

Covenant

Introduction

1. The central theme of the Bible concerns how man can have fellowship with God.
2. One of the ways the Bible addresses this subject is through covenant relationships.

I. The Basic Meaning of Covenant.

A. Technical Meaning

1. Berit, meaning to bind or to fetter, originally carrying the idea of "to cut" (Gen. 15:1-18; Jer. 34:17-20).
2. Diatheke, meaning a unilateral disposition or arrangement that can be either accepted or rejected but not altered; a will or testament.

B. Practical Meaning

1. A lawful relationship.
2. A stable relationship.
3. A trust/faith inspiring fellowship.
4. An exclusive fellowship.

II. Covenant Relationships in the Bible.

A. Adamic (Gen. 1-3)

1. While men do not inherit Adam's sin, Adam stands as a representative figure for mankind (Rom. 5:12-19).
2. An initial covenant of works was given--Adam and Eve could not sin even once and remain in the Garden of Eden and in fellowship with God.
3. Following the fall of Adam and Eve, faith would be a part of all future salvation covenants.
4. A promise of grace was given to point the way to future covenants and the ultimate solution to the sin problem (Gen. 3:15).

B. Noahic (Gen. 6:8, 13, 18).

1. Here the provisions of a covenant of grace, faith, law and works is given that sets a precedent for all future salvation covenants.
2. Noah's obedience of faith led to God's grace for himself and for the future (Gen. 9:1-13).

C. Abrahamic (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-18).

1. This is the covenant that stands as the most fundamental of all covenants prior to Christ.
2. Even the covenant with Israel by Moses was but a means of arriving at the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:15-22).

3. The covenant with Abraham had two basic aspects.
 - a. The temporal dimension dealt with the ultimate formation of Israel and her government (Gen. 12:1-2).
 - b. The eternal aspect dealt with salvation for the world (Gen. 12:3).
4. Again, we see the basic elements of grace, faith, law and works combining in this covenant.

D. Mosaic

1. By far the most detailed covenant in the Old Testament.
2. In many aspects it was symbolic or typical of the future universal covenant in Christ (Heb. 8:1-5; 10:1).
3. It was a further development of the nationalistic aspects of the promises made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3a; Gal. 3:15-18).
4. This covenant was not only for the religion of Israel, but also it gave the basis of Israel's civil law.
5. This covenant was in force until it was fulfilled in Christ (Matt. 5:17-18; Eph. 2:15; Jn. 19:30).
6. The Jews stumbled by thinking that their hope was in the merit of law keeping rather than through God's grace in faithful obedience (Rom. 9:30-33; 1:5; 16:26).
7. The Jews did not join faith to their deeds (Heb. 4:2).

E. Davidic

1. Temporal and spiritual elements (II Sam. 7:12-14; Isa. 9:6-7; Lk. 1:30-33; Acts 2:30-31).
2. The certainty of the temporal aspects was tied to man's faithfulness (I Kings 5:1-5; 2:1-4; I Chron. 28:1-8).
3. The certainty of the spiritual elements was tied to God's faithfulness (Rom. 3:3-4).
4. Psalm 89 deals with temporal failings (no person on the throne) and ultimate spiritual success.

F. New Covenant

1. Promised in the Old Testament (Jer. 31:31-34).
2. Fulfilled in Christ and His atoning death (Matt. 26:27-28).
3. Contains all the basic elements of grace, faith, law and works.
4. Fulfills the Old Covenant types and shadows (Heb. 8:1-13; 10:1).
5. Contains the basis of all forgiveness--Christ (Heb. 10:19-22; 8:11-22).
6. It is the basis for our response to God today (Jn. 14:26; 16:13-14; Matt. 28:20; Col. 3:17, 23; Eph. 4:11-16).

III. Law Versus Promise (Gal. 3:16-18).

- A. Law puts the primary responsibility on man to merit by his good works.
 1. Man, however, is a sinner who falls short (Rom. 3:23).

2. Man earns death (Rom. 6:23).
- B. Promise puts the primary responsibility on God to account for merit.
 1. God cannot sin.
 2. He is dependable (II Cor. 1:20).
 3. In Christ the sinless offering of the Word Who became flesh becomes the basis of our salvation (Heb. 4:14-16; 7:26-28).
- C .Our necessity is therefore the obedience of faith rather than sinless perfection (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Rom. 4:1-8; Jas. 2:14-26).

Conclusions

1. In covenant, God offers to us the terms of having a relationship with Him.
2. We cannot amend the terms; we can only accept or reject.
3. In Christ, we have the fulfillment of all covenant promises.

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