

# ABRAHAM – CHRISTOPHANY, COVENANT, AND TYPOLOGY

- **Christophany – a physical manifestation of Christ (a Theophany is a physical manifestation of God).**
- **Type – a type is an example of something whose reality exists before the type comes into the world.**
- **Melchizedek: Who is he and why does he matter?**
  - **Genesis 14:18-20**

<sup>18</sup> Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (Now he was the priest of the Most High God.) <sup>19</sup> He blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth. <sup>20</sup> Worthy of praise is the Most High God, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.
  - **Hebrews 7:1-10**

Now this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him. <sup>2</sup> To him also Abraham apportioned a tithe of everything. His name first means king of righteousness, then king of Salem, that is, king of peace. <sup>3</sup> Without father, without mother, without genealogy, he has neither beginning of days nor end of life but is like the son of God, and he remains a priest for all time. <sup>4</sup> But see how great he must be, if Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of his plunder. <sup>5</sup> And those of the sons of Levi who receive the priestly office have authorization according to the law to collect a tithe from the people, that is, from their fellow countrymen, although they too are descendants of Abraham. <sup>6</sup> But Melchizedek who does not share their ancestry collected a tithe from Abraham and blessed the one who possessed the promise. <sup>7</sup> Now without dispute the inferior is blessed by the superior, <sup>8</sup> and in one case tithes are received by mortal men, while in the other by him who is affirmed to be alive. <sup>9</sup> And it could be said that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid a tithe through Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For he was still in his ancestor Abraham’s loins when Melchizedek met him.

    - King of Jerusalem before David
    - King of Peace
    - King of Righteousness
    - An eternal king
    - Greater than Abraham (and Levi, and David)
    - Receives tithes (of worship)
    - Imparts blessing
    - Without beginning or end
    - Is like the Son of God
    - A priest forever
    - Greater than OT priesthood
    - Melchizedek is a Christophany; a manifestation of the pre-Incarnate Christ

Jesus is also the true king of peace (Salem) who came to earth to bring peace through his sacrificial death and resurrection. Jesus is also “a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 7:17) and not through Levitical lineage (Heb. 7:14), making his priesthood superior (Heb. 7:11).

As a result, "This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant" (Heb. 7:22). Because "he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever" (Heb. 7:24), "he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

Thus, believers can rest knowing that Jesus is the perfect King who rules with infinite power and justice. Believers are also comforted knowing Jesus is the perfect Priest who ministers with infinite mercy and sympathizes with us in our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15).

- **The Covenant: Unconditional or Conditional?**

- **Genesis 15: ; 17:1-8**

**15** After these things the LORD's message came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram! I am your shield and the one who will reward you in great abundance."

<sup>2</sup> But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what will you give me since I continue to be childless, and my heir is Eliezer of Damascus?" <sup>3</sup> Abram added, "Since you have not given me a descendant, then look, one born in my house will be my heir!"

<sup>4</sup> But look, the LORD's message came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but instead a son who comes from your own body will be your heir." <sup>5</sup> The LORD took him outside and said, "Gaze into the sky and count the stars—if you are able to count them!" Then he said to him, "So will your descendants be."

<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD credited it as righteousness to him.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." <sup>8</sup> But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, by what can I know that I am to possess it?"

<sup>9</sup> The LORD said to him, "Take for me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup> So Abram took all these for him and then cut them in two and placed each half opposite the other, but he did not cut the birds in half. <sup>11</sup> When birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

<sup>12</sup> When the sun went down, Abram fell sound asleep, and great terror overwhelmed him. <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign country. They will be enslaved and oppressed for 400 years. <sup>14</sup> But I will execute judgment on the nation that they will serve. Afterward they will come out with many possessions. <sup>15</sup> But as for you, you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. <sup>16</sup> In the fourth generation your descendants will return here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its limit."

<sup>17</sup> When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking firepot with a flaming torch passed between the animal parts. <sup>18</sup> That day the LORD made a covenant with Abram: "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River— <sup>19</sup> the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup> Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, <sup>21</sup> Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

**17** When Abram was 99 years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am the Sovereign God. Walk before me and be blameless. <sup>2</sup> Then I will confirm my covenant between me and you, and I will give you a multitude of descendants.” <sup>3</sup> Abram bowed down with his face to the ground, and God said to him, <sup>4</sup> “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup> No longer will your name be Abram. Instead, your name will be Abraham because I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you extremely fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will descend from you. <sup>7</sup> I will confirm my covenant as a perpetual covenant between me and you. It will extend to your descendants after you throughout their generations. I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup> I will give the whole land of Canaan—the land where you are now residing—to you and your descendants after you as a permanent possession. I will be their God.”

