

ISRAEL: THE EPICENTER OF GOD'S PLAN WEEK 5

BIBLICAL COVENANTS

Covenant - A *covenant* is an agreement between two parties which involves promises on the part of each to the other. In Hebrew, the word for the noun "covenant" is *berit*. *Berit* comes from a Hebrew root word that means "to cut." A covenant entails a "cutting."

Another root word for *berit* is *barah* which means to eat! (Gen. 31:54 – Jacob and Laban made a covenant and they ate; The New Covenant is based on Jesus' shed blood. The disciples and Jesus celebrated a Passover meal on the evening prior to His crucifixion.

The concept of a covenant between God and the Jewish people is a central theme of the Bible.

"Biblical covenant" - One that is noted in the Bible – that is mentioned in the Bible.

There are eight Biblical Covenants: Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Land, Davidic, New Covenant

The Biblical covenants support/undergird the big picture of the Bible.

Why would God make a covenant with man? Covenants are contracts between parties for the purpose of making promises and governing a relationship.

There are two types of covenants:

Conditional – two parties bind themselves to each other (bilateral/two-sided).
Formula: "if you will, then I will" (Ex. 19:8; Ex. 24:3). The fulfillment of a conditional covenant depends upon obedience. Failure to obey results in the covenant being broken.

Unconditional – one party obligates Himself for the outworking/fulfillment of the covenant (unilateral/one-sided). God unconditionally obligates Himself to bring to fulfillment all that He has promised. Obedience is not required. This covenant is characterized by the formula: "I will" (Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 17:6-8; Dt. 30:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Jer. 32:37-41, etc.) which declares God's determination to do exactly what He has promised. There may be conditions in the covenant by which God requests the covenanted

Our study will focus on the covenants that God made with Israel. However, please note the following information re: the first three covenants in Scripture: Edenic, Adamic, and Noahic:

- The Edenic Covenant is found in [Genesis 1:26-30; 2:16-17](#). The Edenic Covenant outlined man's responsibility toward creation and God's directive regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- The Adamic Covenant included the curses pronounced against mankind for the sin of Adam and Eve, as well as God's provision for that sin ([Genesis 3:15](#)).

- The [Noahic Covenant](#) was an unconditional covenant between God and Noah (specifically) and humanity (generally). After the Flood, God promised humanity that He would never again destroy all life on earth with a Flood (see Genesis chapter 9). God gave the rainbow as the sign of the covenant, a promise that the entire earth would never again flood and a reminder that God can and will judge sin ([2 Peter 2:5](#)) – because He did so through the universal flood.

God's plan for Israel begins with the [Abrahamic Covenant](#). The Abrahamic Covenant is the GLUE of the Bible.

The Abrahamic Covenant is the foundation for the study of prophecy!

The Abrahamic Covenant is the “mother of all redemptive covenants,” and God's blessings spring from this covenant and extend to all mankind throughout all the ages!

We read about the Abrahamic Covenant in Gen. 12:1-2, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 22:15-18.

Genesis 12:1-3 – “Now the LORD had said to Abram: Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

The Abrahamic Covenant includes three major provisions. God promised:

- LAND to Abram and his descendants
- SEED – collective as in descendants; the Seed – the Messiah
- BLESSING for the world through the Messiah (Gal. 3:14)

The Abrahamic Covenant addresses the broad plan of God as it affects Abraham's seed/descendants. AND, this covenant impacts the world!

Widespread provisions of this covenant:

- A great nation was to come from Abraham – the nation of Israel (12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:1-2; 22:17)
- He was promised a land (12:1, 7; 13:14-15, 17; 15:17-21; 17:8)
- Abraham himself was to be greatly blessed (12:2; 22:15-17).
- Abraham's name would be great (12:2).
- Abraham and his seed/descendants would be a blessing to others (12:2).
- Those who bless Abraham and his descendants will be blessed (12:3).
- Those who curse Abraham and his descendants will be cursed (12:3).
- In Abraham all will ultimately be blessed – a promise of Gentile blessing (12:3; 22:18)
- Abraham would receive a son through his wife Sarah (15:1-4; 17:16-21).
- His descendants would undergo bondage in Egypt (15:13-14).
- Other nations as well as Israel would come forth from Abraham (17:3-4, 6)

- His name would be changed from Abram (Exalted Father) to Abraham (Father of Many Nations).
- Sarai's (My Princess) name was to be changed to Sarah (Princess).
- Circumcision was a sign of the covenant (17:9-14).

Genesis 15

Abram had just won a great victory over eastern kings (Gen. 14:14-15). Why did God tell Abram, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great." Perhaps Abram feared that there would be retaliation played out by these kings against him. However, this is NOT Abram's greatest concern. Gen. 15:2-3 expresses Abram's greatest concern. He appears to be asking God, "What good is success without a successor?"

