

1. **Introduction**: It is not possible to have an accurate understanding of Scripture without an understanding of the concept of covenant.
  - Useful references include **The Atonement** by Leon Morris, **Concise Theology** by J.I. Packer, and **Systematic Theology** by Wayne Grudem.
2. **Definition**: A covenant is an agreement between persons, between persons and a legal entity, or between legal entities. A covenant's purpose is to define the future relationship between the parties to the agreement. Covenants are binding.
  - Covenant stipulations may be negotiated or unilaterally imposed by the superior party. Covenants between equals are bilateral. Each party is subject to specified promises, obligations, and claims. Biblical covenants are between God and people.
  - When God makes a covenant with people, He sets terms for both Himself and the people with no input from the people (there is no negotiation).
  - The three persons of the Trinitarian Godhead are equally divine and have the same attributes and work together as a covenantal team to bring about salvation.
  - God is purposeful. He doesn't decide what He should do as He watches His creation in action. He has a plan that is from everlasting to everlasting. It rests on His eternal character, holy omniscient, and immutable. His eternal plan needs no revision.
  - The first covenant was made between the members of the Trinity before the creation of the universe and beginning of time as we know it. That covenant is referred to as the **"Covenant of Redemption."**
3. **Covenant of Redemption**: This covenant is a part of God's overall plan, a plan that never changes because He never changes. The perfection of His plan admits to no degrees and cannot be improved upon.
  - The phrase "Covenant of Redemption" does not explicitly occur in Scripture, but like the Trinity, the concept is visible throughout.
  - The Son (second person of the Trinity) was sent into the world by the Father. The Son incarnate, the God-Man's mission was not given to Him when He was born to Mary, it was given to Him in the Covenant of Redemption before creation.
  - Missionaries are ones who are sent. Jesus was sent as redeemer to sinful earth. As agreed in the Covenant of Redemption, He came to do the Father's will.
  - The Son willingly relinquished His glory and was subjected to humiliation for the sake of our redemption. He willingly "made Himself of no reputation," temporarily laying down His eternal glory for the sake of our salvation.
4. **John 17:1-5 (NKJV)**: As His ministry ended, Jesus prayed. ***"Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."***

- Charles Hodge, in his systematic theology, lists 8 promises the Father gave to the Son as part of the Covenant of Redemption. In summary they are: (1.) To form a purified Church for His Son. (2.) The Son's human nature would receive the Spirit without measure. (3.) The Father would be every present with the incarnate Son to support Him. (4.) The Father would deliver the Son from death and exalt Him to His right hand. (5.) The Son could send the Holy Spirit to whom He willed. (6.) All the Father gave to the Son would come to Him and none of these would be lost. (7.) Multitudes would partake of the Son's gift of redemption and His messianic kingdom. (8.) The Father would see the travail of the Son's soul and be satisfied (propitiated).
  - God honored the eternal Covenant of Redemption. Christ is the heir of His Father's promises. Believers are joint heirs with Christ.
5. **Examples of Other Covenants:** (1.) Marriage is a bilateral covenant between equals. God established marriage and is witness to marriage covenant promises (Mal. 2:14). A marriage covenant defines the expected future relationship between bride and groom.
- (2.) God's covenant with Noah and all living creatures (Gen 9:9-17) was unilateral. Since God is infinitely superior, the covenant parties are in an unequal relationship.
  - In the covenant with Noah, God chose to impose terms only on Himself.
  - God made an unconditional promise to never again curse the ground because of man, nor again strike down every living creature as He did in the flood.
6. **When Did God First Establish Covenant Relationships with People:** The word for covenant is not mentioned in Scripture until the episode with Noah.
- But examining the story of Adam and Eve reveals a covenantal relationship existed between God and His human creatures from the beginning.
  - God rightfully defines His relationship to His human creatures. God's covenants with people are pure consequences of His grace.
7. **Covenant with Adam and Eve:** This covenant was unilateral. God's stipulation was that Adam and Eve and their progeny obey His commands.
- God met all Adam and Eve's needs, provided an intimate spiritual relationship with Him, a beautiful place to live, companionship, food, and suitable work in the garden.
8. **Genesis 2:15:** *The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*
- God's stipulation that they obey Him was incorporated into one command designed to test their commitment to Him.
9. **Genesis 2:16-17:** *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

