

COVENANTS
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THE MEANING OF A COVENANT: Covenant (Hebrew= berit, Greek= diatheke) is a solemn agreement between two parties for self-giving, sacrificial intimacy. A covenant is jealously guaranteed by the covenanting parties with an oath. It may be:

1. mutually agreed between two equals (also Greek= suntheke as in peace treaties for civil alliances, compacts for social relationships and self-plighting troths for marriages).
Here, blood covenants are cut to bind the parties into a lifelong brotherhood/friendship/partnership/union and carry the penalty of condemnation and ostracism on the violator. (Gen 31:44-54; Joshua 9).
2. unilaterally stipulated by a superior (e.g. God or any potentate) with the inferior graciously invited to pledge consent (as in Divine or worship Testaments and Suzerain or royal Ordinances).
Here, blood covenants are cut to bind to irrevocably unending allegiance and usually impose the curse or sentence of death on the violator, who is inevitably the inferior party. (Exo 24:4-8; Jer 34:18). But there is usually a provision for atonement.

BLOOD has life in it (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:11 a). Blood Covenants save/give life (Joh 6:53-54; Lev 17:11 b; Heb 2:14) and cost life (Gen 9:5; Jer 34:18), but last beyond life (Heb 9:12-15; Heb 12:24).

Unilaterally stipulated Covenants could be based on:

1. conditional law (promises with commandments – “If you will ..., then I will ...”) for regulation of hard-heartedness and lawlessness; or
2. unconditional grace (promises without commandments) either as:
 - (i) reward for past merit (“Because you have ..., I will surely ...”) or
 - (ii) grant for no merit (“Because I have ..., I will surely ...”).

Christian marriage is a good example of mutual covenant between a husband and a wife plighting their life, love and livelihood to each other in the Lord, (NOT demanding love and service from, BUT devoting such to, each other). The New Testament salvation in Christ is unilaterally granted by God to all who pledge their commitment to Christ.

Christ is both the Mediator (Finisher/Perfecter) of the New Covenant (Heb 8:6; Heb 9:15; Heb 12:24) and the Testator (Author/Pioneer) of the New Testament (Heb 9:16-17; Heb 12:2). Through His death Christ activated His Gospel Testament once-for-all: and by His

resurrection from death, He lives forever to administer His New Covenant perpetually (Heb 7:24-28).

WITH THE ENACTMENT OF THE NEW COVENANT, EVERY OTHER COVENANT FADES AND VANISHES AWAY (Heb 8:13). No wonder the New Covenant was, in apostolic times, known even among Jewish Christians as the covenant which is “better” (Heb 7:22), “second” (Heb 8:7) and “new” (Heb 9:15).

Covenants have four elements shared by the covenanting parties:

1. the terms or responsibility and benefit as agreed/stipulated and consented;
2. the curse or penalties for violation;
3. the oath or binding pledge in God's name for accepting responsibilities, benefits and penalties;
4. the sign-seal or rite/symbol of ratification and commemoration.

Covenants with God involve God taking the initiative to graciously make promises and issue commandments (and curses), with invitation to man who then pledges to keep the commands, accept the promises as well as the penalties.

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A. COVENANTS IN THE SCRIPTURE: God's mandate blessing on Adam to replenish and subdue the earth, God's ban on Adam from the tree of knowledge and God's curse for sin and promise of the Seed are not called nor describe as “covenant” in the Scriptures. God made what the Scripture clearly calls “covenants” with:

1. Noah for preservation of sinful humanity from universal deluge (Gen 9:9-17) – Unconditional Covenant.
2. Abraham for descendants with National Material blessing for the holy-land heritage (Gen 17:2-21) – Conditional Covenant;
and Messianic Spiritual blessings for all nations (Gen 12:2-4) – Unconditional Covenant.
3. Israel (Legal/Probationary and Temporal/Preparatory, Gal 3:23-25; Gal 4:1-4) – Conditional Covenant:
At Sinai (under Moses) for conditional heritage of the holy-land temporalities as God's special people (Exo 24:4-8; Exo 34:10-28).
This was thereafter re-enacted severally:
 - under Moses at Moab (Deu 29:1 ff),
 - under Joshua (Josh 24),
 - under Jehoiada (2Ch 23:3),
 - under Hezekiah (2Ch 29:10),
 - under Josiah (2Ki 23:3),
 - under Ezra (Ezr 10:3).
4. Levi (Mal 2:4) and Phinehas (Num 25:12-13) for Israelite priesthood – Unconditional Covenant.
5. David (2Sam 7; 1Chron 17) for Israelite and Messianic RULE – Unconditional Covenant.
6. The New (Final, Internalised, Eternal, Universal and Messianic REDEMPTION) Covenant with BOTH Israel and All Peoples through Christ for ALL Spiritual blessings (Luk 1:72-79;

Mat 26:26-29; Joh 1:29; Isa 49:8; Isa 56:3-8; Jer 31:31-33; Rom 4:13-14; Gal 3:8, Gal 3:29; Heb 8:1) – Unconditional Covenant.

