

The Gospel, God's Covenant of Grace

Scripture texts are from the King James Version of the Bible

Introduction

The Bible speaks extensively of the Covenant. God made a Covenant with Noah. He made a Covenant with Abraham, and with Israel, etc.

The Bible speaks of Covenant-breakers, of the salt of the Covenant, of the bond of the Covenant, and of the curses of the Covenant. The Bible speaks of the Ten Commandments as the Covenant. It indicates that the sign of the Covenant was circumcision. Many people today consider themselves to be Covenant people and their children Covenant children. God made a Covenant with Noah. He made one with Abraham. He made one with Israel. The Bible speaks of a New Covenant and an Old Covenant.

What is this Covenant that is referred to in so many ways in the Bible? In this study, we will attempt to gain an understanding so that we can see the relevance of Biblical references to the Covenant.

We must remember, of course, that the Bible is its own interpreter. Therefore, we must not look for answers in what men have said; we must look in the Bible only. We must also be careful to include anything and everything the Bible says about the Covenant. Only when we find harmony between all parts of Bible truth do we dare trust our conclusions.

What Is The Covenant Spoken Of In The Bible?

The word "Covenant" carries within it the concept of an agreement, an agreement or contract in which two or more parties agree to the statements and conditions described in the agreement or contract. Within the agreement, stipulations are made as to what penalties are to be assessed against the one who breaks the agreement. All parties sign the agreement to indicate they agree with its terms.

The Covenant spoken of in the Bible is indeed an agreement. We will discover in this study that it has only one signature. While it concerns mankind, no man signs the agreement. It is made completely within the Godhead on behalf of mankind.

It might help us to understand the nature of the agreement if we had a synonym for it. Is there another word or phrase for "agreement" that would help us understand the Biblical meaning of the word "Covenant?"

God's Covenant: The Gospel For The Whole Human Race

As we develop an understanding of the "Covenant," we will discover that it is a synonym for the Gospel. It is actually God's salvation plan for the human race. We will also discover that the term "New Covenant" is an integral part of the Gospel but focuses on the actuality of salvation.

That the Covenant is synonymous with the Gospel is not surprising. God divides the Bible, which is the Gospel in its entirety, into two parts – the Old Testament or Covenant and the New Testament or Covenant. Thus, God assures us that the Covenant is the Gospel.

God's Covenant relates to the whole human race. This is implied by the language of Deuteronomy 29:14,15.

Neither with you only do I make this Covenant and this oath, but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day.* [*Emphasis added]

It is shown more clearly that it is related to the whole human race in the language of Isaiah 24:5: The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting Covenant.* [*Emphasis added]

God is speaking in this verse to the whole human race. This is seen by the introductory verses to Isaiah 24:5. Verses 1-4 declare:

Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and

scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth, and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.

Verse 5 speaks of the inhabitants of the earth as being Covenant-breakers. One cannot be a Covenant-breaker unless one is involved in the Covenant. Since all of mankind has broken the Covenant, all of mankind is under the Covenant. Since they are under the Covenant, they are under the Gospel, from several vantage points.

First of all, they are under the Covenant in the sense that God has made Himself known to the whole human race apart from the Bible by revealing Himself through creation.

God records in Romans 1:18-20:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the whole world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

Secondly, God has revealed Himself to natural man apart from the revelation of the Bible in that He has blessed mankind with many blessings. Acts 14:16,17:

Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

These verses speak of blessings as a witness.

Thirdly, God has revealed Himself to mankind in that He has written His laws on man's heart.

Not only is mankind without excuse because he should know that God is the Creator and because God has witnessed to him through His many blessings, he is also without excuse because God's Law is written on his heart. We read in Romans 2:14,15:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

Not only has He placed His Law within the heart of natural man, He has also placed within man knowledge of his sinful condition; he knows he is in trouble with God. We read in Romans 2:16:

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, though condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds.

The fact that man has some knowledge of the Gospel, apart from that which he receives from the written Word, is demonstrated by the actions of men who have never heard about the Bible.

1. Ancient times people, such as Cain, Abel, and Noah offered sacrifices to God. Later, on Mount Sinai, these sacrifices were integrated into the written Word.

Throughout history and today, pagans with no knowledge of the Bible offer sacrifices to appease the anger of God as they know Him. These offerings indicate that they intuitively are aware there is a God whom they must worship (Acts 17:23). It also indicates that they intuitively know that a sacrifice must be made to pay for their sins.