- **The Sign of the Covenant and Christian Baptism**

- **Genesis 17:9-27**

<sup>9</sup> Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep the covenantal requirement I am imposing on you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup> This is my requirement that you and your descendants after you must keep: Every male among you must be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins. This will be a reminder of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> Throughout your generations every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not one of your descendants. <sup>13</sup> They must indeed be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money. The sign of my covenant will be visible in your flesh as a permanent reminder. <sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male who has not been circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin will be cut off from his people—he has failed to carry out my requirement.”

<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Abraham, “As for your wife, you must no longer call her Sarai; Sarah will be her name. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her and will give you a son through her. I will bless her and she will become a mother of nations. Kings of countries will come from her!”

<sup>17</sup> Then Abraham bowed down with his face to the ground and laughed as he said to himself, “Can a son be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” <sup>18</sup> Abraham said to God, “O that Ishmael might live before you!”

<sup>19</sup> God said, “No, Sarah your wife is going to bear you a son, and you will name him Isaac. I will confirm my covenant with him as a perpetual covenant for his descendants after him. <sup>20</sup> As for Ishmael, I have heard you. I will indeed bless him, make him fruitful, and give him a multitude of descendants. He will become the

father of twelve princes; I will make him into a great nation. <sup>21</sup> But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time next year." <sup>22</sup> When he finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him. <sup>23</sup> Abraham took his son Ishmael and every male in his household (whether born in his house or bought with money) and circumcised them on that very same day, just as God had told him to do. <sup>24</sup> Now Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised; <sup>25</sup> his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised. <sup>26</sup> Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on the very same day. <sup>27</sup> All the men of his household, whether born in his household or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

- **Typology – Jesus and the Sacrifice of Isaac**

- **Genesis 22:1-18**

Some time after these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am!" Abraham replied. <sup>2</sup> God said, "Take your son—your only son, whom you love, Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah! Offer him up there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will indicate to you."

<sup>3</sup> Early in the morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took two of his young servants with him, along with his son Isaac. When he had cut the wood for the burnt offering, he started out for the place God had spoken to him about.

<sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham caught sight of the place in the distance. <sup>5</sup> So he said to his servants, "You two stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go up there. We will worship and then return to you."

<sup>6</sup> Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. Then he took the fire and the knife in his hand, and the two of them walked on together. <sup>7</sup> Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father?" "What is it, my son?" he replied. "Here is the fire and the wood," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" <sup>8</sup> "God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham replied. The two of them continued on together.

<sup>9</sup> When they came to the place God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood on it. Next he tied up his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> Then Abraham reached out his hand, took the knife, and prepared to slaughter his son. <sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am!" he answered. <sup>12</sup> "Do not harm the boy!" the angel said. "Do not do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God because you did not withhold your son, your only son, from me."

<sup>13</sup> Abraham looked up and saw behind him a ram caught in the bushes by its horns. So he went over and got the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup> And Abraham called the name of that place "The LORD provides." It is said to this day, "In the mountain of the LORD provision will be made."



<sup>15</sup> The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven <sup>16</sup> and said, "I solemnly swear by my own name, decrees the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will indeed bless you, and I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be as countless as the stars in the sky or the grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the strongholds of their enemies. <sup>18</sup> Because you have obeyed me, all the nations of the earth will pronounce blessings on one another using the name of your descendants."

