

• *Covenant promise*

A covenant is a promise that has been made unbreakable, at least in theory.

God binds Himself to keep His word. He made a covenant with Noah, with Abraham, with David, and (in a different kind of covenant), with Moses.

1. The basis of covenant is sacrifice

• *Dedication and gratitude*

1. **The basis of covenant is sacrifice.** As soon as Noah was out of the ark, he built an altar to Yahweh ^{☞1} and, taking some of the clean animals he sacrificed burnt offerings. It was a way of expressing his dedication to God and his gratitude to God. Yet he could only approach God on the basis of a substitute dying for him.

☞1 8:20

• *Never again*

God was pleased with the sacrifice ^{☞1} and **after the sacrifice** gave a promise: never again would He curse the ground. ^{☞2} The seasons necessary for planting and harvesting would continue. Noah's salvation from drowning becomes the starting point of blessing for all humankind. The next time it rains they need not worry that the flood is being repeated.

☞1 8:21a
☞2 see 8:22b

• *The sacrifice of Jesus' blood*

Similarly, God offers promises to us in Jesus. He saves us and then promises that we shall inherit His blessings. We shall be enabled to serve Him. We shall experience God's protection and provision. We shall enter into a knowledge of God's will and participate in the forward development of God's kingdom. By faith in these promises and **on the basis of blood-atonement**, we go forward. Without the sacrifice of Jesus' blood there is no forgiveness, no starting-point. Without the sacrifice of Jesus' blood there is no daily cleansing, no receiving of provisions and enablings from above. The basis of covenant-relationship is blood-atonement.

2. Promises for the future

• *Refill the land*

2. **The covenant is full of promises for the future.** God commissions Noah to refill the land ^{☞1}, and gives promises of safety ^{☞2} and provision. ^{☞3} The only 'regulation' imposed on him concerns the shedding of blood. The blood of animals is to be treated as sacred ^{☞4} because of its use in symbolism when animals are sacrificed. And the crime of murder is to be treated as more serious than almost any other crime because of the sanctity of life. ^{☞5} The number of people must increase (9:6). Noah must refill the land. ^{☞7}

☞1 9:1
☞2 9:2
☞3 9:3
☞4 9:4

• *New covenant promises*

The new covenant promises are promises of what God will do for us in the course of our life. He promises the continuing presence of the Spirit. He will give us a new heart. He will lead us into godliness. He will open our minds and give us a knowledge of Himself and of His will.

☞5 9:5
☞6 9:6
☞7 9:7

• *The kingdom*

As promises to Noah dealt with the future and the progress of God's world, so the promises to the Christian deal with the future and the progress of God's kingdom in us and through us. By faith and patience these promises have to be 'inherited'.

3. God is sovereign

• *In complete control*

3. **God is sovereignly in control all the way through.** God takes the initiative. It was not Noah's idea to have this covenant. God said to Noah *'I am establishing my covenant with you...'* ^{☞1} It is a very emphatic statement. 'I am saying this', 'I will do this...', says God. God maintains his leadership. He says 'I have saved you. Now I am giving you promises. I will do it for you. Your job is to trust me and to cooperate with me. Then I will bring you into a whole new realm that I am promising to give you...'

☞1 9:8

4. The whole world

- God's covenant gets narrower and more precise as time goes on

4. **This covenant embraced the whole world.** God would maintain His promise with all Noah's descendants. ^{☐1} It would include the animals ^{☐2}, and the entire human race, 'all flesh' ^{☐3}, it would last for all generations. ^{☐4} Everyone born would be safe from any threat of a repeated flood.

^{☐1} 9:9
^{☐2} 9:10
^{☐3} 9:11
^{☐4} 9:12

God's covenants get narrower and more precise as they proceed in the history of the world. The first one was with every living creature and with planet earth. The covenant with Abraham was for Abraham and his descendants. The covenant with Moses would be narrower still, with the nation of Israel. The covenant with David would be only for David's line. The covenant with Jesus is even more precise; it is only for the saved. God is not in covenant with any unsaved person. Children are in the covenant only on condition that they have been called to salvation ('you and your children ... as many as the Lord . . . shall call', ^{☐1}). The covenants get progressively more precise. The covenant with Noah was for the entire cosmos. Even animals were involved.

^{☐1} Acts 2:39

5. Un-conditional

- Once the oath was given

5. **Once the oath was given it was unconditional.** There is no possibility that the promises of 8:22 will ever be reversed.

Similarly once God 'swears' to us, the blessings that have been sworn cannot be lost. The covenant through Noah was a reward for Noah's responsiveness, but once given it could not be lost. So it is about anything in which God takes an oath.

6. Mediator

- Noah
- Jesus

6. **The covenant had a mediator.** God chose to give these promises through Noah. He is speaking to Noah ^{☐1} and he passes on what is said and others benefit through what God gives to him.

^{☐1} in 8:21-22; 9:1b-7, 9-11,12-16,17

God says to Jesus 'I will give you the nations of the world'. Everyone who comes to Jesus is open to the promises of the covenant, but they cannot be found outside of Jesus.

7. Covenant-sign

- A sign of mercy
- Baptism of the Lord's Supper

7. **There was a covenant-sign, the rainbow.** There was something visible that recalled the promises. ^{☐1} When you see a rainbow, says God, treat it as a sign that I am not judging the world. It is a sign that I am not judging the world with another flood. It is a sign of my mercy, a sign of my commitment to my oath.

^{☐1} 9:12-17

God's 'covenant-signs' of baptism and the Lord's Supper are similar. They are signs of God's promises to us, promises that God will cleanse us and feed us forever.



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