

THE LORD'S - COVENANTS OF PROMISE

By Kevin E. Hughes

Why Study the **Covenants** in the Bible ?

Covenants as a **Framework** for a **Biblical Theology**

OR a way of looking for **God's** Overall Plan for **Man** through **His Covenant Promises**

What stirred my Personal Interest?

Noticed different Conflicting Views on **Covenants**:

How many **Covenants** are there ?

What are the **Covenants** Names ? Why different Names ?

Who Initiated the **Covenants** ?

Who were the **Covenants** given to ?

When were the **Covenants** given ?

How long did and do **Covenants** Last ? Were **they** Temporary or Everlasting ?

What were the **Covenants** for ? OR What was **their** Purpose ?

Class Approach Considered:

Option #1 > Teach from an existing **Book** on **Covenants** (Explain)

Option #2 > Teach from a particular **Theological** perspective on **Covenants**
like **Catholic**, **Reformed**, or **Dispensational** or other.

Option #3 > Go back **Historically** to show how **Church Views** on **Covenants** developed over the centuries. Compare **Early Church Theological Views** with current ones.

In other words, **Study the Covenants** for **ourselves**, using **Inductive Bible Study**.

Class Approach Used:

Begin with, a **Topical – Historical Study** of the **Covenants**

Overview of Various **Covenant Views**, throughout **Church History**

Overview of **Greek Influence** on **Jews** before and during **Christ**

Overview of **Church Father's Influence** on **Covenants**.

Overview of different **Theological Views**

Early Church and **Roman Catholic** Theology, and **Church Fathers** Theology.

Reformed Theology and **Covenant** Theology, in **Reformation** History

Various **Protestant Denominational Theologies**, since **Reformation**
Dispensational Theology, after the **Reformation**

Switch to, **Inductive Bible Study** Verse by Verse **Study** of the **Covenants**

Study How **Covenants** Progressively Unfolded from **Genesis** to **Revelation**.

Study How each **Covenant**, Relates to or Builds on, previous **Covenants**.

Create **Working Outline** of each Bible Passage, leading to **Exegesis** of the Text.

Provide **Charts** to help see Broad Concepts in a single Image.

Supply **Questions** to encourage **Class** Discussion, Interaction, and
Personal **Exegesis** skills.

Inductive Bible Study: The Bible Text, is understood as Inspired by God, Factual, and Inerrant, then interpretation of the Text is drawn using a **Literal-Historical-Grammatical method** of Interpretation.

What is a **Covenant** in the Bible ?

COVENANT Definition in English Dictionary:

Covenant: a written agreement or promise usually under seal, between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.² (God context?)

COVENANT Definitions in Various Bible Dictionaries, and Bible References:

Covenant: an agreement between two parties.³ (God context?)

Covenant: A bond in blood sovereignly administered.⁴ (popular) (Not all in **Blood**)

Covenant: mutual agreement, entered into by two or more parties, whereby they stand solemnly bound to each other to perform the conditions of the contract.⁵ (God context?)

Covenant: It presupposes two or more parties who come together to make a contract, agreeing on promises, stipulations, privileges, and responsibilities.⁶ (God context?)

Covenant: Arrangement between two parties involving mutual obligations;⁷ (God context?)

Covenant: An agreement between two parties that specifies requirements for at least one party, and includes blessing and curses for obedience or failure.⁸ (God context?)

Covenant: An unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between **God** and **man** that stipulates the conditions of the relationship.⁹ (relationship?)

Covenant: An agreement or testament between **men** or between **God** and **His people**.¹⁰ (agreement?)

Covenant: is a promise or an agreement between **God** and **man**.¹¹ (agreement?)

Covenant: A contractual arrangement between **God** and a **Person**, or between **human beings**, which required binding action from one or both parties, one party often had higher status in the arrangement.¹²

COVENANT Definition - Conclusion:

COVENANT of **God** with **MAN**. A **Promise** of **God**, always initiated by **God**, between **God** and a **Person** or a **People** Group, according to **His Plan, Purpose** and **Will**.

IF the **Covenant** specified certain binding conditions for **God** to fulfill both parties' obligations then **it** was considered a **Unilateral** or **Un-Conditional Covenant**.

IF the **Covenant** specified certain binding conditions for **God** to fulfill, **God's** Part, and separate conditions for **Man** to fulfill, **Man's** Part, then **it** was considered a **Bi-lateral** or **Conditional Covenant**.

