, do you remember the promise of God? There is a double promise – the earth will never be judged by water again. But we await the fire of the final judgment. Where then is your refuge?

The rainbow around Jesus' head reminds us that it is in Him alone that we are promised safety from the wrath of God.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Genesis 15:1-21; 17:1-14

As Given in the Old Testament

The Covenant with Abraham has two major components. There is the promise of a people and a place.

The key texts:

Genesis 12:1-7, Genesis 13:14-17, Genesis 15:1-21, Genesis 17:1-27, Genesis 22:15-18

The Development of the Promises

Before the giving of the covenant itself, God had already made promises to Abraham that would become part of the formal covenant.

Genesis 12:1-7

Genesis 13:14-18

The Promise of Descendant(s) (Genesis 15:1-6)

A Child - Isaac (v. 4)

A Physical People - Jews (v. 5)

A Blessing to Others

Many Descendants

His Son - Jesus (Galatians 3:15-16)

Paul sees the singular here as also referring to Jesus Christ.

The Abrahamic Covenant reaches its fulfillment in Christ.

The Sacrifice of the Covenant (15:7-11, 17)

The Prophecy of the 400 years (15:12-17)

The Promise of a Land (Genesis 15:18-21; 17:1-14)

God also promised Abraham the land his offspring were going to live in in.

A Geographical Place to Offspring (15:18-21)

- Initial fulfillment in conquest
- Literal fulfillment under David and Solomon
- Future fulfillment is an enlarged vision

Connection to the Garden/Land motif - Paradise

- Garden of Eden
- Land of Canaan
- Jesus
- The Church
- New Heavens and New Earth

The Sign of the Covenant (Genesis 17:1–15)

Later, the Lord gives the sign of the covenant.

The Review of the Covenant (17:1-8)

The Requirement of the Covenant (17:8-14)

The Abrahamic covenant was *not* unconditional. There was a sign that actually was part of the covenant command itself.

Circumcision was required for anyone to be a part of the covenant itself. It was required of all male children and any man who was a non-Jew yet wanted to join with God's people. Circumcision was given a special significance for Abraham and the covenant people.

As Interpreted in the New Testament

The New Testament explains the fullness and the fulfillment of the covenant with Abraham.

Abrahamic Covenant - The Plan of Salvation is Revealed

Purpose of the Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant reveals God's plan to save a people. His plan is physically pictured by his bringing the nation of Israel into existence and giving them the promised land. His plan is fulfilled by redeeming a people through Jesus Christ and causing them to dwell with him in heaven

Key Passage: Galatians 3:1-29

Remember: The old is interpreted through the lens of the new.

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— ⁶ just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?

⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

¹⁵ To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. ¹⁶ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. ¹⁷ This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

¹⁹ *Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.* ²⁰ *Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.*

²¹ *Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.* ²² *But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

²³ *Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.* ²⁴ *So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.* ²⁵ *But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,* ²⁶ *for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.* ²⁷ *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* ²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* ²⁹ *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

The Seeds of Abraham

Natural

Special Natural

Unique

Spiritual

The Physical Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant

Seed - Isaac (Genesis 17:15-22)

Nation - Israel (Romans 9:1-5)

Land - Palestine (Acts 7:1-7)

The Spiritual Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant

Seed - Christ, true seed (Galatians 3:16)

Nation - Church, true nation (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Land - salvation rest, heaven, true land (Hebrews 4:6-11)

His Spiritual Descendants - All Believers

Paul also recognizes that all Christians are the spiritual children of Abraham through Christ. So we participate in the fulfillment of this covenant by being *in Christ*.

Galatians 3:7–9

Galatians 3:29

A Heavenly City to Spiritual Seed

What Abraham Understood (Hebrews 11:8-12)

⁸ *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.* ⁹ *By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.* ¹⁰ *For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.* ¹¹ *By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.* ¹² *Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.*

What the Apostles understood

Peter – 1 Peter 2:9–12

⁹ *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* ¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

¹¹ *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.* ¹² *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

Paul - Romans 4:13

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

John - Revelation 21:1–8

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

Summary

Promise	Text	Fulfillment	Text
Son	Genesis 15:1-7	Jesus	Galatians 3:15-18
Land	Genesis 12:7; 15:8	World	Romans 4:13; Hebrews 11:10; 12:22
Inheritance		Spirit	Galatians 3:14

How do the apostles understand the “land” promise to Israel? Do they envision the Jewish people being restored to Jerusalem? One looks in vain for such teaching in the New Testament. In Romans 4:13, Paul says that Abraham was promised the *world*! The text reads, “For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world.” We should not brush this off, but should pause and ask what the Holy Spirit, through Paul, is

teaching here. Paul is what we could call a *biblical theologian*. He interprets the Old Testament in light of Jesus. After his experience on the road to Damascus, nothing was the same for Paul. Now he reads Israel's Scriptures in light of the cross and resurrection. He sees everything in the Old Testament as *prophetic*, that is, pointing forward to Jesus and the new covenant he inaugurated.

So now, when Paul thinks about the "land" promise, he looks both backward and forward. The promise of land given to Abraham is rooted in God's original creation purposes. And, God's original creation purpose pointed to God's eventual new creation purpose. The original creation pointed forward to the new creation. Eden pointed forward to what God would eventually do: the *New Eden*. Jerusalem pointed forward to the *New Jerusalem*. Paul viewed the land as a *type* that pointed forward to the new creation, the whole world! The author of Hebrews agrees. He says that Abraham "was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Heb 11:10). He was looking for Mount Zion, "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb 12:22).

