

The Covenant of Life

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Preamble: Moses had spent 38 years in the wilderness teaching the people of Israel the Way of God and documenting that teaching. Finally, just before the Israelites were to cross the Jordan, Moses had about one month to live, he spent his last days lecturing the people to ensure they understood the teaching. Almost the last thing he did was to mediate a new covenant, The Covenant of Life, with the people. This covenant raises the ultimate question of human existence: each and every human being who has ever lived will one day stand before God and declare that they will live by the Way of God, “Choose Life”; or, choose NOT to live. (Dt29:1, 30:15-19).

Historical Prologue: Moses briefly recounted the works of YHWH to bring the people to the Promised Land (Dt29:2-9). Moses laments that the people do NOT have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and therefore cannot fully understand the Way of God (Dt29:4, 5:29, 31:16,18-19).

Covenant Stipulations: This covenant is **NOT with the nation as a whole**, but **with each individual person**, especially **future generations** (Dt29:10-15). The principal stipulation is to **avoid all forms of idolatry**. Idolatry is the root of all sin; pride and arrogance lead to idolatry (Dt29:16-19a, Hb12:15, 1Jh5:16).

Covenant Curses: The curses follow from the proscription against idolatry – “This will lead to the **sweeping away of moist and dry alike**. The LORD will not be willing to forgive him ...”. The “sweeping away the moist and dry alike” is a very severe punishment – **the implication is that no one survives**. Moses alludes to the general covenant curses (Lv26:32-33, Dt29:22-24); but he also foreshadows Jesus’ warning **“the whole land burned out with brimstone and salt”** (Mk13:20). The national sin of violation of the Sinai Covenant is the natural result of individual sin – **if each person is true to his personal commitment to God, the nation will remain true to the national covenant** (Dt29:25-28).

Further Stipulation – the Secret Things of God: “The **secret things belong to the LORD our God**, but the **things that are revealed belong to us** and to our children forever, that we may **do all the words of this [torah]**” (Dt29:29). The Way of God is hidden from all humanity because it can only be revealed through God’s calling and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **The secret things of God are embodied in understanding and living by the Way of God** (Job 28:12,15,20-21,23,28). Yet at any given time God retains the knowledge of certain things (Dn2:19-23, 12:4,8-9). Even today **some things remain secret** (Hb1:1-2, Rv1:1-3, At1:6-8).

Further Stipulation – Repentance: Next, **the Covenant of Life prescribes repentance in the inevitable event of sin and punishment**. Upon repentance, God will forgive and restore the relationship (Dt30:1-3a). God had already documented the inevitable apostasy of Israel, but **sin is universal – all human beings must repent** (Rm3:23-24). Given the inevitable apostasy and dissolution of the Nation of Israel, Moses makes reference to **the Second Exodus and the establishment of the New Israel** (Dt30:3b-5). Finally, Moses looks to **the New Covenant as the basis for the New Israel and the heart of the Covenant of Life** (Dt30:6-10).

Covenant Blessing – the Word of Faith: “**this commandment that I command you today** is not too hard for you ... **the word is very near you**. It is **in your mouth** and **in your heart**, so that **you can do it**” (Dt30:11-14). The Apostle Paul quoted and greatly elaborated on this passage; he asserts: “the **righteousness based on faith says** ... The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, **the word of faith that we proclaim**)” (Rm10:6-9). Paul’s point is that the “commandment”, Deuteronomy 30:11, is equivalent to the “word”, Deuteronomy 30:14, and **these are the basis of Christian Faith which is required for salvation**. But nothing a human being can do puts God in a position that he must grant salvation to that person – **salvation remains God’s gift for which we must trust him in faith**. This is **Paul’s greatest contribution to theology**: both “faith” and “works” are required, but neither can “earn” salvation. We all deserve death: **salvation is only available as the free gift of God through grace**.

Covenant Blessing – the Promise of Life: This is **the ultimate blessing from God** – the promise of eternal life, the “better promise” of the New Covenant (Dt30:15-18, Hb8:6). The ultimate blessing requires an affirmative answer to the ultimate question (Dt30:19-20). **The choice of “life” is complicated**, but God will NOT grant the gift of salvation to anyone who chooses otherwise (Rm14:10b-11, Pp2:10-11). **“The Book of Life”** contains the list of human beings who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit which makes an individual a “begotten” member of the God Family (Pp4:2-3). **To “choose life” implies a daily choice of living by the Way of God**. As long as one makes the correct choice, that person’s name remains in the “Book of Life”. The untold billions who have never been converted, have not yet been required to make the choice: they will in the **“Great White Throne Judgement”** (Rv20:11-15).

The Covenant of Life is a personal covenant between God and any human being who would be a True Worshipper of God. God cut this covenant with the individuals who were inheriting the typical fulfillment of the first promise to Abraham. This was a watershed moment in the Plan of God. **We are today approaching THE watershed moment in the Plan of God**. Soon the King of kings will return and establish the Kingdom of God. Those individuals who are being prepared to be part of that Kingdom must understand the Plan of God, the revelation of God in his *torah*, and **The Covenant of Life**, and **unequivocally commit to God’s recommendation: “Choose Life”**.

The material is based on the paper “Covenants of Grace” available at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

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