

F. Covenants and Dispensations

a.

1. Definition

- a) **Definition:** A covenant is a sovereign pronouncement of God by which He establishes a relationship of responsibility between Himself and an individual, a family, a nation, or mankind.
- b) Covenants may be divided into **two** classifications.
 1. **Conditional** covenants – God promises are conditioned upon man’s obedience.
 2. **Unconditional** covenants – God’s promises will be performed regardless of man's behaviour.

2. Declarations – 7 Covenants

- a) **Adamic Covenant** – made with Adam in the Garden of Eden.

1. The **Covenant**

1. Man would die if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Gen.2:16, 17.
2. They would lose the blessing of fellowship with God.

2. The **Conditions**

1. Obedience to God’s ONE command.

3. The **Conclusion**

1. Judgement was pronounced against the serpent, the woman, the man and the earth, Gen. 3:14-20.
2. Man was cast out of God’s presence, suffering spiritual and now physical death, Gen.3:22-24.

- b) **Noahic Covenant** – made with Noah after the flood.

1. The **Covenant** – Gen.8:20-22; 9:8-17

1. God will not destroy the earth with a flood again, v.11
2. The days and seasons will continue while the earth remains, 8:22
3. A rainbow was set in the sky as a sign that when it rains man should not fear for God will not destroy the earth by it, v. 12-17

2. The **Conditions**

1. None. God will perform it.

- c) **Abrahamic Covenant** – Made with Abraham

1. The **Covenant:** Gen.12:1-3. See also Gen.13:14-18; 15:5-21; 17:1-22; 22:17,18

1. “**I will shew thee**” a land, the land of Canaan, Gen.13:14,15
2. “**I will make of thee a great nation,**” – Abram to Abraham – “Father of many nations.” His seed

would be as the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven in number.

3. **“I will bless thee,”** – He was spiritually by believing in God for righteousness. Gen.15:6; Rom.4:11, 12. He was physically very wealthy – herds, flocks, 318 servants Gen. 14:14
4. I will **“make thy name great,”** - Abraham’s name occurs over 300 times in Scripture. Highly esteemed Bible character.
5. **“thou shalt be a blessing,”** for through Abraham came the promised seed, Gal.3:14.
6. **“I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee,”** God protected Abram before Phaorah, Abimeleck and the kings of Mesopotamia. This promise also extends to his descendants – Israel.
7. **“in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed,”** is a reference to Abraham’s seed, Christ.
8. The covenant was confirmed with the sign of circumcision, Gen17:9-14.

2.The **Conditions**

1. The covenant was initially conditioned upon Abram leaving Ur of the Chaldees, Gen.12:1
2. As Abram fulfilled the condition of going to Canaan, the promises made were unconditional.

d) **Palestinian Covenant** – an extension of the Abrahamic covenant

1. The **Covenant**

1. Abraham, his descendants will possess the land of Canaan, Gen.17:8. (Promise of Land)
2. The borders were established by God, Gen.15:18-21.
3. The land was never to be sold, for the land always belonged to God and was granted to Abraham’s seed as a gift of grace, Lev.25:23,24.

2.The **Conditions**

1. The promise of permanent possession of the land is unconditional as part of the Abrahamic covenant.
2. The privilege of living in the land is conditional upon continued obedience to God’s laws. They could be scattered from the land for disobedience, Deut. 28:15,25.
3. They would be returned to the land upon true repentance and obedience, Deut. 30:1-10.

e) **Mosaic Covenant** – made with Moses at Mount Sinai

1. **The Covenant**

1. The moral laws, the ten commandments, were given to Israel, Ex. 20:1-21
2. They outlined Israel's responsibility towards God and to fellow man.
3. These commandments were stated as general principles from which many other laws were derived.
4. These laws were mandatory upon His people. Violations would bring judgement and death.
5. The civil laws, Exodus to Deuteronomy: They were to govern the social life of Israel.
6. The ceremonial laws found predominantly in Leviticus: They describe the sacrificial system, the priesthood, holiness by separation, feast days and all that was necessary for the worship of God.

2. **The Conditions**

1. Israel was promised blessings if they obeyed the laws, Deut. 28:1-14.
2. Israel was promised judgement if they disobeyed God's laws, Deut. 28:15-68.
3. Their choice to live in obedience or disobedience was a choice between life and death, Deut. 30:19, 20.

f) **Davidic Covenant** – made with David after he brought the Ark into Jerusalem and desired to build a temple for the Ark of God to dwell in.