- You shall surely die – immediate spiritual death plus immediately beginning the disintegration that leads to mortal death (separation of body and soul).
  - Genesis 2:15-17 was specifically directed at Adam before Eve was created but applied to them equally after Eve’s creation.
  - The serpent was sent to tempt Adam and Eve. The serpent twisted the truth to imply that they would not surely die (they would live on physically, but die spiritually), and that they would become more like God by knowing “good and evil.”
  - Forgetting God’s very specific instruction to not eat of that fruit, Eve decided that anything that would make them more like God must be good.
  - So, Eve and then Adam broke the covenant with God by eating the fruit God had forbidden, thus failing their test of commitment.
  - Because the earth had been created to match the spiritual perfection in which Adam and Eve were created, when they lost that perfection, the earth lost its perfection.
10. **Effects of Adam and Eve’s Covenant Breaking:** The bad effects of covenant breaking came to Adam and Eve and to the whole human race through their descendants. The bad effects came to the animal kingdom and to the earth itself.
- Consequences began immediately. Adam and Eve were instantly changed. They lost their original immortality, became mortal and immediately began to die physically. They lost their intimate spiritual connection to God.
  - Their easy and blessed life in the Garden of Eden was over. They would now have to toil for their livelihood in an unfriendly environment.
  - Spiritual death meant their “spiritual hearts” were changed from being pure and blameless to being controlled by a “sin nature” acquired by their disobedience.
  - Spiritual death was spiritual separation from God. That disturbed everything. The added sin nature assured passing on the defects to all their future descendants.
  - Breaking a covenant with God is serious business with serious consequences.
  - Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden and their descendants would never know such earthly paradise. Labor and sweat would be required to acquire food and other necessities of life.
  - Enmity would develop between Adam and Eve’s descendants (first recorded in the murder of Abel by Cain).
11. **God’s Restraint and Grace:** When Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God’s command, God might well have destroyed them.
- God did destroy others for disobedience. Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, were destroyed for offering unauthorized fire before the LORD (Leviticus 10:13).
  - Sinful people of Noah’s day were drowned in the Flood (Genesis 6-9).
  - God chose not to destroy Adam and Eve.

- Their disobedient actions seriously harmed and degraded them, but God graciously promised a restoration through a future Savior (Genesis 3:15).
12. **Redemptive History**: As presented in Genesis through Revelation, Redemptive History is organized in terms of promise and covenant, or as Paul declares “**the covenants of promise**” (Ephesians 2:12).
- Time and again in the OT, through covenants and covenant renewals, God restated His promise of a Savior. As time passed, He supplied increasing detail and structure as He prepared the way for the promised Savior.
  - We will consider three of the covenants: (1.) The promise to Abraham. (2.) The Sinai Covenant through Moses. (3.) Our Lord Jesus Christ’s New Covenant.
13. **The Promise and Covenant with Abraham**: God called Abram (later renamed Abraham) while he was in Haran where his father, Terah, had settled after leaving Ur of the Chaldeans. Terah and Haran, Abram’s brother died.
- Abraham’s call by God is considered a pivotal point in redemptive history. The first eleven chapters of Genesis mostly focus on the dreadful consequences of sin.
  - The promises God made to Abraham are directed toward the hope of redemption.
14. **Genesis 12:1-5a**: *Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”<sup>4</sup> So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup> And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.*
- In a series of contacts, God promised Abraham numberless progeny, possession of Canaan, and that he would be a blessing to all people through his progeny (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:5-7; 22:17-18).
  - In the NT, God’s promise to Abraham is regarded as continuing without time limits.
  - Christ’s incarnation is viewed as the vital step in the outworking of the Abrahamic promise to be a blessing to all people (Luke 1:68-73, Romans 4).
  - Abraham asked God how he could know God’s promise would come to pass. God’s answer was to make a covenant with Abraham.
  - The covenant was ratified by the visible demonstration of a smoking fire pot with a blazing torch passing between cut halves of sacrificial animals (Genesis 15:17).

