

The Gospel Concealed: The Old Testament

Week 2: God Relates - Covenant

The new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed. -St. Augustine

OT Overview

- The Old Testament, sovereignly **written by God** through the empowering and guiding of many authors over many periods of time, is fundamentally about **Jesus Christ**: the necessity of his coming, the purpose of his work, and the beauty of his person.

Discussion

- Think about a time when someone close to you gave you their word and failed to uphold it. How did that make you feel and how did that affect your relationship moving forward?
- What do you know about covenants?

Covenant Definition

- **Covenant (berith) – a religious agreement that creates a relationship with legal aspects.**
- What are some common elements of an Old Testament covenant?
 - Preamble – A spoken introduction to the oath about to be made between the parties.
 - Historical Prologue – Historical background given to explain the context of the covenant.
 - Promise/Blessing – The main purpose/character of a covenant bond.
 - Ratification/Sign – Ceremony or symbol of covenant commitment.
 - Obligation/Sanction – Responsibilities or duties of those in the covenant including curses in the instance of disobedience (e.g. Deut. 4:5)
- Evangelical language: “a personal relationship with Jesus” → Biblical language: Jesus, “the guarantor [someone who guarantees] of a better covenant” (Heb. 7:22)

Covenant Practice

- Breakup into small groups (if comfortable) and read the following text together concerning God’s covenant with Noah:
 - *Genesis 9:8-17*: ⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. 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. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”
- What elements of the covenant (the list above) are present in this text and what are they? What elements of the covenant (the list above) are missing? Is this significant?
- Who does the Lord make this covenant with? How long does it last?

The Gospel Concealed – Case Study #2

Where do we see the Gospel “concealed” in the Abrahamic Covenant?

1) Covenant Elements...

- **Promise**
 - i. A family, as numerous as the stars in the sky. (Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 17:2-8)
 - ii. The Promised Land (Gen. 12:1,7; 15:7,18-21; 17:8)
 - iii. God will be their God. (Gen. 17:7-8)
 - iv. Through them all nations will be blessed. (Gen. 12:3)
- **Historical Prologue**
 - i. Gen. 15:7: “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.”
- **Sign**
 - i. Circumcision → Gen 17:10-13
- **Sanction**
 - i. Gen 15:10-17 & Gen 17:14: “Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

2) The unilateral nature of God’s covenant with Abraham...

- Grace → “And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” (15:6)
- God’s activity vs. Abraham’s passivity...
 - i. **Ratification** (confirmation) ceremony: Genesis 15:8-18a
 1. Sacrificial animals – Why are these animals picked?
 2. Covenant sanction – Why walk through the carcasses? Who walked through?
 3. Prophetic implications – Why the smoking pot and fire?
 - ii. Covenant Test
 1. Genesis 22:1-14: The Binding of Isaac
 2. Who provides what? Where do we see the Gospel in this story? (22:8)

3) Gospel Applications

- The LORD goes to great lengths to covenant (be) with his people.
- The LORD does the work to uphold his covenant. It is his faithfulness that keeps covenant. It is his word that is trustworthy.
- All the Old Testament covenants pave a way for the New Covenant, where Jesus Christ faithfully walks through the “death passage” on our behalf.

Covenant Theology – Debated Questions for Further Study...

- How do all the covenants work together? (Key terms: Covenant of Grace, administration)
- How many total covenants are in the Bible?
- What is the connection between the “old” and “new” covenant? (Key terms: pedobaptism, credobaptism)
- Is there a covenant present at creation with Adam? (Key term: Covenant of Works)