1. **The Covenant** – 2 Sam. 7:4-17

1. God will build David's physical house, meaning he will ensure the continuance of the physical descendents of David, v.11
2. His seed, Solomon, will build the temple, and God will establish his kingdom, but it is through his seed, Christ, that the throne of his kingdom will be established for ever v.12,13; 1 Kings 8:17-21.
3. God will build David's political house, meaning the throne of Israel will be established to David's and his descendents for ever, v.13,16.

2. **The Conditions**

1. None. This is an unconditional covenant.

g) **New Covenant** – made with the remnant of restored Israel which will come into effect in the millennium.

1. The **Covenant** – Jer.31:31-34; 32:36-44; Ezek.36:21-36; Matt.26:26-29; 2 Cor.3:6; Heb.8:6-13; 9:15,(1-28); 12:24.

1. The type of covenant will be “new,” unconditional, not like the old covenant of law given at Mount Sinai, where blessings were conditioned upon obedience, this will be a covenant of grace. Jer.31:31, 32; Gal.3:21; Heb.8:10, 13.
2. Jesus Christ will be the mediator of this covenant, Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24; Matt. 26:26-29; Heb.9:14-16.
3. The covenant was made with “the house of Israel” and “the house of Judah, Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:10.
4. The church is also included in the covenant, Rom. 9:30-33; 11:18-24; 2 Cor. 3:6; Matt. 26:26-29.
5. Israel will receive it in the millennium, Jer.31:31; Ezek. 36:21-36; Heb. 8:10.
6. God will gather Israel from all nations and bring them back to their land, Ezek. 36:24.
7. God will put a new heart and a new spirit within them, Ezek. 36:26.
8. God will put His fear in their hearts, that they will not depart from Him, Jer. 32:40.
9. God’s word will be implanted in their hearts, and they will have intimate knowledge of, and fellowship with, God. They will also experience forgiveness of sins and peace of heart, Jer. 31:32, 33; Ezek. 36:25, 29, 33.
10. The physical blessings of the covenant include restored productivity of the land to the condition to where it will become like the garden of Eden, Ezek. 36:29-36.

2. The **Conditions**

1. None. This is an unconditional covenant. The Guarantor of the new covenant will be the LORD, Himself. Notice how many times God says “I will” in this passage, Jer. 31:31, 32,35,37,38.

b. _____

1. Definition

- a) The word “dispensation” occurs four times in the N.T., (1 Cor. 9:17; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2; Colossians 1:25), and is translated from the Greek word, “oikonomia,” meaning an administration or stewardship of an household estate, and economy.
- b) The word is oikonomia, which is made up of oikos, "house," and nomos, "law." The compound word means, "the management of a household, or of household affairs, the management, oversight, administration of other’s property, the office of a manager, overseer, stewardship." (Wuest)
- c) Acknowledging dispensations is part of “...rightly dividing the word of truth...” Not everything God said or every way God acted is the same throughout human history. Although He has never changed we do see how God has managed different people in different ways over various points of time in history.

2. Divisions – 7 Dispensations

- a) **Innocence** – Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Gen. Ch. 1-3

1. The **Duration**

1. Genesis 1-3 – The Creation to the Fall

2. The **Expectation**

1. They walked with God in the Garden of Eden.
2. They had one simple command to obey.
3. They had basic responsibilities before God
 - (1) Be fruitful and multiply, Gen. 1:28
 - (2) Replenish the earth
 - (3) Subdue the earth
 - (4) Have dominion over it
 - (5) Vegetarian diet, Gen. 1:29
 - (6) To dress and keep the garden of Eden, Gen.2:15
4. Man rebelled against God – Adam and Eve eating from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

3. The **Judgement**

1. Death was brought into this world. Man was separated from God and expelled from the Garden of Eden.

- b) **Conscience** – From the Fall to the Flood. Gen. Ch. 4-8

1. The **Duration**

1. 1,656 years, from the fall of man to Noah’s flood, Gen.4-8

2. The **Expectation**

1. Man is in a fallen condition, having knowledge of good and evil, is now guided by both the Word of God and conscience, Gen.3:22; Rom. 2:12-15.
2. Yet man rebelled against God. Gen 6:5 – “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

3. The **Judgement**

1. World-wide flood, Gen.7

c) **Human Government** – From Noah’s flood to the dispersion of nations.