- The light seems to symbolize God’s presence. The covenant with Abraham was unilateral, only God stipulated His obligation. No obligations on Abraham, so he was not required to do anything during the ratification. Abraham received God’s grace.
15. **Sinai Covenant**: After freeing the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery, God led them to Mt. Sinai (Mt. Horeb). They were at Sinai about a year.
- In preparation for giving of the Law, God said, ***“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”*** (Exodus 19:5-6a).
  - The covenant to be established will be bilateral.
  - God will stipulate that the Hebrews will be His treasured possession among all peoples, and the Hebrews promise to obey God’s voice and keep His covenant.
  - God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and other parts of the Sinai-covenant law (Exodus 20-23). The law defines the people’s covenant responsibility.
  - Moses gave the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules of their covenant relationship with the LORD (Exodus 24:3b). They voluntarily committed to obey all that God commands. ***“Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD”*** Exodus 24:7).
16. **Exodus 24:6-8**: ***And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. <sup>7</sup> Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” <sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”***
- Throwing sacrificial blood on the people was unusual.
  - Sacrificial blood cleansed from sin. All the people were to be cleansed & consecrated for their new role as God’s people, hence throwing blood of sacrifice on them.
  - If the covenant was disobeyed, Israel would not lose its covenant relationship but there would be consequences. The covenant established rules for living and the people said, ***“All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”***
  - As the people of God, they were obligated to live according to the rules established by the covenant or suffer penalties for not doing so.
  - The words Moses wrote defined the covenant between God and the Hebrews. The book of the covenant was read during the ratification ceremony.
17. **Sinai Covenant Ratification**: The covenant was ratified by an elaborate ceremony of sacrifices (Exodus 24:4-8). Young men of Israel (not priests) offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen (24:5).

- The sacrificial blood was not handled in the usual way. The words, “*Behold the blood of the covenant*” seem to lie behind Jesus’ NT words, “*This cup is the new covenant in my blood*’ (1 Corinthians 11:25).
  - The Sinai covenant established a covenant relationship between God and the people of Israel and their descendants. Subsequent OT events revolved around God’s choice of Israel to be His people. Covenant blessings depended on keeping the covenant.
  - Israel failed pointing out their need for grace. The Law is perfect, given by our holy God, but it has no power to give people new life.
  - People are unable to obey the law perfectly (Galatians 3:21).
18. **The Moral Law**: God’s moral law has always been in effect. It was in effect when Adam and Eve violated it, they (and we through them) suffered the consequences.
- God’s moral law was spelled out in detail in the Sinai Covenant for the benefit of the Hebrews. That law continues in effect for Christians today. It has various functions.
  - (1.) God’s moral law is a mirror reflecting both God’s perfect righteousness and our own sinfulness and shortcomings. No matter how hard we strive to fulfill the law’s requirements, we can’t. We must depend on God’s mercy and grace.
  - (2.) The law restrains evil. The law cannot change the spiritual heart, but it can to some extent inhibit lawlessness by its threats of judgment, especially if backed by a civil code that is enforced by administering present punishment for proven offenses (Deuteronomy 13:6-11; 19:16-21).
  - (3.) The law provides a positive function for the regenerate by guiding them into the good works God prepared for them (Ephesians 2:10).
  - Next lesson will begin with the New Covenant and then begin Thoughts About Death.