



GENESIS

Biblical Covenants

“The covenants provide the structure and unfold the developing plot line of Scripture, and a detailed investigation of those covenants is necessary to understand God’s eternal plan of salvation centered in Christ.”

— Peter J. Gentry

Understanding the Covenants

Recap of Genesis 1–11 (Pre-History)

- Genesis 1-11 describes realities before Israel’s “recorded history.” They include theologically deep and challenging accounts of creation, fall, sin, flood, and the beginning of nations.
- They address deep questions of origins, identity, human rebellion, and divine mercy.
- Scripture is authoritative and trustworthy, and every faithful interpretation will consider genre, structure, and authorial intent.
- There is a theological purpose of these chapters to establish the world as God’s creation (good), humanity’s unique calling (rule and represent), the origin of sin, and God’s redemptive plan.

The Covenants of Adam and Noah

Adam (often called the Adamic or Creation Covenant)

Key: God’s blessing, human dominion, fruitfulness, obedience, and the warning of death.

Purpose: Establishes humanity’s role as God’s image-bearers and stewards.

Noah

Key: Preservation of life, stability of creation, the command to multiply, prohibition of bloodshed, and the sign of the rainbow.

Purpose: Reaffirms creation order after judgment; God’s commitment to sustain the world.

Comparison

Continuity: Both affirm humanity's role in creation and God's blessing; both provide basic structure for life in God's world.

Contrast: Adamic covenant ties blessing to obedience; Noahic covenant is unconditional and focused on preservation, not ideal vocation.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Central theme: The foundational OT covenant promising land, offspring/nation, and worldwide blessing.

- The Abrahamic covenant is one of the most important theological foundations in the entire Bible. It is introduced in Genesis 12:1–3, where God calls Abram away from his homeland and promises three core blessings: land, offspring, and worldwide blessing. God declares, *“I will make you into a great nation... I will bless those who bless you... and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”* This covenant is not based on Abram's worth but on God's sovereign choice and gracious prerogative.
- In Genesis 15, God formalizes the covenant with an oath ceremony. God alone passes between the divided pieces (Gen. 15:17), signaling that He Himself bears full responsibility for fulfilling the covenant. Abram's role is faith: *“Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness”* (Gen. 15:6). In Genesis 17, the covenant is expanded, emphasizing permanence, offspring, land, and the sign of circumcision.

Key texts: Genesis 12, 15, 17.

Characteristics: God initiates, God promises, and God binds himself to the covenant's fulfillment.

Relationship to other covenants:

- Builds on God's commitment from Creation and Noah's preservation.
- Moves the story from humanity in general to God's chosen family.
- Becomes the theological backbone of Israel's entire identity and mission.

How the Abrahamic Covenant Plays Out Across the Old Testament

1. The Covenant Defines Israel's Identity (Exodus 2:23–25)

When Israel groans in slavery, Scripture says, *“God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”* The Exodus itself is an outworking of God's promise to make Abraham's descendants into a great nation.

2. The Covenant is Rooted in the Land (Deuteronomy 1:8)

Moses reminds Israel, “*See, I have set the land before you; enter and take possession... the Lord swore to give to your fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*” Israel’s inheritance is rooted not in military strength but in covenant.

3. The Covenant Expands Through the Patriarchs (Genesis 26:3–4; 28:13–14)

God reaffirms the covenant to Isaac and Jacob, repeating promises of land, descendants, and worldwide blessing. This shows the covenant is multigenerational and unstoppable.

4. The Covenant Is Celebrated in Israel’s Worship (Psalm 105:7–11)

The psalmist proclaims that God “*remembers his covenant forever... the covenant he made with Abraham.*” Israel’s worship is grounded in God’s faithfulness to His promises.

Psalm 89:1–4 – Celebrates God’s covenant love and his covenant commitment, especially through the line of David, which flows from the Abrahamic promise.

Psalm 106:43–45 – Describes Israel’s unfaithfulness, but emphasizes that God “*remembered his covenant with them*” and showed mercy.

Psalm 111:5 – Declares God “*remembers his covenant forever,*” grounding his care for his people in his unchanging promise.

5. The Covenant Shapes the Hope of a King (2 Samuel 7:8–16)

The Davidic Covenant does not replace Abraham’s covenant—it channels it through a royal line. The promise that David’s descendant will have an everlasting kingdom grows out of the promise that Abraham’s offspring would bless the nations.

6. The Covenant Creates Prophetic Expectations (Isaiah 41:8; Micah 7:20)

Isaiah calls Israel “*the offspring of Abraham my friend.*” Micah ends his prophecy by praising God for keeping his covenant love to Abraham. The prophets continually point forward to a future fulfillment of God’s promises.

7. The Covenant Extends to the Nations (Isaiah 49:6; 56:8)

The Servant of the Lord is told, “*I will also make you a light for the nations.*” This is the promised global blessing: Abraham’s family is to be the means by which God’s grace reaches every people.

Summary

- The Abrahamic covenant is the backbone of the Old Testament narrative. It explains the Exodus, the Law, the Davidic monarchy, the Prophetic (Messianic) hope, and the expectation of a coming Kingdom.
- Every stage of Israel's history unfolds from God's promise to Abraham—land, people, blessing—and each development pushes toward the ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah.

The Mosaic and Davidic Covenants (Overview)

Mosaic

Purpose: Forms Israel as a holy nation; provides law, worship, and communal structure.

Relationship to the Abrahamic: Implements the Abrahamic promise by shaping Abraham's descendants into a covenant people.

Davidic

Purpose: Establishes a royal line; promises an enduring throne.

Relationship to Abrahamic: Channels Abraham's blessing through a king whose rule will ultimately bless the nations.

How the Covenants Shape Our Understanding of the NT Covenant

Hermeneutically: The covenants form the narrative backbone of Scripture; they help us see continuity and development.

Theologically: Jesus fulfills creation's purpose, embodies Israel's calling, fulfills the Law, and the promised Son of Abraham/Son of David.

Practically: Understanding the covenants clarifies the nature of salvation, the mission of the church, and our identity as people of the new covenant, personal and corporate expectations.

Climax in Jesus (Messiah/Christ):

- Jesus fulfills the law.
- Jesus embodies the only faithful king.
- Jesus brings the blessing promised to Abraham to the nations.
- Jesus's blood establishes the covenant that brings forgiveness, restoration, and the hope of a renewed