## Seeing Jesus in the Sacrifice of Isaac

1. Both were children of a promise
2. The father leads his son to be sacrificed.
3. A donkey is involved on the road to the sacrifice.
4. They leave their "homeland" to go to the place of sacrifice (Abraham & Isaac leave home and travel to the mountain, Jesus leaves heaven to come to earth).
5. To get from where they are to the place of sacrifice requires a journey.
6. Each son is the "one and only son" of his father.
7. The son is a descendant of Abraham.
8. The son had been born with divine intervention.
9. The sacrifices take place on the same mountain (called Mt. Moriah in the Old Testament, called Mt. Calvary in the New Testament — also known as Mt. Zion, by the way)
10. The companions that were with them stayed behind (most likely on the hill across the valley, called the Mt. of Olives) when the son went with the father for the sacrifice.
11. The son carried the wood/cross to the place of sacrifice.
12. The son asked questions of the father.
13. The father knew what he was called to do.
14. The son was submissive to the will of the father.
15. The father was willing to sacrifice his son, if necessary.
16. The father loved the son.
17. A resurrection was prophesied (Abraham said, "we'll come back to you." Jesus said, "I will rise on the third day.")
18. The son was laid upon the wood/cross.
19. The son was bound to the wood/cross.
20. The Lord Himself provided the sacrifice (the ram, Jesus). [Note, the word order in the Hebrew text of Genesis 22:8 could read, "The Lord will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." A foreshadowing of Jesus]
21. Blood was shed.
22. The sacrifice was a substitute (ram a substitute for Isaac, Jesus a substitute for us).

**\*The ram (Jesus) became the substitute for Isaac which was sacrificed 'instead**

**of” Isaac (the Hebrew word TAHAT means “in place of” or “in the stead of”).**

**\*The ram is also referred to with the definite article THE**

23. Men of great faith in God who were committed obediently to the will of God.
24. The ram was caught in the thorns, and Jesus had a crown of thorns on his head.
25. Abundant blessings flow because of the sacrifice (or willingness to sacrifice).
26. Abraham was tested, Jesus was tested.
27. The son ultimately survived the sacrifice.
28. The son was “resurrected” on the third day.

The last one requires a little explanation. Jesus was literally resurrected on the third day. As for Isaac: Abraham heard from the Lord that he was to sacrifice his son. As far as he was concerned, Isaac was as good as dead at that point. The journey from their home to the place of sacrifice took three days. On the third day, God provided the ram so that Isaac was spared his life, i.e., he was “resurrected” on the third day. The Bible tells us that Abraham had great faith all along, believing that even if God did call him to slay his son that God would bring his son back to life!

## **THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS OF GOD**

God's covenantal relationship with creation is not made automatically or out of necessity.

Instead, God chooses to establish the connection as a covenant, wherein the terms of the relationship are set down by God alone according to God's own will.

The initiation of God's various covenants were/are essentially unilateral or monopleuric (one sided) on the part of God, but also entailed conditions on the part of human beings. Thus the covenants are also considered to be bilateral or dipleuric (two sided).

### **1. ADAMIC COVENANT (or, Covenant of Works)**

The covenant of works (Latin: *foedus operum*, also called the covenant of life) was made in the Garden of Eden between God and Adam who represented all humankind as a federal head (Romans 5:12–21). God offered Adam a perfect and perpetual life if he did not violate God's single commandment. However, God warned that death would follow if he disobeyed that commandment. Adam broke the covenant, thus standing condemned as representative for all humankind. See Hosea 6:7.

When Adam failed to keep the covenant, God established the covenant of grace in the promised seed Genesis 3:15, and shows his redeeming care in clothing Adam and Eve in garments of skin—the first instance of animal sacrifice because of sin. The specific covenants after the fall of Adam are seen as administered under the overarching theological covenant of grace.

## **\*Covenant of Grace (see below)**

The covenant of grace promises eternal life for all people who have faith in Christ (or, in terms of people who lived before Christ, those who had faith in the promised Christ/Messiah, yet to come).

Christ is the substitutionary covenantal representative fulfilling the covenant of works on their behalf, in both the positive requirements of righteousness and its negative penal consequences (comm). It is the historical expression of the eternal of redemption. Genesis 3:15, with the promise of a "seed" of the woman who would crush the serpent's head, is usually identified as the historical inauguration for the covenant of grace.

The covenant of grace runs through the Old and New Testaments and is the same in substance under both the law and gospel, though there is some difference in the administration. Under the law, the sacrifices, prophecies, and other types and ordinances of the Jews signified Christ, and people were justified by their faith in him who was to come. These sacrifices were done away with the coming of Christ, and replaced with the much simpler sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, preceded, obviously, by faith in him who had already come.

## **2. NOAHIC COVENANT**

The Noahic covenant is found in Genesis 8:20–9:17. Although redemption motifs are prominent as Noah and his family are delivered from the judgment waters, the narrative of the flood plays on the creation motifs of Genesis 1 as de-creation and re-creation. The formal terms of the covenant itself more reflect a reaffirmation of the universal created order, than a particular redemptive promise.

