

## Lesson 8

# Covenants

A covenant is a solemn promise, fortified by an oath, concerning future action. The oath might be expressed in words or in a symbolic action. A covenant is more than a mere impersonal contract, in which two parties agree to an exchange of goods and/or services. A covenant binds persons together beyond the mere contractual agreement. Marriage is a prime example. While marriage has “contractual” elements and promises, it is a covenant that binds two persons together. Marriage obviously binds two persons in a unique way, but all covenants bind persons together in some way. Covenants are much more than contracts because they establish a family bond and relationship.

### What's the difference between a covenant & a contract?

#### Covenant

- it's the most solemn of all agreements
  - Irrevocable
  - In-dissolvable
- a commitment valid until death
  - Sealed in blood
- Not dependent on performance.

#### Contract

- Agreement between 2 parties
  - Dependent on the performance of each party
- If one fails to perform satisfactorily – the other party may cancel!

God shows His love for His people through covenants. Christ establishes the eternal covenant between God and His people in the Eucharist. This new covenant in Christ binds God to His people with a future promise of redemption. It also binds God's people to one another; hence the Eucharist is called “the Sacrament of Unity.”

There are six covenants that God establishes with His people in the Scriptures. God establishes these covenants through a mediator. The following are the mediators of God's covenants: Adam, Noah, Abraham (*Abram*), Moses, David, and Jesus. Each of God's covenants has a form and a sign.

Now, let's examine each of the six covenants which are revealed to us in Scripture. Notice the four things similar in these covenants: a blessing, a condition/curse, a sign, and the resultant form of God's family.



### **The Covenant with Adam**

God's First Covenant is with man (*Adam and Eve*). God created Adam and Eve to be joined together as one flesh:

*"Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh."* [Genesis 2:23-24](#)

<b>The Blessing:</b>	Their descendants will fill the earth and subdue it.
<b>The Condition/Curse:</b>	Do not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil for death will result.
<b>The Sign:</b>	The Sabbath ( <i>the Holy Day</i> )
<b>The Family Form:</b>	Marriage

God told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply" which means more than just to reproduce. God created man and woman as equal but complementary persons, meant to join in a family relationship sealed by the marital covenant. Marriage is not man-made. Marriage is divinely instituted the very moment man was created male and female.



## The Covenant with Noah

God's Second Covenant is made with Noah and his family. God promises to never again destroy mankind through a flood, and the rainbow is His constant reminder of that promise:

*"Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth."*

Genesis 9:9-17

<b>The Blessing:</b>	God will never flood the entire earth again.
<b>The Condition/Curse:</b>	Do not drink the blood of animals or shed human blood
<b>The Sign:</b>	A Rainbow
<b>The Family Form:</b>	Traditional Family

Noah and his family after the Flood are the beginnings of a new creation. Therefore, Christians view the Flood as a type of baptism. Like Adam and Eve, God tells Noah to "be fruitful and multiply." Thus, God gave Noah and his family dominion over the living things of the world.



The rainbow is a universe sign. By making the rainbow the sign of the covenant, God shows that this covenant ultimately applies to all creation, just like the covenant with Adam. Like Noah, we still carry the potential of sin with us after baptism, but we have received God's blessing and His promise that He will not destroy us.



### **The Covenant with Abraham (Abram)**

God's Third Covenant is made with Abram (*whose name God changes to Abraham*). Abraham becomes known as the "**Father of Faith**." First, because of his great faith in God which is put to the test when he is asked to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Second, because Abraham becomes the father of all monotheistic (*one God*) religions: Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

God promises Abram three things: **land**, **kingship**, and a **worldwide blessing**. Each of these promises will be fulfilled in other covenants to come. God will reinforce each promise with a covenant oath. These three promises begin in Genesis 12 and are reinforced in Genesis 17.

*"The Lord said to Abram: Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will find blessing in you."* **Genesis 12:1-3**

From the above passage, we can learn the following things about God's three promises to Abram:

#### **1. Land and a Nation:**

"Go to the land that I will show you," God says. As Abram will find out, the land God will show him is Canaan. God will make a great nation of Abram and the first thing a nation needs is land. This promise will be fulfilled in God's covenant with Moses.