Notice, I left off the word “agreement”

In an **Un-Conditional Covenant**, **Man** doesn't “**agree**” with anything, **God** does everything, **it** is guaranteed that **it** will “come to pass” no matter what **Man** does, as in most **Covenants**.

In a **Conditional Covenant**, **Man** does “**agree**” with what **he** must fulfill, and understands that breaking the agreement, leads to being “**Cursed**” and fulfilling the agreement leads to being “**Blessed**”.

² Merriam-Websters Dictionary

³ Enns, P. P. (1989). The Moody handbook of theology (p. 631), Easton Bible Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary,

⁴ O. Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Covenants, (p. 4)

⁵ Arthur W. Pink, The divine Covenants, (p. 26)

⁶ Van Groningen, G. (1996). Covenant. In *Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology* (p. 124).

⁷ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). Covenant. In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 530).

⁸ Witthoff, D. (Ed.). (2014). *The Lexham Cultural Ontology Glossary*.

⁹ Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 1238).

¹⁰ Sparks, J. N. (2008). *The Orthodox Study Bible: Notes* (p. 1778).

¹¹ Willmington, H. L. (1987). *Willmington's book of Bible lists* (p. 92).

¹² Bible Sense Lexicon, LOGOS Bible Software.

Covenant of God with Man

Covenant of God with Man

A Promise of **God**, always initiated by **God**, between **God** and a **Person** or a **People** Group, according to **His** Plan, Purpose, and Will.

Unilateral - Covenant of God

IF the **Covenant** specified certain binding conditions for **God** to fulfill both parties' obligations then it was considered a **Unilateral** or **Un-Conditional Covenant**.

Bilateral - Covenant of God

IF the **Covenant** specified certain binding conditions for **God** to fulfill, **God's** Part, and separate conditions for **Man** to fulfill, **Man's** Part, then it was considered a **Bilateral** or **Conditional Covenant**.

Covenants of God > as a Testament or a Will

The **Old (Testament)** is understood to mean the **Old (Covenant)** > the **Mosaic Covenant**

The **New (Testament)** is understood to mean the **New (Covenant)** > the **New Covenant**

A **Testament** is used today as in a **Person's** last **Will** and **Testament**.

Testament > A **Will** that **someone** makes, saying (legally declaring) what should be done with **their** money and property (assets) after **they** die: A **Testament** is also a **Will**. *Cambridge Dictionary*

Covenants of God > are usually **binding decrees** but other times **binding agreements**

In the **Old Testament** this concerns two parties, **God** and **Man**.

“**My (God's) covenant** with **you (Noah)**”, **Gen 9:9**

Binding Decrees of God

Unilateral Covenants or **Un-Conditional Covenants** are authored, decided, and acted on by only **one involved party (God)**, irrespective of what the second party (**Man**) does (**Un-Conditional**).

Binding Agreements of God

Bilateral Covenants or **Conditional Covenants** are authored, decided, by (**God**) and acted on by the **two involved parties**; (**God**) the first party and (**Man**) the second party.

IF either party defaults then the **Covenant** is no longer binding (**Conditional**).

Covenants of God > as a **Decree of God**

Decree: “the **Will** or **purpose** of **God**, interpreted through events considered to be **God's** doing”.

Decree: an order from one having authority (**God**), **determining** (causing) what is to be done or to take place (like prophecy or an edict or a law).

Covenants of God > as Promises of God

Of all that **God Promised** “not one word (of **promise**) has failed”, and Not one word will fail.

1 Kings 8:56 (also Jos 21:45, Jos 23:14-15, Jer 29:10)

56 “Blessed be **the Lord**, who has given rest to **His** people **Israel**, according to all that **He promised**;
not one word has failed of all **His** good **promise**, which **He promised** through **Moses His** servant.

God's Promises are Good, He is Good for His Promises

WHY ?

Because **He** “cannot **Lie**” and **He** will “do **it**” and **He** will “make **it** good” and not “change **His** mind”

Titus 1:1–2

1 **Paul**, a bond-servant of **God** and an apostle of **Jesus Christ**, for the faith of those chosen of **God**
and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,

2 in the hope of eternal life, which **God**, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,

Numbers 23:19

19 “**God** is not a **man**, that **He** should **lie**, Nor a **son of man**, that **He** should repent;
Has **He** said, and will **He** not do **it**? Or has **He** spoken, and will **He** not make **it** good?”

1 Samuel 15:29

29 “Also the Glory of **Israel** (**God**) will not lie or change **His** mind;
for **He** is not a **man** that **He** should change **His** mind.”