## **3. ABRAHAMIC COVENANT**

The Abrahamic covenant is found in Genesis chapters 12, 15, and 17. In contrast with the covenants made with Adam or Noah which were universal in scope, this covenant was with a particular people. Abraham is promised a seed and a land, although he would not see its fruition within his own lifetime. The Book of Hebrews explains that he was looking to a better and heavenly land, a city with foundations, whose builder and architect is God (11:8–16). St. Paul writes that the promised seed refers in particular to Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16).

The Abrahamic covenant is:

1. Exclusive: it is only for Abraham and his (spiritual) descendants. Genesis 17:7
2. Everlasting: it is not replaced by any later covenant. Genesis 17:7
3. Accepted by faith. Genesis 15:6
4. The external sign of entering into the Abrahamic covenant was circumcision. Genesis 17:10, but it has to be matched by an internal change, the circumcision of the heart. Jeremiah 4:4, Philippians 3:3
5. According to Paul, since the Abrahamic covenant is eternal, the followers of Christ are "children of Abraham" and therefore part of this covenant through faith. "Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham." Galatians 3:7
6. According to covenant theology (held by numerous Christian denominations, including Methodism), Paul makes it clear that baptism is the external sign of faith in Christ ("...you were baptized into Christ..."), and that through faith in Christ the believer is part of the Abrahamic covenant ("Abraham's seed"). This provides the basis for the doctrine that baptism is the New Testament sign of God's covenant with Abraham, Galatians 3:26.



*\*Non-covenantal theology does not teach that the Abrahamic covenant is inherited by gentiles, and thus presents a different view of baptism.*

7. Romans 11 teaches disobedient Jews are broken off of the family tree of Abraham. It is only after the full number of the Gentiles have been grafted into Abraham's family tree that God will pour out His mercy on the people of Israel.

## **4. MOSAIC COVENANT**

The Mosaic covenant, found in Exodus 19–24 and the book of Deuteronomy, expands on the Abrahamic promise of a people and a land. Repeatedly mentioned is the promise of the Lord, "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Exodus 6:7, Leviticus 26:12). This covenant is the one most in view when referring to the *Old Covenant*.

## **5. DAVIDIC COVENANT**

The Davidic covenant is found in 2 Samuel 7. The Lord proclaims that He will build a house and lineage for David, establishing His kingdom and throne forever. This covenant is appealed to as God preserves David's descendants despite their wickedness (1 Kings 11:26–39, 15:1–8; 2 Kings 8:19, 19:32–34), although it did not stop judgment from finally arriving (compare 2 Kings 21:7, 23:26–27; Jeremiah 13:12–14). Among the prophets of the exile, there is hope of restoration under a Davidic king who will bring peace and justice (*cf.* Book of Ezekiel 37:24–28).

## **6. THE NEW COVENANT**

The New Covenant is anticipated with the hopes of the Davidic messiah, and most explicitly predicted by the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31–33).

At the Last Supper, Jesus alludes to this prophecy, as well as to prophecies such as Isaiah 49:8, when he says that the cup of the Passover meal is "the New Covenant in [his] blood." This use of the Old Testament typology is developed further in the Epistle to the Hebrews (*esp.* chs. 7–10).

Jesus is the last Adam and Israel's hope and consolation:

he is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17–18).

He is the prophet greater than Jonah (Matthew 12:41),

and the Son over the house where Moses was a servant (Hebrews 3:5–6), leading His people to the heavenly promised land.

He is the high priest greater than Aaron, offering up Himself as the perfect sacrifice once for all (Hebrews 9:12, 26).

He is the king greater than Solomon (Matthew 12:42), ruling forever on David's throne (Luke 1:32).

The covenant of grace became the basis for all future covenants that God made with mankind such as with Noah (Genesis 6, 9), with Abraham (Genesis 12, 15, 17), with Moses (Exodus 19–24), with David (2 Samuel 7), and finally in the New Covenant founded and fulfilled in Christ.

These individual covenants are called the Biblical Covenants because they are explicitly described in the Bible. Under the covenantal overview of the Bible, submission to God's rule and living in accordance with his moral law (expressed concisely in the Ten Commandments) is a response to grace – never something which can earn



God's acceptance (legalism). Even in his giving of the Ten Commandments, God introduces his law by reminding the Israelites that he is the one who brought them out of slavery in Egypt (grace).