#### **2. Kingship and a Name:**

"I will bless you and make your name great." Making Abraham's name great

means establishing a dynasty, giving Abram political authority and power. This promise will be fulfilled in God's covenant with David.

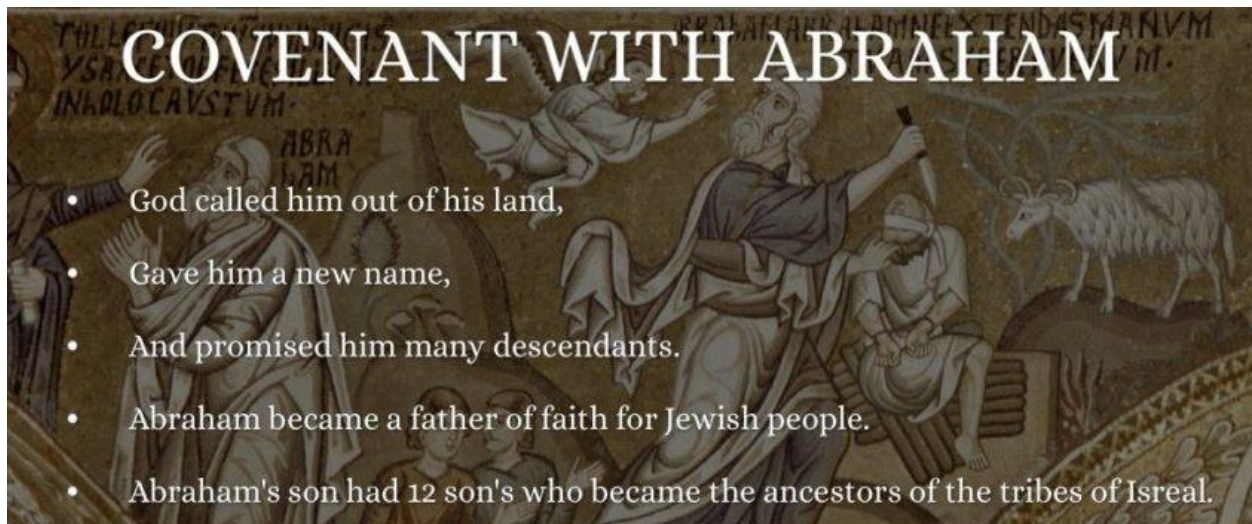
### 3. Blessing for All Nations:

"In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." God will use Abram to bring salvation to the whole world. The whole human family which is torn apart by sin will be brought back together again through the line of Abraham. This promise will be fulfilled in God's covenant with Jesus Christ.

The following passage from Genesis 17 reaffirms God's promises to Abram and introduces the sign of the covenant: circumcision.

*"When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 'Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.' And God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.'"* **Genesis 17:1-10**

<b>Blessing:</b>	Land and many blessed descendants
<b>Condition/Curse:</b>	Circumcision
<b>Sign:</b>	Circumcision
<b>Family Form:</b>	Tribe





## The Covenant with Moses

God's Fourth Covenant is with Moses. Moses was chosen by God to lead His people, Israel, out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land. The event of God freeing His people from their slavery in Egypt is called the "Exodus." Moses is also known as the "lawgiver" since he is the one who God gave the 10 Commandments.

*"Therefore, say to the Israelites: I am the LORD. I will free you from the forced labor of the Egyptians and will deliver you from their slavery. I will rescue you by my outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and you shall have me as your God. You will know that I, the LORD, am your God when I free you from the labor of the Egyptians and bring you into the land with I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I will give it to you as your own possession – I, the LORD!"* Exodus 6:6-8

If the people would obey God's voice, then they would be a nation of priests. God, who made the whole world had chosen Israel as the nation to bring His word to the rest of the nations. God would have a personal relationship with His people. God would talk to them directly, and He would be their leader and guide. In turn, Israel, as God's first-born, would carry His message to the rest of the family of nations.