NOTE: As humanity matured, God gradually revealed His Kingdom administration by building each newer covenant on top of the older covenants. God began to reveal His Kingdom widely with universal covenants to Adam and Noah for Kingdom commission, till Abraham to Moses and David when God narrowed into Israel as His Kingdom example with national covenants, till Christ when God expanded His covenant universally again for Kingdom fulfilment.

The Scripture shows that God comes redemptively to man by means of COVENANT RELATIONSHIP as the sure and intimate way of revealing Himself and dispensing His riches. Otherwise, worshipping God would be a fruitless guesswork – a mere uncertain groping as in the dark (Act 17:27). By means of His condescending Covenants and through our loyal commitment (i.e. faith and obedience), God graciously invites us to obtain His superlative blessings: (i.e.

- restoration to life of fellowship with God,
- adoption to heritage of God's Kingdom and
- endowments with divine possessions of:
 - spiritualities – purity & power, and
 - temporalities – protection & provision).

All the covenants are unconditional except the covenant with Israel and of the Promised Land (SEE No 2a and 3 ABOVE) which are conditional.

While all older covenants promised temporal blessings, the New Covenant promises spiritual blessings.

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B. THE CLASSICAL VIEW on covenants was that there are two principal covenants:

1. Old Covenant of Works with Adam (First Adam) in time only i.e. Old or Legal Covenant promise of eternal life based on our obedience to the moral Law. Rom 10:5; Rom 5:12-14;
2. New Covenant of Grace with Christ (Second Adam) in eternity and in time i.e. New or Gospel Covenant promise of eternal life based on Christ's unity with the Father and our faith in the redeeming Christ. Rom 10:4; Rom 5:15-21.

C. THE DISPENSATIONALIST THEORY, a fascinating doctrinal reengineering: newly developed in the past one hundred years, has devised their seven/eight covenants and their so called seven epoch "dispensations" (Not same with assignment dispensation in the Scriptures). The chief propagator of this new theory was Scofield who wrote that there are seven dispensations: of innocence, of conscience, of civil government, of promise, of law, [of grace], and of the kingdom. These correspond to their seven/eight covenants: Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, [New (Messianic)] and Davidic Covenants. Dispensationalists reinterpret the Scriptures in the light of these epoch dispensations and even other perceived ultra-dispensations. But from the Scriptures, their so called Abrahamic, Mosaic and Palestinian Covenants are one and the same.

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NOTE: The biggest problematic of the innovations of the Dispensational casuistry however, is not only the truncation, seclusion and abrogation of Scriptures; Dispensationalism reintroduces the “wall of partition” and segregation of Israel from the Gentile Church in contradiction to apostolic convictions that Israel has been united and integrated with the Gentiles in the one Church of Christ (Act 15:7-9; Eph 2:15, Eph 2:19).

Other problems are their reconstructive theory of suspension of their Israel Kingdom Covenant(s), and the theories of “parenthesis” and “take away” of their Church Messianic Covenant (which is clearly the equivalent to the New Covenant of Christ). This contradicts the Gospel preached by Christ and His Witnesses. The Apostles taught that this New Covenant of Christ is the ultimate Covenant before which all other Covenants are abolished and vanish away irredeemably for eternity (Eph 2:15; Heb 8:13).

THE NEW COVENANT OF CHRIST (WITH HIS REDEEMED SAINTS) CANNOT GIVE WAY OR BE TAKEN AWAY FOR ANY OTHER COVENANT TO BE FULFILLED THEREAFTER IN ITS ABSENCE. The New Testament Church of Christ was understood (even by Jewish Christians) in apostolic times, as the predetermined Universal Agency of the Heavenly Messianic Kingdom of God. The basis of this agency is the New (i.e. ultimate and final) Covenant, which both replaces and perfects (but NOT INTERRUPTS) the older or other Covenants forever (Heb 8:13; Heb 11:39-40).

The Apostles unambiguously taught that the New Covenant gives way to none other, rather all other Covenants give way for or find fulfilment in the New Covenant (Gal 3:15-29; Gal 4:1-7). The Dispensationalists however are of the opinion that this New Covenant will “give way” so that the temporal political State of Israel will realize its “covenant dispensation” nationally in the absence of Christ and the Church! To support this they pride in taking some preferred OT prophecies more “literally” than Christ and the Apostles, while they figuratively allegorize plain NT prophecies and intricately revise and distort plain NT teachings under the guise of “rightly dividing” the Word better than Christ and the Apostles!