1. The **Duration**

1. 427 years, from the flood to the Tower of Babel, Gen. 9-11

2. The **Expectation**

1. One righteous man, Noah, his family and the animals which were in the Ark are the only living creatures upon the earth.
2. Capital Punishment – Gen. 9:5-6 – “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”

- (1) “The institution of capital punishment presupposes the establishment of governmental authority. It would be chaos if anyone and everyone avenged a murder. Only duly appointed governments may do so. The NT perpetuates capital punishment when it says concerning the government, “. . . he does not bear the sword in vain” (Rom 13:4).” William Macdonald.

3. The **Judgement**

1. Tower of Babel. God confounded their languages as they did not obey His Word concerning replenishing the earth.

d) **Promise** – From Abram to Israel in Egypt.

1. The **Duration**

1. 430 years, from the call of Abram to the Exodus, Gen.12-50

2. The Man Promised - God called a man (Abram), making a promise to him Gen.12:1; Heb.11:8
3. By faith, he left his country and kindred and followed God to the Land of Canaan.

2. The **Expectations**

1. They were to walk uprightly before the Lord and to obey the covenant sign of circumcision. Gen. 17:1,10,11

3. The **Judgement**

1. Bondage in Egypt, Gen. 15:13,14; Exodus 1:1-7

e) **Law** – From the Exodus to the Cross

1. The **Duration**

1. 1,490 years, from Sinai to Calvary, Exodus 1 – John 21

2. The **Expectation**

1. God's people were to keep the laws of God which includes the 10 commandments, the ceremonial, civil and social laws, Ex.19:5-8; Rom. 9:4.
2. They were to obey God's chosen leaders who administer the laws, Deut.5:24-27.
3. Keep the laws of God from the heart, Deut.5:28,29.
4. Fear the LORD from the heart, Deut.5:28

3. The **Judgement**

1. The northern tribes of Israel and Judah were taken into captivity (Israel) by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., 2 Kings 17:18-23 and (Judah) by the Babylonians, in 586 B.C., 2 Kings 24, 25.
2. God departed from the temple, 586 B.C., Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:22, 23.
3. Jerusalem would be rebuilt, with the temple, but because of Israel's rejection of their Messiah it would be again destroyed again to lay waste till the return of Messiah, Luke 21:20-24.
4. Israel will be scattered into all the world
5. However there was a sense of judgement fell upon Christ at the cross. The sin of all mankind and the law breaking of humanity were laid upon the Saviour 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:14.

f) **Grace, or Church** – From Pentecost to the Rapture

1. The **Duration**

1. Over 2,000 years, from Pentecost to the rapture, Acts 1:4, 5; 2:1-4; 1 Thess.4:13-18.

2. The church replaced Israel:
 - (1) As God's witnesses to the world, Isa. 43:10; Acts 1:8.
 - (2) As the recipients of God's blessings, Rom. 11:16-23.

2. The **Expectation**

1. Repentance from sin and Faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ – Acts 17:30; Acts 20:21
2. Baptism by immersion – Matthew 28:19-20
3. Believers to assemble in local assemblies to worship, serve, and glorify God.
4. Fulfilment of the Great Commission – Mark 16:15-16
5. To walk in obedience to the revealed revelation of God concealed in the Holy Bible.
6. To walk in obedience to and in the power of the Holy Spirit – Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:14

3. The **Judgement**

1. The seven years of tribulation upon the earth, Matt. 24:4-28; Rev. 4-18.
2. The destruction of the wicked, 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:7-12; Rev. 19

g) **Kingdom** – From Christ's 2nd coming to the New Heaven and New Earth

1. The **Duration**

1. 1,000 years, from the second coming of Christ to the Great White Throne Judgement, Rev. 20:1-15.

2. The **Expectation**

1. A true heart of allegiance and submission to Jesus Christ as King, Psalm 2:12; Psalm 45.

3. The **Judgement**

1. Fire from God out of heaven will come upon the rebels, Rev. 20:9
2. Satan will meet his final end in the Lake of Fire, Rev. 20:10.
3. The Great White Throne judgement will be ushered in, Rev. 20:11-15.
4. God will destroy the heavens and the earth with fervent heat, 2 Peter 3:10-12.

Homework:

- Reading and Quotations: Bible Explorers Guide, J. Phillips – Part 1 – Ch. 18 – 20
- According Ezekiel 20:12, 20, is the Sabbath teaching binding upon the church? What is the Christian Sabbath?