<b>Blessing:</b>	Becoming God's chosen people
<b>Condition/Curse:</b>	They must keep God's laws and the Commandments
<b>Sign:</b>	The Passover
<b>Family Form:</b>	A holy nation

The sign of God's Covenant with Moses is "The Passover." This sign is extremely important to our understanding of the Eucharist (*The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ*) since the Last Supper and the Crucifixion are celebrated as one Passover meal.

To better understand the significance of the Passover, let's review exactly what it entails as outlined in Exodus 12:1-13.



*"The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month will stand at the head of your calendar; you will reckon it the first month of the year. Tell the whole community of Israel: On the tenth of this month every family must procure for itself a lamb, one apiece for each household. If a household is too small for a lamb, it along with its nearest neighbor will procure one, and apportion the lamb's cost in proportion to the number of persons, according to what each household consumes. Your lamb must be a year-old male and without blemish. You may take it from either the sheep or the goats. You will keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and then, with the whole community of Israel assembled, it will be slaughtered during the evening twilight. They will take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They will consume its meat that same night, eating it roasted with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or even boiled in water, but roasted, with its head and shanks and inner organs. You must not keep any of it beyond the morning; whatever is left over in the morning must be burned up. This is how you are to eat it: with your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand, you will eat it in a hurry. It is the LORD's Passover. For on this same night I will go through Egypt, striking down every firstborn in the land, human being and beast alike, and executing judgment on all the gods of Egypt—I, the LORD! But for you the blood will mark the houses where you are. Seeing the blood, I will pass over you; thereby, when I strike the land of Egypt, no destructive blow will come upon you."* Exodus 12:1-13



### **The Covenant with David**

God's Fifth Covenant is made with David, who becomes the greatest King of Israel. This covenant establishes the Kingdom of David as an everlasting kingdom.

*"Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David, `Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name,*

*like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men; but I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established forever.”* 2 Samuel 7:9-16

As outlined in 2 Samuel 7:9-16, the following are the **seven primary features** of the Davidic Covenant:

**1. Kingdom**

David's line will have a kingdom. A kingdom is far more than just a nation. The difference between a kingdom and a nation is like the difference between the United States and Florida. And David and his descendants will be more than kings; they will be great kings.

**2. Dynasty**

The covenant is made with David's whole house, which is another way of saying dynasty.

**3. God's own son**

When the son of David is anointed, he is adopted as God's own son. Anointing with oil makes the Son of David "messiah" (*in Hebrew*) or "Christ" (*in Greek*). Therefore, the anointed one is both priest and king.

**4. Unlimited and Never Ending**

The Davidic Covenant is unlimited in time and space. David's throne will be everlasting and his kingdom boundaries are the ends of the earth.

**5. Temple**

The Temple is the architectural sign of the Davidic Covenant, a building where all people of the earth were invited to worship the God of Israel. It is a place of international family reunion.

**6. Wisdom**

Wisdom is the new law of the Davidic Covenant. Solomon, David's son who inherits his kingdom, would be given wisdom to govern by God Himself. Wisdom literature is to the Davidic Covenant what the Pentateuch was to the Mosaic Covenant. David's son is going to get something more than Moses got: a law for every nation, not just for the people of Israel.



## 7. Spiritual Center

Jerusalem becomes the spiritual center of the world. Zion, the central mountain of Jerusalem, eclipses Mount Sinai (*the mountain where Moses received the Ten Commandments*). Now, Zion is the holy mountain of God.

<b>Blessing:</b>	God becomes our Father, and we become His children
<b>Condition/Curse:</b>	Chastisement with the rod of men
<b>Sign:</b>	Throne
<b>Family Form:</b>	Kingdom



## The Covenant of Christ

God's Sixth and Final Covenant is made through Jesus Christ. This covenant is established at the Last Supper and is brought to completion through the Paschal Mystery (*the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus*). The account of the Last Supper can be found in all four Gospels; however, for simplicity, we will only look at Mark's version, which is as follows:

*"On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, 'Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?' He sent two of his disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him. Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"'" Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there.' The*

*disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.*

*When it was evening, he came with the Twelve. And as they reclined at table and were eating, Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." They began to be distressed and to say to him, one by one, "Surely it is not I?" He said to them, "One of the Twelve, the one who dips with me into the dish. For the Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born."*