The Fulfillment of Circumcision (Colossians 2:8–15)

What does the New Testament do with circumcision?

The circumcision of the heart is the true fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Baptism is *not* the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Thinking it through...

Abraham believed God's promise. Righteousness was put to Abraham's account *through* his faith, his believing God's promises.

There were great promises for God's people: a nation, an inheritance, a land and a special Son.

God has made great promises for His people through the descendant of Abraham. The Lord Jesus is the true son of Abraham. He is and brings all the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham.

There are great blessings for God's people, both the physical descendants and the spiritual sons and daughters.

The fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise is ever so greater than expected. There would be blessings for all the nations, a land that would be the new heavens and new earth and a son who would be the great Redeemer and Ruler of God's people.

Abraham's faith saw a son named Isaac and descendants as stars of the heavens and sands of the sea.

Abraham's faith obeyed God in marking out the land; but his faith saw a heavenly city. How can we do no less?

Abraham's faith believed God's promise in an obeying way. Through His faith, righteousness was put to his account.

"How beautiful are the feet those who bring the gospel, the good news." Why feet? Why not mouth? Because when we go with the gospel in obedience to the great commission, we are bringing forth the sons and daughters of God and everywhere that men and women believe, there is the beginning of the new heavens and new earth.

Notes

The Davidic Covenant

2 Samuel 7:12-16

The Giving of the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16)

⁸ Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. ⁹ And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. ¹² When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.' " ¹⁷ In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

The provisions of the Davidic covenant include, then, the following items:

David is to have a child, yet to be born, who shall succeed him and establish his kingdom.

This son (Solomon) shall build the temple instead of David.

The throne of his kingdom shall be established forever.

The throne will not be taken away from him (Solomon) even though his sins justify chastisement.

David's house, throne, and kingdom shall be established forever.

The covenant is confirmed to Solomon at his ascension to the throne.

Confirmed and Developed

Psalm 89

Psalm 45:6-9

Hebrews 1:8-9

The Fulfillment

Christ fulfills the Davidic Covenant. The evidence is clear from the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. For anyone accepting the authenticity and inspiration of the Scriptures, the testimony of the angel to Mary is conclusive: ([Luke 1:31-33](#)). The promise of David's throne, David's kingdom, and all that is involved is transferred by this prophecy to Jesus Christ, "The Son of David" ([Matt 1:1](#)). The line that began with David has its consummation and eternal fulfillment in Christ.

Luke 1:31-33

Matthew 1:1

When does Jesus fulfill the Davidic Covenant?

During His Earthly Ministry

Jesus began to teach and inaugurate the kingdom during His ministry here on earth. He is primarily seen as the Messiah, the King of the Jews.

Matthew 4:17

Matthew 13

All the parables of the kingdom...

Mark 11:7-11

Matthew 28:16-20

At the Resurrection (Acts 2:29-36)

Peter clearly is declaring that Jesus was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven is now seated on the throne of David fulfilling the promises made to David.

Through the Obedience of Faith

Through the obedience of faith, Jesus, the son of David, extends His Lordship over all the nations and peoples.

Romans 1:1-6

1 Timothy 1:16-17

In the Church

This rule and reign has begun through the church during this age.

Colossians 1:11-14

Colossians 4:11

1 Thessalonians 2:12

In the Future Kingdom

This is the continuation of Jesus' ascension into heaven and his ruling in heaven. He will rule and reign over the earth.

2 Timothy 4:1, 18

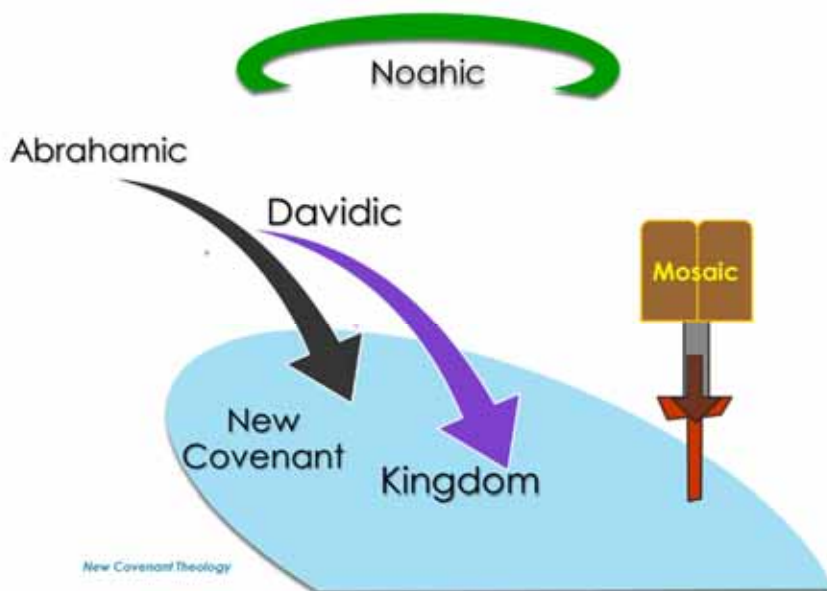
1 Thessalonians 2:12

In the Millennial Age (Revelation 20)

Some believe that this will not begin until a 1000-year reign on the earth after His second coming. This period is often referred to as the Millennium.

In Eternity

The Stream of the Covenants



Thinking it through...

Jesus is King – this all the Bible witnesses to and Christians agree with.

Jesus is the fulfillment of the Davidic promises.

We are living in the beginning of the eternal kingdom.

The kingdom and throne of David are forever.

Notes