Harm should not be done to the truth of the Scriptures in order to protect certain unnecessary theoretical fears about tribulation and unfounded motives about the nation of Israel. Before Christ comes, All spiritual Israel (out of the Political Israel Rom 11:26) shall be saved, together with All spiritual Gentiles (out of the Political Gentiles Rom 11:25): both of whom come by faith (AS ONE BODY in Christ) into the One Messianic Commonwealth of the Household or Sheepfold of God, and through the mission of the One Apostolic Church (Act 15:16-17; Rom 11:11-33; Eph 2:17-21; Eph 3:4-6).

Before Christ comes, the Man of Sin (Antichrist) MUST COME FIRST (2Th 2:1-4) as determined by God (Dan 7:24-25; Dan 11:36), but he will be destroyed at Christ’s second coming (2Th 2:8) to raise (rapture and reign with) His redeemed saints. We can only hazard guesses, but only the Thessalonians knew the “restrainer” that will be “taken out of the way” (2Th 2:5-7). What is clear from the passage is that possible guesses for the restrainer could never include a lawless system or the Church or the Holy Spirit. It will pay us better to take the Apostles at their words if we truly believe the Scriptures, else you may find yourself among those with strong delusion to believe lies unto their damnation (2Th 2:9-12).

To be sure, the rapture into the AIR is to “welcome” or “meet” (compare 1Th 4:17 and Mat 25:6 also see Act 28:15) Christ our Bridegroom, at His glorious arrival to the earth. It is NOT rapture to “escape” from the Antichrist and follow Christ back into HEAVEN, but for

triumph with Christ at His glorious COMING to earth to finally destroy the Antichrist and reign over all the kingdoms of the earth (Dan 7:10-11; 2Th 2:8).

Reserved for this One Church of both Jews and Gentiles, as the ONLY Bride of the Lamb, is the One heavenly, bridal Jerusalem without structural Temple but with God and the Lamb dwelling in it both as it's Tabernacle and it's glorious illumination (Rev 21:3, Rev 21:22-23). This one Bride Church includes ALL THE SAINTS EVER REDEEMED SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD together, who are registered in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev 21:27).

This One Celestial City is clearly described as having the 12 Tribes of Israel as its pearl Gates (Rev 21:9-13, Rev 21:21), the 12 Apostles as its precious-stone wall foundations (Rev 21:14-20), and all Nations and their Kings as contributors to its glory and honour and beneficiaries of its illumination (Rev 21:24-27), with NO walls of partition between any of these (Eph 2:11-22; Eph 3:4-6; Gal 3:26-29). This agrees perfectly with the indigenization of the Gentiles in the New Commonwealth of Israel (Eze 47:22-23) with the New "Jehovah Shammah" Holy City (Isa 24:23; Isa 56:6-7; Jer 3:17; Eze 48:35) as the Prophets had consistently indicated long time ago.

This composite ONE True Church shall be resurrected ONCE as ONE Body (Eph 3:4-6) and ONE Bride, in open, visible glory (at the ONE blast of the angelic LAST trumpet), at the ONE glorious Second Coming and ONE rapturous First Resurrection (1Co 15:22-26, 1Co 15:50-53; 1Th 4:14-18). There are no two separate second comings, no two separate first resurrections or two separate brides as if to a polygamous Lord!

The first resurrection of the Just which will never occur until "IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION", will be glorious, rapturous and will usher in the millennial subduing reign of Christ and His raised Saints "ON THE EARTH" (Mat 24:21-31; Luk 14:14; Rev 5:9-10; Rev 20:4-6). This millennial reign shall be operated from the Saints' Camp which is the Beloved "heavenly" City, founded by God (Rev 20:9; Heb 11:10).

Then comes the final, futile Magog rebellion against the Saints of the ruling Camp City (Rev 20:7-10).

Thereafter shall be the great conflagration of the physical elements (2Pe 3:10-13; Rev 21:1) and the inglorious resurrection of the Unjust, to face the final judgment for reward/retribution of all works.

Then shall all go to their final destinies of eternal bliss/rest and eternal doom/torment (Dan 12:2; Joh 5:29; Rev 19:11-21, Rev 20:1-15, Rev 21:1-8).

This is the simple plain reading of the Prophetic and Apostolic Scripture without any difficulty, theories, assumptions or clever casuistry. Why would any true believer have difficulty agreeing with Christ and His Apostles?

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