2. The creation account and the flood account were known to man by oral records handed down throughout many generations. These, together with the direct messages given to Adam, Enoch, and Noah, etc., though meager in content and corrupted by much retelling, served to send the Gospel to the world before the invention of writing.

Because man knows there is a God and knows he is in terrible trouble with God because of his sins, he should cry out to God for mercy. He should recognize that he is under the judgment of God and that only God can provide a solution to his awful situation.

New Testament Covenant-Breakers

It is no wonder then that we read in Romans 1:31 that mankind is "without understanding, Covenant-breakers"

In this verse the New Testament parallels the Old Testament. God assures us that all mankind by nature is a Covenant-breaker. We cannot avoid the principle that anyone who is a Covenant-breaker must be related in some way to the Covenant. Since, to some degree, the Law of God and a knowledge of God are known to man, and since the Law of God and a knowledge of God are integral parts of the Gospel, then the Covenant is the Gospel.

That all men are under the Gospel, in the sense revealed to us in Romans 1 and Romans 2, may offer an explanation to the declarations of Colossians 1:5,6 and **Colossians 1:23**:

For the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, whereof ye heard before in the Word of the truth of the Gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world;* and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth . . . If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under Heaven;* whereof I Paul am made a minister. [*Emphasis added]

This reminds us of **Psalm 19:1-3**, where God declares:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

Keep in mind that the whole Bible is the complete articulation of the Gospel. However, any part of the Bible is the Gospel. Later, we shall see that there was a progressive revelation of the Covenant, or the Gospel, as God wrote the Bible. For example, Israel in the wilderness was told that God had made a Covenant with them that was not made with their fathers. This will be developed further a bit later.

The Gospel natural man has – he knows there is a God who is the Creator and who is to be worshipped, and he knows some of God's Laws, which are written on his heart – is not the Gospel in all its fullness that we have in the whole Bible. What he does have is, nevertheless, the Gospel. God can, therefore, speak of natural man who remains unsaved as a Covenant-breaker.

It must be understood, therefore, that apart from the Bible, God looks upon the revelation of Himself to mankind as a revelation of the Gospel. It was a revelation inferior to the Bible, and yet it served the world for about 9500 years. During Moses' lifetime (he died in the year 1407 B.C.), God began to give the Gospel in written form.

A few men during the 9500-year period did receive direct information from God. They were often separated from each other by thousands of years. Before any of the Bible was written, God spoke to the following men:

Adam

11,013 – 10,183 B.C.

Cain

Enoch

7106 – 6741 B.C.

Noah

5590 - 4640 B.C.

Abraham

2167 - 1992 B.C.

Isaac

2067 - 1887 B.C.

Jacob

1887 - 1740 B.C. God gave additional revelation to the Gospel directly to these men and thus to the human race. As corrupted as this revelation would have become while verbally handed down to succeeding generations, nevertheless, it was part of God's Gospel for the world during these 9500 years. Significantly, some people were saved as a result of this declaration of the Gospel. Because it is considered by God to be the Gospel, God can speak of those who did not become saved as Covenant-breakers.

It should be noted that when we speak of the Gospel, we often think of it as the Good News. The Good News is that there is a solution to mankind's problem, and the solution is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we are certain we have not brought the Gospel unless we declare the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Be aware, however, that the greatest revival recorded in the Bible took place with no mention by the preacher of the love of God or the coming of Jesus Christ as Savior. The revival took place in the City of Nineveh and is recorded in the Book of Johan. The Gospel preached was of impending judgment. The result of that preaching was the salvation of the city. According to the account of Matthew 12:41, we may believe that salvation did come to them.

The point is that God does not require the whole Bible to save people. God can save people regardless of their limited spiritual truth. God saved the Ninevites within the context of a message of judgment and there is no reason to believe God could not save by means of the meager Gospel available to mankind before the invention of writing. The Ninevites' salvation, of course, was on account of Christ's shed blood; there is no other Name whereby they could become saved.

The fact that sacrifices were offered by these pagans indicates they knew that somehow payment must be made for sin, and the one sacrificed was someone other than themselves. Therefore, unknowingly they anticipated the coming of Christ, even though they had no specific knowledge of Christ.

Once Christ came, the times of ignorance, God overlooked (Acts 17:30). Since that momentous event, God requires the declaration of some part of the Bible as a vehicle by which He saves. Nevertheless, those who live and die without hearing any part of the Bible are not innocent. They are regarded as Covenant-breakers.

The Bible Becomes More Specific About The Nature Of The Covenant

God began to produce the Bible as the verbalized record, and He became specific about what those who hear the Word of God are to do in the face of their terrible trouble with Him. God commands mankind to come to Him for forgiveness and mercy. A few verses given here illustrate this.

