



KNOW:TRUTH

The Gospel of John

A New Covenant Study

WEEK ONE | DAY FIVE

UNDERSTANDING THE COVENANTS

There are at least fifteen great covenants of scripture. Listed below is a very brief description of the most important and an overview of the types of covenants to help you understand the purpose of how they function.

Type

Grant Covenant: These covenants reflected how a king bestowed favor on a faithful person. This type of covenant was unconditional (no strings attached) and was one of poured-out love, blessing, and grace. It included the beneficiary and their family.

Kinship Covenant: When two equal parties decide to enter into a covenant together, such as a marriage or military alliance, this is a kinship covenant. This type of covenant came with obligations and agreements both parties agreed to uphold.

Vassal Covenant: This type of covenant was the most burdensome. In times of war, a king who conquered a nation would make an agreement that the conquered nation must either be his servants, be heavily taxed, or put to labor; this would be a vassal covenant. This was a heavily conditional covenant; if the lesser party did not keep up their end of the bargain, the resulting consequences would be a form of punishment or death.

Significant Covenants

Noahic Covenant (Gen 8:20-9:29): (**Grant**) This eternal covenant was made with Noah and the beasts of the field after the flood. The covenant terms were that God would not curse the ground or living creatures again and that man would replenish the earth and rule it. The rainbow was put in the sky as a promise that He would never again destroy it with a flood. There is no condition to the promise.

Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-3): (**Grant**) This was an unconditional covenant of grace for all of Abraham's seed and spiritual children. God gave Abraham a three-fold promise: He would make Abraham a great nation, his name would be made great, and God would bless those that bless him, and all peoples of the earth would be blessed through him. This covenant was made while Abraham was asleep; God alone passed through the ceremonial sacrificial blood agreement (violation of a blood covenant was punishable by death). God made the covenant agreement within Himself, and Abraham was a beneficiary. This meant that Abraham did not have conditions to uphold.

In Genesis 17: 9-10, God told Abraham to circumcise himself, all the men of his household, and all the generations to come. Abraham had to do this act of faith to receive the grant covenant. This covenant never expired and went alongside the Mosaic Covenant. It continues today and is realized in the New Covenant.

Mosaic Covenant (Ex 20:1-24:8; 2 Cor 3:6-18): This covenant is the most complex. When God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, God offered them a **grant** covenant (Exodus 19:5-6). However, at the foot of Mt. Sinai, the presence of God frightened them, and they asked for a different agreement. (Keep in mind, they just came from a pagan land and had little to no understanding of the God of Abraham. They were frightened of God, and so rejected the covenant God wanted to make with them).

“Now, therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? You go near and hear all that the Lord our God may say, and tell us all that the Lord our God says to you, and we will hear and do it.” Deuteronomy 5:25-27

God honors their request and so downgrades the covenant to a **kinship** covenant. The Ten Commandments were the obligations and agreements made between God and the people through Moses as the representative.

Because a kinship covenant is for life, when the primary representative dies, the contract is up for renegotiation, depending on how the lesser party's end of the bargain had worked out. Because the people failed miserably in keeping up their end of the deal, God amended the covenant through Joshua after Moses died. At this point, the covenant got downgraded to a vassal covenant, and the people went from partners to servants. The book of Deuteronomy lays out the structure of that covenant. This is referred to as “the law” in the New Testament.

The **vassal** covenant was never God's intent or desire for the people- it is what they asked for. This is why there is so much prophecy concerning a new and better covenant throughout the prophetic books. The Law put a veil over God, disguising His true nature only through the Son is the veil removed.

Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7: 1-17): (**Grant**) Made with David and his house through Nathan the prophet. The seven-fold blessing was that David's house, throne, and kingdom would be established forever. Israel would have a sure land forever, and nations would not afflict them. God would be their Father, and an eternal covenant would be established. Through David's lineage came Jesus, who would reign forever. King David represented God's desire to restore the right relationship with all people through Christ despite their inability to keep the standard of the Law. God gave David this promise in response to the honor that flowed from David's heart to God.

New Covenant (Matt 26:28, 2 Cor 3:6-18): (**Grant**) This covenant was made between God and His Son. It is a covenant of grace based on the finished work of the cross. It flows from the Abrahamic covenant and promises eternal righteousness through Jesus' blood for those who believe- that is the only condition. It is given to all the earth, Jew and Gentile. Where the Old Covenant of Law was conditional on obedience, the New Covenant of Grace is based on those

saved by faith in Jesus. This covenant was made between God and Jesus; the beneficiaries are “in Christ.”

Jesus came to abolish the “law” (the vassal covenant) that kept the people in bondage because it was the Law that brought wrath. His coming also fulfilled the promise God had made with Abraham and David. Jesus is Messiah and King, the Son of David and Abraham.

Galatians 4:4 “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

**For further study, I recommend Kinship by Covenant by Scott Hahn, and The Blood Covenant*