

Covenants of Grace

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God is Love! (Jh3:16, 1Jh4:8-10,16) But what exactly does that mean? How is God's love revealed in the Bible?

What is a "Covenant"? The English word "covenant" comes from a Latin word "convenire" – briefly, its meaning is "a formal binding agreement between two or more parties", usually some action or performance is required. In modern speech: we tend to use words like "agreement", "contract", "treaty". In the ancient world, the concept of "covenant" was extremely important. The Hebrew word for "covenant" is בְּרִית - *brith*.

Seven Covenants: The Bible contains seven specific covenant agreements between God and humanity: these covenants are a progressive revelation of the nature of God (love, grace, and mercy) and of the Plan of God.

1. **The Covenant of Justness:** established by God with Noah after the flood, in force for all human societies, establishing true justice as the basis for a human society. The Covenant of Justness is based on God's promise NOT to ever again destroy the earth with a flood. (Gn8:8-11). The Covenant of Justness is an object lesson in mish'pat, "justness" as character attribute of God, a key component of the Nature of God. (Dt32:3-4)

2. **The Covenant of Promise:** This covenant comprised two promises to Abram: (Gn12:1-4a,7a)

- his descendants would form a nation and would be given the land of Canaan as a permanent dwelling place;
- all nations of the earth would be blessed through a Descendant of Abram – this Descendant is Jesus Christ.

Through The Covenant of Promise God ensured that Abraham came to understand the meaning of hesed (covenant love)– when John says "God is Love", that love is embodied in hesed. (Ex34:6-7)

3. **The Covenant of Knowledge:** God established The Covenant of Knowledge through Moses to create the nation of Israel. This covenant provides to each and every human being the fundamental knowledge required to attain holiness. The Sinai Covenant was very simple: Israel agreed to: "obey my voice", "keep my covenant", and "be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". (Ex19:5-8) The entire contents of the five books of the Pentateuch, the torah, contain God's instruction (torah) on how to "obey my voice", "keep my covenant", and "be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" – this material is the basis of life; it reveals God's mind, his character, and his nature; and, his Plan of Salvation.

4. **The Covenant of Life:** Just before the Nation of Israel crossed the Jordan River to establish themselves in the Land of Canaan, God presented them with another covenant, distinct from the Sinai Covenant. (Dt29:1) In the Covenant of Life, God clearly expresses his desire for a personal relationship with each and every human being – God implores us to consider the options: life or death. His recommendation – choose life! (Dt30:19) God reserves the right to reveal what he will reveal at his discretion. (Dt29:29) Based on what has been revealed, the Covenant of Life requires True Worshipers to live by God's instruction.

5. **The Covenant of Fidelity:** After the Israelites were established in the promised land, God reminded the people that they had willingly entered into the Sinai Covenant. Then God made a new covenant, the Covenant of Fidelity, which required each individual to consider what God had done for the nation, and for each individual, and on that basis commit to serving God or not. (Jsh24:1-28) This covenant is essentially the same as the New Testament covenant of Baptism.

6. **The Covenant of Descent:** God promised David dynastic longevity and that his Descendent would rule forever. (2Sm7:11b-16) David's dynasty sat on the throne of Israel for 400 years. The Descendant to which the promise passed in perpetuity is, of course, Jesus Christ. (Mt1:1, Lk1:31-33, Rm1:1b-4)

7. **The Covenant of Salvation:** this covenant opens the door to salvation for all human beings. The Covenant of Salvation is based on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a propitiation for sin. Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant (Jr31:31-34) on the First Christian Passover. The inauguration of the New Testament Church was the beginning of salvation for all human beings. The Covenant of Salvation will come into full effect when the Kingdom of God is established on the earth and all people in all nations over the whole earth will be brought into the True Worship of the True God.

Because God has such love for his creation, human beings, he has been willing to enter into these seven covenants with human beings: these covenants define God's Grace; they comprise a complete revelation from the Creator to his creation, human beings, of the Nature of God and his Plan of Salvation.

This material is based on the paper: "Covenants of Grace" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

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