

## **Lesson 13: Covenant Relationships**

The Church is built upon covenant relationships that are not just vertical, but also horizontal.

A “covenant” is an arrangement between two parties.

### **Some Old Testament Covenants**

In the Bible, the covenant is the arrangement that establishes the relationship between God and his people.

If we begin our study of covenants in Genesis and work our way through the Bible, we learn of several covenants that God made with men. We need to remember too that while God established the covenant with his chosen leaders, the people were included in the covenant by association...that is until they showed through their rebellion that they did not agree or commit to the covenant.

- In Genesis 9: God established a covenant with Noah. God’s promise was to all creation, that he would never again destroy the inhabitants of the earth, whether man or animal or plant, through a world-wide flood. The rainbow was to be a reminder to mankind of the covenant that God made with Noah.

- In Genesis 15: God made a covenant with Abraham concerning his descendants and the Promised Land. In Chapter 17 we learn that this covenant was sealed through circumcision.

- In Exodus 19: We learn that the Book of the Covenant consisted of the 10 Commandments and the law that God gave to Moses. The Covenant was confirmed with the Peace Offering in Exodus 24:5.

The Peace Offering and Christ's Offering: The blood of animal sacrifices prefigured or foreshadowed the final consecration which came through the blood of Christ.

*"<sup>3</sup> Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do." <sup>4</sup> And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>5</sup> And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. <sup>7</sup> Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." <sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."*

*(Exodus 24:3-8 ESV)*

To consecrate in this context means to cleanse and atone for man's sin, which could only be accomplished through shed blood. In the Old Testament animals were sacrificed and their blood was used to cover man's sin. In other words, the blood of animals appeased God's wrath, but it did not remove their sins.

Notice also that the people were in total agreement with God's mandates for the covenant. Shortly after this scene in Exodus 24 we read of Israel's rebellion in Exodus 32 and the need for the Covenant to be renewed in Exodus 34.

## The New Covenant

Jesus introduces the subject of a New Covenant in Luke 22. Later, the writer of Hebrews helps us see that while Christ spoke the New Covenant, Jeremiah had actually spoken of this covenant 550 years before Christ was born.

*“<sup>19</sup> And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>20</sup> And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” (Luke 22:19-20 ESV)*

Jesus speaks of a New Covenant...one that will replace the Covenant God made with Moses and the nation of Israel. This New Covenant, like the covenants before it, was instituted with the shedding of blood. Jesus informs his disciples that this New Covenant will be instituted with the shedding of his blood and will come after much suffering (the cup signifies suffering).

*“<sup>6</sup> But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. <sup>7</sup> For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. <sup>8</sup> For he finds fault with them when he says: “**Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, <sup>9</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. <sup>10</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write***

***them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>11</sup> And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. <sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.*** (Hebrews 8:6-12 ESV)

The New Covenant has to do with what God will do in the hearts of believers because of the obedience of Christ.

The quotation of Jeremiah 31:31-34 in Hebrews 8:8-12 (in bold above) is the longest Old Testament quotation found in the New Testament. This quotation explains that the New Covenant will one day supersede the Old Covenant. The theme of the New Covenant dominates the book of Hebrews, which was written to encourage Christians by demonstrating the superiority of Christ over the law.

The expression "New Covenant" is found at least six times in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24) and perhaps a seventh (Luke 22:20 according to some manuscripts). Jesus saw the Lord's Supper as instituting a different, and therefore new, covenant. The covenant was sealed by his own sacrificial death, and the cup of the Lord's Supper symbolizes the blood of Christ's sacrifice. Every time we gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are celebrating the New Covenant – the wonderful truth that Christ died to save us from the bondage and condemnation of our sins and gave us new life so that we could enjoy and worship God forever.

Hebrews 7 informs us that this New Covenant is far better than the Old.

*“<sup>22</sup> This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.”  
(Hebrews 7:22 ESV)*

Why is the New Covenant better than the Old Covenant?

*<sup>24</sup> but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. <sup>25</sup> Consequently, 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. <sup>26</sup> For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup> He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. <sup>28</sup> For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.” (Hebrews 7:24-28 ESV)*

1. Jesus is risen and lives forever.
2. Jesus intercedes for us.
3. Jesus is perfectly holy.
4. His sacrifice removed sin once and for all (not just covered).
5. Jesus is appointed the High Priest forever.

*“<sup>12</sup> he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.” (Hebrews 9:12 ESV)*

In the New Covenant, our redemption is secured in Christ!