

# Covenants

# Covenants

- **What is a Covenant?**
  - A formal and legal agreement between businessmen
  - An agreement between God and Men
  - The Old Testament and the New Testament?
- **Old Testament Covenants with**
  - Noah
  - Abraham (Isaac and Jacob)
  - Moses
  - David



# The Covenant with Noah

- A covenant with every living creature
- A Promise never to destroy the world by flood
- The rainbow is the sign of the covenant

**but how was God going to administer His relationship with the world?**

- Through one man and his family: Abraham



# The Covenant with Abram

- **Genesis 12:1-3 gives a threefold promise to Abram:**
  - He was going to be a great nation
  - He would be given a land
  - All people on earth would be blessed through him

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.” (Genesis 15:18)

- **Like the Covenant with Noah**
  - **It was unconditional**
  - **It included a sign: Circumcision**
  - **It was an everlasting covenant**

# The Covenant with Abram

- Abraham never inherited the land but the promise was repeated to Isaac:

“To you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm what I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky... and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws” (Genesis 26:3-5)

- Same 3 dimensions:
  - **A great nation**
  - **A land**
  - **All nations blessed through your offspring**



# The Covenant with Abram

- **A Conditional Covenant?**
  - ... because Abraham obeyed me...
  - “I am God Almighty. Walk before me and be blameless” (Genesis 17:1)

- **The Principle**

**The Abrahamic Covenant is certain; it will be fulfilled. Obedience is the key to when it will be fulfilled. If Abraham’s descendants do not obey, the covenant will not be fulfilled at that time.**

- **But how were they to know what “obedience” meant?**

# The Covenant with Moses

- Sinai: Israel was in a privileged position...

“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, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:5)

- This is a two-way covenant:
  - Great blessing promised “if” they obey fully
  - Warnings of disaster “if” they do not





# The Covenant with Moses

- **Example:**

“I will look on you with favour and make you fruitful and increase your numbers and I will keep my covenant with you... But if you do not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees... and so violate the covenant, then I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever...” (Leviticus 26:9, 12, 14-16)

- **The Abrahamic Principle**

- **If a particular generation fails, but then repents, the Lord will turn and bless them.**



# The Covenant with Moses

- **Example:**

“If they confess their sins and the sins of their fathers...I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham and I will remember the land... I will not reject them... I am the Lord their God.” (Leviticus 26:40-44)

- **Conclusion:**

- The failure of a generation only resulted in a delay
- Remember the 12 spies who checked out the land?
  - **A 40 year delay!!**

# The Covenant with David

- **God's Promises: 1 Chronicles 17**

- The Lord will make David's name great in the earth (vv7-8)
- Israel will be established in the land (vv9-10)
- The Lord will raise up David's offspring to succeed him and he will build the temple (vv11-12)
- His throne will be established forever and God will never take His love away from him. (v13)

- **“Covenant” does not appear, but...**

You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, ‘I will establish your ... throne firm through all generations’” (Psalm 89:3-4)



# The Covenant with David

- **But there is an “if”...**

“As for you, if you walk before me as David your father did and do all I command... I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father... But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods... then I will uproot Israel from my land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my name.”  
(2 Chronicles 7:17-20)

- **What happened?**
  - Solomon strayed and was succeeded by Rehoboam
  - The kingdom split
  - Both Israel and Judah were eventually exiled

# The Prophets' Vision: The New Covenant

- **What's new?**

**This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people... I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more (Jeremiah 31:33,34)**

- **New Covenant with both houses of Israel (vv31,33)**
- **Forgiveness and sins remembered no more**
- **God's Law written on their hearts by the Spirit**



# The Prophets' Vision: The New Covenant

- Ezekiel speaks of the returning exiles:

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and... keep my laws. They will be my people and I will be their God. (Ezekiel 11:19-20)

- And Isaiah...

“As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord, “My Spirit, who is on you and my words that I have put in your mouth, will not depart from your mouth, or the mouth of your descendants... forever.” (Isaiah 59:21)

# The Prophets' Vision: The New Covenant

- **The link with the Davidic Covenant...**

**I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. (Isaiah 55:3)**

- **Ezekiel says this:**

**My servant David will be king over them and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees... I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. (Ezekiel 37:24,26)**





# Themes coming together

- **The promises to Abraham: The land and the glory of the nation in an everlasting covenant**
- **God's Laws written on their hearts, enabling the promises offered in the Mosaic covenant to be realised**
- **David (or his descendant) on the throne forever, making the promises in the Davidic covenant a reality.**

**But...**

**How was the forgiveness of sins to be achieved?**

- **See The New Testament**



# The New Covenant in the Gospels

- **Matthew's Beginning**

A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1)

- **Gabriel**

“The Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever” (Luke 1:32-33)

- **Zechariah**

“He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David... to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham...” (Luke 1:69, 72,73)



# The New Covenant in the Gospels

- **Moses**

**“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I command him.” (Deuteronomy 18:18)**

- **Stephen in Acts 7:37 confirms that verse refers to Christ**

- **Jesus said...**

**“If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.” (John 5:46)**

# Covenant?

... after the supper he took the cup saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” (Luke 22: 20) – Matthew 26:28 says “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

- **Covenants with Abraham, Moses and David all broke down**
- **Old Testament prophets foresaw a new covenant.**
- **Under this covenant, Israel’s sins would be washed clean through the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you.**
- **How does this work?**
  - See the epistles





# The New Covenant in Hebrews

- **Hebrews 1-10:** All the main features of the Mosaic Regulations become a more glorious reality in Christ
- **Three Key Passages**

The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect) and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God... Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:18-22)

- The old covenant was useless to save (Galatians 3:11)
- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law
- He is the guarantor of a better covenant.



# The New Covenant in Hebrews

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifice, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God... The Holy Spirit says... “This is the covenant I will make with them... I will put my law in their hearts... (their sins) I will remember no more. And where these have been forgiven there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. (Hebrews 10:11-18)

- The repeated sacrifices did not achieve anything
- But Christ’s sacrifice was effective
- Israel’s sins were truly forgiven once for all





# The New Covenant in Hebrews

The ministry Jesus received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one and it is founded on better promises. (Hebrews 8:6-13)

- If the old covenant had worked, God says, there would be no need for a new one
- But God spoke through Jeremiah...
- New covenant promises are better: they are unconditional, based on grace
- This new covenant, with the law written on Israel's hearts will make the old one obsolete.



## In Summary...

- The promises of the Abrahamic covenant were fulfilled through Christ, Abraham's descendent *par excellence*.
- The Davidic covenant was also fulfilled by the Lord Jesus seated on David's throne: the Son of David *par excellence*
- The Mosaic covenant failed because Israel could not keep it
- Christ fulfilled the promises by succeeding where Israel failed
- Jesus provided true cleansing for the nation through the New Covenant, as the prophets foresaw.