

Doctrine of Covenant

The Meaning of Covenants

1. Biblical revelation and redemptive history are united in Scripture with covenants.

- The Eternal Covenant of Grace Hebrews 13:20
- The Edenic Covenant Genesis 1:26-28
- The Adamic Covenant Genesis 3:14-19
- The Noetic Covenant Genesis 8:20-21
- The Abrahamic Covenant Genesis 12:1-3
- The Mosaic Covenant Ex. 20:1-31:18
- The Levitical Covenant Numbers 25:
- The Palestinian Covenant Deuteronomy 30:1-10
- The Davidic Covenant 2 Samuel 7:4-17
- The New Covenant Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:8-12

2. God works in time of which there are two words for in the Greek.

- Chronos, referring to events in chronological order, moment by moment. This time is called, history.
- Kairos, has a special meaning. It has to do with the historic. Everything that happens in time is historical, but not everything that happens is historic. There are moments in time that are pregnant in meaning such as the attack on Pearl Harbor, 1941, or the attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11.

The birth of Christ was historic. *Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.* The death of Christ was historic. *1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.* The resurrection of Christ was historic. *1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

3. Redemptive history is part of real history and it is historic.

4. The Hebrew word for covenant is “berith” (ber-eeth’; to cut). The Greek word is “diatheke” (dee-ath-ay’-kay, testament). The OT concepts were translated by the Septuagint into the Greek.

5. There is a bit of confusion between the concept of “covenant” in the Old Testament, and the idea of “testament” in the New.

6. A “testament” in Greek culture was different from a “covenant” in this way.
 - A “diatheke”, a testament was something that could be changed, at any time, by the testator, as long as the testator was still alive, while an Old Testament Covenant was unchangeable. God disciplined His people for covenant violation, but He did not destroy the covenant. So, in one sense, “diatheke” is inadequate to translate “berith.”
 - The benefits of a “diatheke”, a testament, do not accrue until after the testator is dead, while in a “berith”, a covenant, the benefits are immediate.
7. Despite the challenge of translating the concept of covenant from the OT to the NT, the word “diatheke” is a good translation.
8. There is another point to keep in mind about “berith” or the covenant. To the covenant is added a divine promise so that the ultimate foundation of the covenant rests upon God, not man and his weaknesses.
9. There is another Greek word used to translate covenant and that is the word “sundiatheke” which refers to an agreement between equal partners. But the Jews who translated the Hebrew into Greek wanted nothing to do with that word for they wanted to convey the idea of the covenant is not between equals but between God and man, who is subordinate to God.
10. The word “diatheke” originally had reference to the disposition for one’s self, or a will. It refers to his sovereign determination to give his estate to whom he will. That reflects the sovereignty of God to give His grace, and His covenant, to whom He wills. God chooses the Hebrews, and not the Philistines. God said to Israel, “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” God makes the decision. God makes the choice.
11. While we use the language Old Covenant, New Covenant, Old Testament, New Testament, care must be taken to understand the concepts behind the words.
12. Question. “Who is the greatest prophet of the Old Testament?” Answer. John the Baptist.
 - *Luke 7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.*
13. Question. “When does the NT era begin?” Answer. The NT church began on the night of the Passover in the Upper Room, during the Last Supper. The New Covenant was ratified the next day at Calvary.
 - *Matthew 26:17 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? 18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. 19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.*

20 Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. 21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. 22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? 23 And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. 24 The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. 25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. 26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. 30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

14. The Old Testament Covenant of Redemption does not cover all of the history of the covenant for the Old Testament Covenant did not begin until the Fall. But prior to the Fall, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit entered into the Covenant of Grace, and then the Covenant of Creation.