In the Ancient Middle East a childless couple could adopt a servant or a man who didn't have property. (Nuzi tablets found in 1925 – patriarchal customs) This adopted person was obligated to care for the needs of their "parents," weep over and bury them when they died. At this point, Eliezer was the best for which Abram could hope. YET - God had promised Abram seed – descendants – 10 years earlier!

God tells Abram that Eliezer won't be his heir, Abram. God promises numerous offspring – numerous – like in the stars in the heavens. And this will come about through a – SON! Verse 6 is the first time "*believe*" is used in Scripture! Belief is connected with the promise of a – SON. And, this is also the first time that Abram is said to have been reckoned as righteous. Abram was justified by faith – he was declared righteous by God. Abram was saved!

NOTE: God's way of saving men is the same throughout the Bible – OT and NT. The same! There is no other way. It's always by grace through faith in God's revealed message which is always focused on Jesus alone – the Jewish Messiah. While Abram was saved by faith in the One Who would come, we are saved by faith in this One Who has come.

Abram asked God to prove His promises??!?? Remember, Abram had no title deed to the land. BUT, Abram had the promises of the sovereign God of the universe!!

Gen. 15:9 reads more like a shopping list for a witch doctor than something the LORD would ask for. Gen. 15:10-11 - But Abram knew exactly what to do with these animals: he **cut them in two . . . and placed each piece opposite the other**. Abram understood God was telling him to get a contract ready for signing. In those days, contracts were made by the sacrificial cutting of animals, with the split carcasses of the animals lying on the ground – on each side of a ditch. The blood from the animals would run into the ditch. Both parties to the covenant would walk through the animal parts together, repeating the terms of the covenant. *The LORD made a covenant in [Genesis 15:18](#) is*

literally, “the LORD cut a covenant.” If the covenant is broken by one of the parties, their blood would be poured out just as the animals’ blood was shed.

God causes a **deep sleep** to fall upon Abram. Abram wouldn’t be walking in the ditch.

Gen. 15:12-16 - God tells Abram of their sojourn in Egypt (Ex. 12:40 – 430 years) and their affliction/bondage in Egypt for 400 years. God tells Abram that He will judge Egypt – which led to the Exodus from Egypt. The possessions that the children of Israel brought out of Egypt were requested (Ex. 11:2-3; Ex. 12:35-36). God tells Abram that He will judge the Canaanites because of their wickedness which had not yet reached the “complete” point. Deut. 9:4-5 – the Canaanites would be expelled from the land at the point in which their iniquity was “complete” – and that marked the entrance of the children of Israel into Canaan.

Gen. 15:17 - God represents Himself by two emblems: a **smoking oven and a burning torch**. The smoking oven on Mount Sinai ([Exodus 19:18](#)), and the cloud of God’s Shekinah glory ([1 Kings 8:10-12](#)). The burning torch reminds us of the pillar of fire representing the presence of God ([Exodus 13:21-22](#)), of the burning bush displaying the presence of God before Moses ([Exodus 3:4](#)), and of the fire from heaven which sometimes consumed sacrifices God was well pleased with ([1 Kings 18:38](#); [1 Chronicles 21:26](#); [2 Chronicles 7:1](#)). God, represented by the smoking oven and the burning torch, passed through the animal parts by Himself. This was a unilateral/one-sided covenant. Abram never “signed” the covenant, because God “signed” it for both of them. Heb. 6:13 – God swore by Himself when He made the promises to Abraham. Therefore, the certainty of the covenant God makes with Abram is based on Who God is, not on who Abram is or what Abram does. The outworking/fulfillment of the covenant is NOT based on Abram’s obedience. This covenant cannot fail, because God cannot fail.

By quoting the specific lands Abram’s descendants will inherit, God makes it plain that this is a literal, material, physical promise of land with boundaries that Israel will indeed possess in the future.

The Abrahamic Covenant is an UNCONDITIONAL Covenant based on God and God alone. It is an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:7, 19; I Chron. 16:17). Israel will possess the land (everlasting possession – Gen. 17:8; Jer. 7:7; Jer. 25:5); the Messiah will come through the Jewish line; both Jews and Gentiles will be blessed through the Jewish Messiah. The Abrahamic Covenant will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom – at which time the Messiah – the “Seed” will be seated on David’s throne; and at which time Israel will inherit the land; and there will be more evangelism – the ingathering of the nations (the nations will be blessed) – Zech. 8:23.

When you are studying passages in the Bible that may appear to indicate that God is finished with Israel - please realize that view point is actually stating that God is NOT faithful to His promises to Israel. Check out Eze. 36:20-29.

Passages throughout the Bible that speak to the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant in God's plan:

Genesis 50:24 – Joseph told his brothers that God would bring them to the land which He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Exodus 2:24 – after Joseph died, God made it CLEAR that His covenant was still in force.

