

## Local Church

- Local churches are led by qualified and publicly-recognized men who are called pastors or elders.
  - The New Testament also uses two other terms—“bishops” and “overseers”—which are interchangeable terms).
  - Pastors have the responsibilities of teaching sound doctrine, governing (under the headship of Christ), praying (especially for the sick), and shepherding (leading through exemplary lifestyles).
- These assemblies are also served by deacons, qualified and publicly-recognized men (and possibly women) who serve Jesus Christ in the many church ministries.
- Because of divine grace and provision, local churches possess both purity and unity, but because of sin, they must also pursue greater purity and maintain unity through both divine aid and Spirit-empowered human effort.
  - When their members persist in sin, churches exercise discipline for the purposes of restoring erring members and rectifying entrenched sinful situations, containing such sin-saturated realities, and preserving the honor of Christ and their own reputation.
- Churches also develop strong connections with other churches for the purposes of cooperative high impact ministry, the sharing of resources, mutual accountability, and the like.

## Local Church

- In terms of their ministry and mission, local churches regularly gather for the following:
  - Worship the triune God
  - Proclaim his Word through the preaching of Scripture
  - Celebrate the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper
  - Engage non-Christians with the gospel
  - Exercise spiritual gifts for the building up their members
  - Disciple them through education and sharing in community life
  - Care for people through prayer and giving
  - Stand for and against the world by helping the poor and marginalized through holistic ministries and denouncing the evils wrought by sin. Social justice does come into play here.



# New Covenant

- The church exists in a relationship with God called the New Covenant.



## Principles:

- God always relates to his people in covenant relationship— there is no such thing as an unstructured relationship between God and a person, or God and His people.
- This is contrary to U.S. individualism, where people think they set the terms of the relationship with God.
- Covenants are not mere contracts.

- Covenant definition:

– “an enduring agreement which establishes [or formalizes] a defined relationship between two parties involving a solemn, binding obligation to specified stipulations on the part of at least one of the parties toward the other, which is taken by oath under threat of divine curse, and ratified by a visual ritual.”



# Biblical Covenants

- Biblical Covenants have four elements.
  1. Unilateral (established by God and God only).
  2. Create or formalize a structured relationship between God and his covenant partners.
  3. Feature binding obligations.
  4. Involve covenantal signs or the swearing of oaths.
- God obligates Himself to be God and act as God for His partners. His partners obligate themselves to be His partners, and act appropriately in the covenant.

The Suzerainty – Vassal Treaty  
Format of the Conditional Mosaic Covenant in Exodus

Treaty Element	Exodus 18	Mosaic Element
Traditional Provisions	V. 18	Recognition of the King
Historical Prologue	V. 1	Retrospect of God's Past Providence
General Stipulations	V. 16	Conditions for Israel to Keep
Promised Blessings	V. 21-24	Promises of Blessing

# Biblical Covenants

- Old Testament Covenants:
  - Adamic & Noahic.
  - Abrahamic – God calls a pagan from Ur (who already lived in Haran) to go to Canaan, and God will make a nation out of him and the nations will be blessed. This is the beginning of the covenant with God's people.
  - Mosaic (or Old) Covenant – Israel was now a massive people.
  - Davidic – God establishes it with David and his offspring, and ultimately an eternal king, King Jesus.
- The church of the New Covenant – the church exists under the New Covenant.



## Old Covenant

- There are two themes regarding the Old Covenant.
- First, the Old Covenant would one day be done away with.
  - There is built-in obsolescence. It was never meant to be eternal.
  - There was nothing wrong with it; the problem was with the people of God being unable to keep it. The Old Covenant did not provide the people with a new nature and ability to keep it.
  - So it would be replaced by something else.
- Second, this replacement, the New Covenant, would be characterized by a fresh, new, and unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit. So it is focused on the Holy Spirit.
  - John the Baptist – In Luke 3:15-17, John says the one coming after will baptize with the Spirit.
  - Jesus Christ – Jesus makes the promise that one day rivers of living water would flow out of His followers.
  - Day of Pentecost – This is the fulfillment of these Old Covenant expectations.

## New Testament teaching on OC/NC

- The Old Covenant is one of death, the letters, and fading glory. The New Covenant is one of the Spirit, life, and full of glory.
- The church is the church of the New Covenant(1)
  1. It's a unilateral agreement, established by God and God alone.
  2. It creates a structured relationship between him and his covenant partners, Christ-followers "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9).
  3. It features binding obligations on the part of both God and his covenant partners (e.g., 2 Cor. 6:16-18; Matt. 22:37-40; 28:19-20; Gal. 6:2).
  4. It is sealed by two covenantal signs, baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- It's an all-encompassing partnership (every nation, tribe, and tongue).
- The ongoing rite is the Lord's Supper. The initiatory is immersion in water.
- We are strangers and sojourners, which shows that the church is not the ultimate reality, but will one day give way to something greater, which the church will be fully conformed to Jesus and feast with Him and live permanently with Him.