

[AN INTRODUCTION TO COVENANTS]

[excerpt from **THE COVENANTS** by **KEVIN CONNER** and **KEN MALMIN**]

The Bible reveals that *God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping and covenant-revealing God*. The Bible itself is a covenantal book being divided into two sections, the Old and New Testaments (Covenants), and containing a progressive revelation of nine major covenants. These Covenants comprise the purposes of God in both Creation and Redemption and involve time and eternity. One of the primary keys to the interpretation of Scripture is the Covenantal Principal of Hermeneutics.

What is a Covenant?

In modern society the word “covenant” has lost some of the fullness and richness that it had in Bible times. The word “covenant in Scripture refers to an agreement or a contract between men, or between God and man. In Scripture, we find that men often made covenants with men in relation to various matters (e.g., **Genesis 21:27, 31, 32 – Luke 22:5** – covenant between the chief priests and Judas concerning the price of betrayal).

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In every case in Scripture when a covenant was instituted between God and man, God is seen as the initiator. Man did not come to God with a proposal seeking God’s approval, rather God came to man declaring His will and seeking man’s adherence.

A covenant is a contract between God and man drawn up by God and presented to man. Man can either accept it or reject it, but he cannot change it. However, the usage of “covenant’ in Scripture does not always contain the idea of joint obligation, but may signify an obligation undertaken by a single person: God. In these instances, the aspect of covenant is emphasized in “the promise” (Galatians 3:17; Romans 15:8).

Who Originated the Covenants?

Being an interpersonal arrangement, a covenant must be made by one person for or with another. The covenants

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between God and man had to originate with God for He alone has the mind, authority and ability to make them effective. It was always His heart and nature that motivated Him to initiate the covenants with man. The covenants are the greatest manifestations of

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God's love, grace and mercy.

A Covenant-Making God

God established His covenant with Noah (Genesis 6:18). He made a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18; 17:2). God made a covenant with David (II Samuel 23:5). He promised to make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31-34). He has also made an everlasting covenant (Isaiah 55:3; 61:8).

A Covenant-Keeping God

God reveals His faithfulness and trustworthiness in the He keeps the covenant that He makes. Once God has made a covenant He does not forget it nor become negligent of it. He always follows through with the commitments He has made (Deuteronomy 7:9; II Chronicles 6:14; Psalms 111:5, 9; Romans 1:31).

A Covenant-Revealing God

In order for man to be in covenant relationship with God He must reveal the covenant to man, openly declaring the promises and terms. Apart from God taking the initiative and revealing His covenant to man, man would be ignorant of the availability of covenantal relationship with Him (Psalms 25:14; Deuteronomy 4:13).

A Covenant-Enabling God

The same God who makes, keep and reveals His covenants to man also enables man to fulfill his part of the covenant. Apart from the enabling grace of God man has proven his inability to keep the terms of any covenant. This was particularly illustrated under the Mosaic Covenant (Ephesians 2:4-13).

Why Make a Covenant?

The general purpose for a covenant is to provide a binding sense of commitment to an interpersonal relationship.

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The specific purpose of the Divine covenants is for them to be the vehicles of the expression of God's will and purpose for man. They are also to be the effective means by which His will and purpose is fulfilled.

What He does is **always consistent with who He is** | God has a reason for everything He does. He moves with definite purpose. Careful forethought and planning goes into all His works. All of God's purposes proceed from His person. What He does is always consistent with who He is. The kind of person He is dictates the kind of things He does.

The Nine Covenants

- The Edenic Covenant
- The Adamic Covenant
- The Noahic Covenant
- The Abrahamic Covenant
- The Mosaic Covenant
- The Palestinian Covenant
- The Davidic Covenant
- The New Covenant
- The Everlasting Covenant

God's purpose for man is seen in both creation and redemption. Before the fall of man God expressed His purpose in creating man in the form of a covenant: the Edenic Covenant. The fulfillment of this covenant was interrupted and apparently frustrated by Adam's breaking of the conditions of that covenant. This necessitated and ushered in the expression of God's redemptive purpose for man in the form of the redemptive covenants: the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic and New Covenants. Thus there was a covenant of creation and covenants of redemption. All of these were included in the scope of the Everlasting Covenant which is the most comprehensive expression of both God's creative and redemptive purposes for man.