Deuteronomy 9:5-6 – Before the Israelites entered the land God had promised them – God told them that it was NOT because of their faithful obedience that they would possess the land. It is because of God's covenant with the fathers.

Deuteronomy 4:31 – *“(for the LORD your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.”* The permanence of God's covenant with Abraham is linked to GOD and His compassion which is ETERNAL!

II Kings 13:23 – Because of God's covenant with Abraham, God states that He will not destroy Israel!

Micah 7:18, 20 – God's prophet, Micah, had already underscored the many corrupt sins of Israel. Judgment would come upon Israel – but Micah was confident, as seen in this passage, that Israel has a future because of the promises given to the patriarchs. Micah is completely convinced that it is impossible to frustrate the covenant commitment of God.

Luke 1:67-73 – Zacharias, after his son, John, is born and named, reflects on the centuries gone by and proclaims under the direction of the Holy Spirit that God was still intent on fulfilling His covenant commitments to Israel. (This passage should be highlighted in Christmas pageants!!!)

Acts 3:25-26 – Peter spoke to the Jewish non-believers (mostly) who had made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of Shavuot/Pentecost. This was 50 days following Jesus' resurrection – AFTER the nation of Israel had rejected Jesus as their Messiah. YET – Peter states that God's covenant with Abraham is still in effect.

Directly following God's covenant expressed to Abram in Genesis 12, we see very telling outworkings of the covenant which speak to the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant and the seriousness of God's promises to Israel:

Genesis 12:10-20

Abram goes down into Egypt (WHY??) and instructs Sarai to tell a half-truth – that she is his sister. Abram feared for his life. If Pharaoh thought that Sarai was married to Abram, Pharaoh could have killed Abram and taken Sarai. With telling the half-truth, Pharaoh just took Sarai and left Abram alone. Pharaoh took Sarai and placed her in his harem.

What had God promised Abram? Seed through Sarai – and the Promised Messiah through this seed, Isaac (Gen. 21:12). With Pharaoh taking Sarai – the pure line of promise could've been corrupted. Satan was at work! If anyone can be said to be at fault here it is certainly not Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Abram turned his back on the Promised Land and told Sarai to lie! In this chapter we see the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant, God begins to operate on Abram's behalf.

Genesis 20:1-18

We see the same situation in Genesis 20 – with a different king in a different country. Once again the same half-truth is told. Once again the result is the same: Sarah is taken from Abraham. Again, in the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant, God operates on Abraham's behalf (Gen. 20:3, 18).

These passages perhaps indicate the first real attempt at destroying the Jews. Both of these incidents with Pharaoh and Abimelech occurred before Isaac was born. Here are attempts to keep Isaac from being born. Abimelech acted in such a way (in his naiveté) as to destroy the Jews and now God plagues Abimelech. Gen. 20:18 – it was now the house of Abimelech that faced possible extinction because of the inability of the women in his household to give birth. After Abraham prayed for Abimelech upon the latter's restoring Sarah, the curse was lifted. These first attempts to destroy the Jews failed and Isaac was born.

It has been said that the Abrahamic Covenant is the constitution of our salvation.

Eph. 2:8-9 – *“Salvation is by grace through faith and that NOT of ourselves; it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast.”*

We come face-to-face with the faithfulness of God in the outworkings of the Abrahamic Covenant. This has application to us. If you believe that God has reneged on His promises to Israel or has transferred His promises to the Church. . .what do you do with Rom. 11:29 – *“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”*? If you believe that God will no longer keep His promises to Israel – what about God's promises to us as the Church? Then do you believe He could very possibly renege on His promises to us?

What are the three provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant? Land, seed, blessing. The Abrahamic Covenant works itself out in:

Land: Land Covenant (Deut. 6; Deut. 28-30) – physical land within specific boundaries promised to Israel. Inherited by a restored national Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

Seed: Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7:15-16) – a physical, literal, earthly kingdom was promised to the nation of Israel with the Messiah, THE Seed (Gal. 3:19), seated on David's throne.

Blessing: New Covenant (Jer. 31:31ff) – universal blessing. Salvation extended to both Jew and Gentile based on Jesus' shed blood. (Gal. 3:14)

The Mosaic Covenant was a conditional/bilateral covenant. Two parties came together in this covenant: God and Israel. Israel's obedience was required within the Mosaic Covenant. The Law was given to the children of Israel to serve as their tutor to lead them to Jesus (Gal. 3:24). The Law was given because of transgressions UNTIL the Seed would come (Gal. 3:19). The Mosaic Covenant was temporary. Israel broke this covenant (Jer. 31:31) and were then scattered as God had promised (Deut. 28:64). The Mosaic covenant is the covenant referred to in Hebrews 8:7-13. Note also Hebrews 7:11-13.

Recommended Reading

Understanding End Times Prophecy – Paul Benware

The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy – Tim LaHaye