*While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Then, after singing a hymn,<sup>[a]</sup> they went out to the Mount of Olives." Mark 14:12-26*

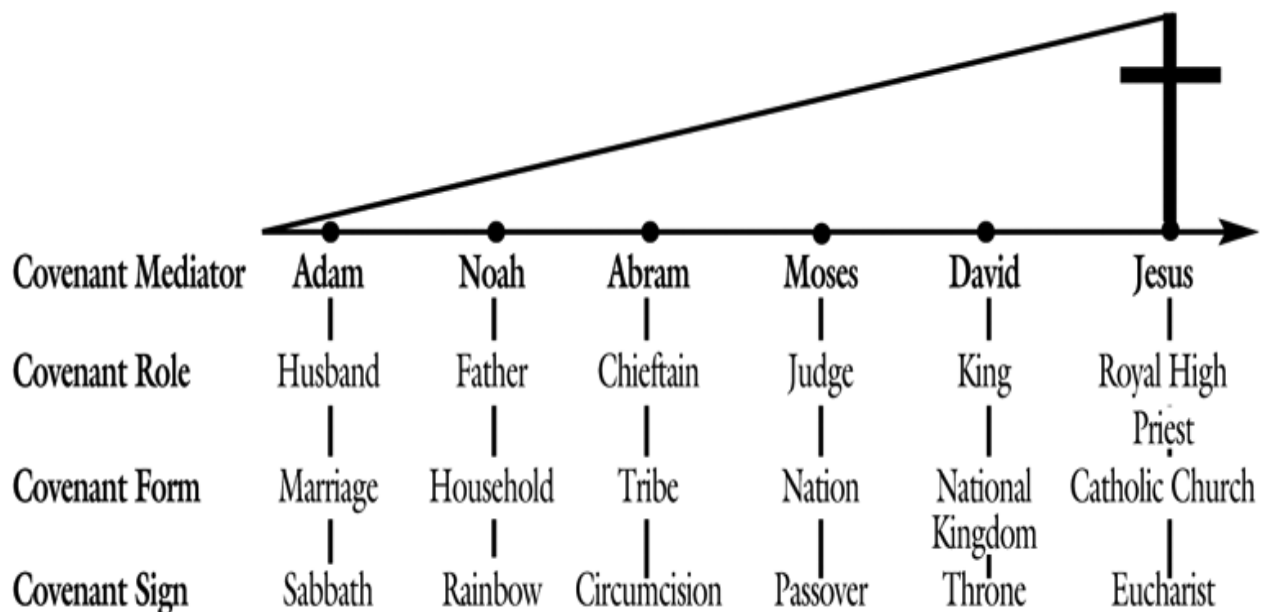
<b>Blessing:</b>	Believers become the new chosen people.
<b>Condition/Curse:</b>	Belief in Jesus as the Son of God and His True Presence in the Eucharist.
<b>Sign:</b>	The Eucharist
<b>Family Form:</b>	The Church

The Eucharist appears as both the source and the summit of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ. Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: "This is my body which is given for you" and "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood" (*Luke 22:19-20*). The Eucharist is the sign of Christ's covenant with humanity and it is the "Sacrament of Unity" because it unites all of humanity with God through Jesus.

If the mass was just a meal,  
then the crucifixion  
was just an execution.

~ Scott Hahn

The following diagram shows us how each of the Old Testament Covenants lead up to the New Testament Covenant established by Christ in the Eucharist:



Notice how the covenant form progresses with each of God's six covenants: Marriage, Family, Tribe, Nation, Kingdom, and Church. What God is doing here is not only building up man's relationship with Him using signs, He is revealing more and more of Himself to us with each and every covenant, until at last He has revealed Himself fully in Jesus Christ. Even though man may have broken the covenants, God has remained true (*faithful*) to each of them. Since Christ has established the eternal covenant of God's love that we renew each time we receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist, we are part of His Church, which is His universal kingdom on earth.

Hopefully, you can see the importance of covenants in Salvation History. The Scriptures are built upon them; therefore, the Scriptures are built upon our family bond with God. God has shown us His Love through the covenants.

