

## Covenant

### New Testament

- The word translated “covenant,” διαθηκη, is also translated “testament”.
- The same word is used interchangeably with “promise” in Galatians 3:16 – 17. The promise to Abraham in verse 16 is called a covenant in verse 17. The promise to Abraham concerning a Messiah is called a covenant in Acts 3:25.
- Circumcision is called a covenant in Acts 7:8 (Genesis 17), in which God promised:
  - To be their God
  - To give them the land of Canaan
  - But only if circumcised
- The Law of Moses is called a covenant in Romans 9:4 and a covenant of promise in Ephesians 2:12.
- The Old and New Covenants are contrasted in Hebrews 8 – 9:
  - The New is established on better promises (8:6).
  - The Old was ineffective (8:7, 9:9).
  - The Old was broken by Israel (8:9).
  - The participants in the New Covenant will “know” God (8:10 – 11).
  - The New tabernacle is superior (9:11, 9:24).
  - The New is effective (9:14).
  - The same contrast is made in Galatians 4:21 – 31 and 21 Corinthians 3:5 – 6.
- The covenant being referenced in Luke 1:72 is generic, encompassing many promises of God rather than a specific one:
  - Israel will be saved from its enemies
  - The ancestors will receive mercy
  - Israel may serve without fear
- Jesus called the cup in the Lord’s Supper “the blood of the covenant” (Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:25).

### Old Testament

- Hebrews 8:8 – 12 makes a secure bridge to the Hebrew word for covenant as used in Jeremiah 31:31 – 33. The Hebrew word is number 1285, and is the only Hebrew word translated covenant in the KJV.
- Several are described in the Old Testament:
  - Noah (Genesis 6:18, 9:9 – 17): Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood. The sign of this covenant is the rainbow.
  - Abraham (Genesis 15:18 – 21): Abraham’s descendants will inherit Canaan.
  - Abraham (Genesis 17:2 – 8): Abraham will be fruitful and his descendants will inherit Canaan.
  - God remembered the promise to Abraham about Canaan (Exodus 2:24, 6:4 – 5).
  - Circumcision (Genesis 17:9 – 27): See Acts 3:25 above.
  - Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech concerning water rights (Genesis 21:27, 32).
  - Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech of mutual non-aggression (Genesis 26:28).
  - Jacob and Laban made a covenant of territory (Genesis 31:44).
  - God called the Law of Moses a covenant (Exodus 19:5 *et al*).
  - The Israelites were to make no covenants with the Canaanites (Exodus 23:32).

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### Observations

- Some covenants had specific conditions, others did not.
- A covenant might be between people or between God and people.
- A covenant includes the idea that the parties are making promises.

### Where do people go wrong with such a simple concept:

- Odd teaching: “A covenant is a sacred agreement between God and a person or group of people. God sets specific conditions, and He promises to bless us as we obey those conditions. When we choose not to keep covenants, we cannot receive the blessings, and in some instances we suffer a penalty as a consequence of our disobedience.” (from an LDS website) But...
  - Biblical covenants are not always with God.
  - The flood promise does not seem to have conditions.
- Odd teaching: “Some believe that the church fulfills the covenants and God will never deal with Israel again. This is called replacement theology and has little scriptural evidence.” But...
  - Romans 9:6 – 8 Children of promise
  - Galatians 3:7, 14 – 22 Children of Abraham by faith
  - Philippians 3:3 We are the true circumcision
  - 2 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 3:17, 6:19 We are the true temple
  - Kingdom of priests Exodus 19:6 (everlasting Exodus 40:15, Numbers 25:13) Revelation 1:6, 1 Peter 2:5, 9
  - David’s line reigning forever
  - Which covenants? (Romans 9:4)