

The Covenants of the Bible (Part II)

Review

- covenants last forever | never annulled
- each covenant builds on top of another

Basic framework of Bible: Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace

- Covenant of Works – obey and live, disobey and die
- Covenant of Grace – believe in Jesus and live

All of the Bible from Genesis 3 is Covenant of Grace

- unifies Old Testament and New Testament – one story

NOAHIC COVENANT

- only a few references in New Testament | not big part of story

Test in Eden repeated

- Noah is best of humanity
- Gen. 6:9 – “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation”

When Noah emerges out of ark – new creation

- Noah also tested w/ fruit of tree | sins drinking fruit, drunk
- ends w/ shameful nakedness | just like Adam

Noahic Covenant is a covenant of grace

Genesis 9:11-13

¹¹ “I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:

¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

Noahic Covenant is promissory

- God makes unilateral promise that does not depend on man
- gospel is hinted at | but not yet explicit

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

- paradigmatic “covenant of grace” in Bible
- NT continually references this covenant as embodiment of gospel

Galatians 3:7-10

⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. ¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”

Romans 4:2-3

³ For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

In Abrahamic Covenant, God establishes beachhead of New Creation

- beginning of redemption of world | starts with one man – Abraham
- and then grows into family, and then nation | Gentiles grafted in

Genesis 15:1-7

¹ The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”

² But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.”

⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” ⁵ And he brought Abram outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

⁶ And Abram believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

⁷ And he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.”

Abrahamic Covenant

- promise of blessing (v. 1)
 - no conditions | no “if, then” language
- promise consists of 2 parts:
 - promise of offspring | v. 5 – as numerous as stars
 - promise of land | v. 7 – give land of Canaan
- receive by faith
 - faith is open hand receives gift | not by good works

MOSAIC COVENANT

The Mosaic Covenant is a puzzle

- very complex and sprawling
- rules extend across Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

If Mosaic Covenant is a Covenant of Grace, then why does sound like the Covenant of Works?

Deuteronomy 30:15-18

¹⁵ See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.

The Mosaic Covenant is fundamentally of grace

- remember, it cannot overturn the previous covenant given to Abraham

Galatians 3:17-18

The law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.

¹⁸ For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

The Mosaic Covenant is a continuation of the Abrahamic Covenant

- provides richer details, symbolic rituals, and language

The grace of the Mosaic Covenant

Exodus 24:7-8

⁷ Then Moses 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.” ⁸ 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.”

Also: Passover | sacrificial system | prophecies of return

So what is the conditional language about?

- Mosaic Covenant has duality
- Mosaic Covenant is also a Covenant of Works

Galatians 3:11-12

¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”

Mosaic Covenant is contrasted with Abrahamic Covenant

- “righteous shall live by faith” – Abrahamic Covenant
- “the one who does them shall live by them” – Mosaic Covenant

Mosaic Covenant is a re-dramatization of the Garden of Eden

- Promised Land is a new “Eden” | Israel is corporate “Adam”
- obedience to law is condition to stay in Promised Land

Mosaic Covenant is a re-enactment of failure of Adam in garden

- Adam disobeys and is expelled from garden (east)
- Israel disobeys and is exiled from land (east)

Purpose of story is show people utter futility of law-keeping

- only hope is a savior | perfect lamb who take sins of people
- Mosaic law is dead-end to salvation | Christ is only way

Galatians 3:23-26

²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.