

...Covenants: Bonding Together with Heavenly Father...

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What is a 'covenant'?

a promise of God to His children

a solemn agreement between two or more parties

a solemn agreement between God and His children containing His promises to us

(NOTE: 'covenant' comes from Old French *covenir* 'agreeing', from Latin *convenire* 'come together')

What are the biblical meanings of 'to covenant'?

O.T. Hebrew: *karat be'rith* = 'to cut a bond'

(i.e. 'to sever a union' or 'to separate a connection' or 'to cut a deal')

Compare cutting boards into segments to create a fine, solid bookcase

N.T. Greek: *diatheke* from *diatithemai* = 'to dispose or put apart a contract'

Compare taking apart or analyzing the elements of a treaty before it is signed.

What are the two common covenant relationships?

vertical (between God and His children)

horizontal (between humans, either as individuals or groups)

What are the basic elements of a covenant?

introduction: a *preamble, preface, or prologue* that describes the involved parties and their context

Function: Brings the various covenant parties together

historical context: insights into earlier historical events and other valuable covenant circumstances

Function: Reviews the background and settings for a new covenant relationship

stipulations: details containing the 'fine print of the contract;' the general and specific agreements

Function: Describes conditions and expectations of the covenant

ritual act: a symbolic activity (ordinance/oath) that binds the covenant parties together

Function: Performs specified acts that pledge the individuals to an agreed course of action

rewards & punishments: the positive & negative consequences of obeying or neglecting contract terms

Function: Identifies the blessings/incentives and curses/penalties of the covenant

witnesses: third-party observers who certify the covenant process, especially the ritual act

Function: Fulfills legal requirements of outsider verification (and provides additional help)

perpetuation: a 'documentation' where essential covenant details are recorded, including provisions for contract elements to be read, reviewed, revised, and renewed as necessary

Function: Provides written records and future continuation of the binding relationship

King Benjamin's Covenant Teachings

Study carefully Mosiah 2:1 - 6:3 in the Book of Mormon to identify multiple examples of all seven covenant elements as found repeatedly in King Benjamin's teachings to his people *Speaking to the hearts and souls of his subjects, King Benjamin followed Moses' ancient covenant pattern found in Deuteronomy as he brought his people into a sacred covenant bond with God.*

What are some key covenant promises of the gospel dispensations?

Adam: God promises a Savior to redeem humanity from the effects of the Fall.

Enoch: A Zion society on earth foreshadows life with the Father’s family in heaven.

Noah: God offers us a second chance; He sends the rainbow as a sign that He will honor His promises.

Abraham: A chosen **people** will receive a promised **land** and become a **blessing** for other nations.

Moses: The House of Israel should become God’s *peculiar treasure* to prepare for the coming Messiah.

Jesus: God the Father fulfills His plan of salvation through the atonement of His Son, Jesus the Christ.

Joseph Smith: A restoration & gathering prepares for Christ’s second coming and millennial reign.

What types of covenants help us fulfill Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation?

covenants of works that reward us conditionally through God’s just laws

covenants of grace that bless us unconditionally through God’s merciful love

salvation covenants that are required for entrance into and service within God’s celestial realms

What are five critical salvation/exaltation covenants that help us return to the Father?

Baptism: the essential gateway covenant

Sacrament: the weekly renewal covenant

Priesthood: the divine power and service covenant

Endowment: the heavenly path covenant

Sealing: the celestial bonding covenant

What are the key values of our covenants with God?

Teachings and Guidelines help us know what our Heavenly Father expects of us

Incentives and Rewards motivate us to do God’s will in spite of temptations and distractions

Gateways and Ordinances establish required rites for prescribed divine blessings and promises

Patterns and Measurements . . . provide markers to know how well we are fulfilling God’s plan

How does keeping God’s covenants help us become more like Him?

*Divine covenants **Teach** as they provide us with knowledge to achieve our unique destiny.*

*Divine covenants **Empower** as they give us authority to share God’s special gifts with others.*

*Divine covenants **Sanctify** as they make us holy and worthy of eternal life.*

What is the key relationship between covenant parties?

Try to describe in a single word or a short phrase the most essential element in a strong, beneficial, enduring friendship, marriage, or partnership?

In the ancient Hebrew text of the Old Testament ^c*hesed* would be that single word!

^c*hesed* appears 246 times in the Bible and it is such a rich, complex word that it is translated into over thirty different words or phrases in the various English translations.

^c*hesed* is a dynamic noun describing the powerful, goodly nature of God (and a saintly person) in their various personal, religious, and covenant relationships with each other.

^c*hesed* refers primarily to the devoted love, kindness, and mercy that God has with his chosen children who have chosen to obey his commandments and to honor their covenants with him.

^c*hesed* also shares the Hebrew root letters for the term ‘saints’ in the King James Version of the Bible.