Covenants of **God** > have a **Covenantor** and a **Covenantee** (Legal terms)

the person making the **promise** is the “**covenantor**” (**God**),

and the person to who benefits from the **promise** is a “**covenantee**”

(like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sons of Israel, David, the Gentiles...).

God is the sole author of the **Covenant**, **Man** has no say in what is written or proclaimed.

Covenantor: (legal term) a party (**God**) who makes a **Covenant promise**.

and who is active to perform the obligation expressed in a **Covenant promise**.

Covenantee: (legal term) the person (**Man**) to whom the **Covenant promise** is made

and who is idle in the obligation expressed in a **Covenant promise**

Encarta Dictionary: English (North America)

Adapted from The LawDictionary.org

Adapted from Collins Dictionary of Law, W.J. Stewart, 2006

Covenants of God > as “I Will” statements, of God

“**Will**” Definition: the faculty by which a person (**God**) decides on, initiates, or establishes an action.

Genesis 6:18

18 “But **I** (**God**) will establish **My** covenant with **you** (Noah); and **you** shall enter **the ark**
—**you** and **your sons** and **your wife**, and **your sons’ wives** with **you**.

Genesis 17:2

2 “**I** (**God**) will establish **My** covenant between **Me** and **you** (Abram), And **I will** multiply **you** exceedingly.”

Genesis 17:7

7 “**I** (**God**) will establish **My** covenant between **Me** and **you** and **your descendants** after **you** throughout
their generations for an everlasting **covenant**, to be **God** to **you** and to **your descendants** after **you**.

Covenants of God > as Oaths of God or Swearing of God

“Oath” Definition:

a solemn **promise**, often invoking a **divine** (God) witness, regarding **one's** future action or behavior.

Hebrews 6:16–18

16 For **men swear** by one greater than **themselves** (God), and with **them** an **oath** given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. [What Men Do]

17 In the same way **God**, desiring even more to show to **the heirs** of the **promise** the unchangeableness of **His purpose**, interposed with an **oath**, [What God Does]

18 so that (Reason) by two unchangeable things (**Promise & Oath**) in which it is impossible for **God to lie**, **we** who have taken refuge would have **strong encouragement** to take hold of the hope set before **us**.

“Swear” Definition:

make a solemn statement or **promise** undertaking to do or affirm that something is the case.

Synonyms: **vow**, **promise** under **oath**, solemnly **promise**, **pledge** oneself, give **one's word**.

Luke 1:73

73 The **oath** which **He** (God) **swore** to **Abraham our father**,

Acts 2:30

30 “And so, because **he** (David) was a **prophet** and knew that **God** had **sworn** to **him** with an **oath** to seat one of **his descendants** on **his throne**,

Covenants of God > apply to certain Men and their Physical Descendants (Seed, Offspring)

Genesis 9:9

9 “Now behold, **I Myself** do establish **My covenant** with **you** (Noah), and with **your descendants** after **you**;

The Lord, the **covenantor**, is not only concerned with the **covenantee** (like Noah),

but with the **covenantee's** future **physical descendants** (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel, Ps 105:6–11)

Like **Descendants** of > (**Abraham**, Gen 12:7, 13:15, 17:17, **Isaac**, Gen 26:3-4, **Jacob**, Gen 28:4, 13-14, 35:12, **Moses**, Ex 32:13, 33:1, **David**, 2 Sam 7:12, **Nation of Israel**, Ps 105:10)

Physical Descendants (Seed) are person's that come forth from one's body (Heirs)

As **Isaac** came from **Abraham's body**,

“**one** who will come forth from **your own body**, **he** shall be **your heir**.” (Gen 15:4)

Physical Descendants as seen in **Genealogies** of the OT and the NT. (Gen 5 + 11, 1 Chron 1-9, Matt 1, Luke 3)

Physical Descendants as seen in (**Abraham**, Gen 17:7, **Isaac**, Gen 26:3, **Jacob**, Gen 35:12, **Moses**, Ex 32:13, **Sons of Israel**, Ex 6:2-8, Deut 1:8, 4:37, 2 Chron 20:7, **David**, Jer 33:22, **Jesus**, Matt 1:1)

Covenants of God >

as a **Testament** or a **Will** of **God**

as **Binding Decrees** of **God**

as **Binding Agreements** of **God**

as a **Decree** of **God**

as **Promises** of **God**

as “**I Will**” statements, of **God**

as **Sworn Oaths** of **God**