Isaiah 26:4: "Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."

Deuteronomy 4:29: "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

Psalms 6:1-4: "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long? Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: oh save for thy mercies' sake."

Isaiah 55:6,7: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

The Bible articulates the Gospel by commanding people to come to Him for forgiveness. As it continues to develop the nature of God's Covenant with mankind, it shows us the basis on which God can forgive our sins. Forgiveness is provided by Christ the Savior. All who believe on Him become saved. All who look only to God for eternal life will receive it; that is, all who will be reconciled to God on His terms will find Him.

The coming of Christ is beautifully declared in Isaiah 49. In verse 8, God says the coming Messiah is to be the Covenant.

Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a Covenant of the people,* to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages [*Emphasis added].

Christ is the Covenant because He was the personification of the Gospel. Incidentally, God speaks of breaking His Covenant in Zechariah 11:10:

And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.

This surprising statement can be understood only if we realize that Christ is the Covenant who must be broken. He is the Covenant; He was broken so that the Covenant could be an everlasting Covenant. He experienced death that was the equivalent of eternal damnation, in order that God's Covenant of grace could provide eternal life for all believers.

The ark, located in the Holy of Holies, was called the ark of the covenant (Numbers 10:33). The ark typified Christ, who is the essence of the Gospel of salvation.

The Bible speaks of this Covenant as a Covenant of peace (Numbers 25:12), because it is the Gospel that provides a way for mankind to have peace with God. Christ, the Mediator of the Covenant, is called the Prince of Peace.

The Covenant God made with mankind, the Gospel of grace, declares that man is in trouble with God because of man's sin. God also promises to the human race that He will provide forgiveness and eternal life to those who trust Christ as their sinbearer.

The Covenant, therefore, was an agreement within the Godhead whereby payment for sin, demanded by God's Law, would be paid by God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Mankind was not to attempt to make any part of the required payment. He was to throw himself on the mercies of God, while convicted of his own miserable condition.

The Bible Is The Covenant

We have begun to discover that the revelation of the articulated Covenant or Gospel is the Bible. Therefore, the Covenant identifies entirely with the Law of God. In fact, God speaks of the Ten Commandments as the Covenant in **Deuteronomy 9:15**.

So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands.

The Law of God is called the Covenant because it:

1. described it and gave illustrations of it,
2. showed man his need of redemption by declaring the perfect standard of sinlessness he must have if he is to be right with God,
- 3 shows how perfect we become in God's sight when we become saved, and
4. is the vehicle or means by which God saves those who become saved.

Covenant – A Progressive Revelation

We have learned that apart from the Bible the Gospel message or the message of the Covenant has been given to some degree. The creation itself testifies concerning the existence of God who must be worshipped by mankind (Rom. 1:20 and Rom. 8). Moreover, man was created with some knowledge of the Law of God and that the breaking of God's Law deserves judgment. Thus, to some degree, the Gospel has always been available to the human race. It is no surprise that thousands of years before the invention of writing, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

It was God's plan that the Gospel should become more and more complete and specific, and He accomplished this by providing the Bible. God progressively presented the Gospel in the Bible. The writing of the Bible took approximately fifteen hundred years. AS it was being written, the Gospel message became increasingly clear and more specific. The progressive revelation is indicated by the way in which the Bible speaks of the Covenant.

In Genesis 17 we read that God made the Covenant with Abraham. Yet in **Deuteronomy 5:2-3** God declares:

The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

God effectively declares that there is more to the covenant or Gospel message than what was given to Abraham. Since Abraham became saved, and his salvation was no different from any other believer's salvation, God is not indicating that the results of the Gospel or Covenant are different as time goes by. Rather, He is emphasizing the progressive knowledge of the Covenant or Gospel God gives to mankind through His lawbook, the Bible.

The progressive revelation is seen in the language **of Deuteronomy 29:1**:

These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

The progressive revelation of the Covenant of the Bible was presented over a period of approximately 1500 years. With the New Testament command to send the Gospel into all the world, the whole world came under the Covenant in the sense that the people of the world increasingly come to a knowledge of the Gospel in its complete and written form.

Moreover, with the coming of Christ and the focus on the New Covenant, God became more insistent that mankind recognize this Covenant. We read in Acts 17:29-31:

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.* Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. [*Emphasis added]

This passage teaches that before Jesus shed His blood, God was not insistent upon mankind having a trusting relationship with Christ. True, men were Covenant-breakers and therefore under the curse of God and eternal damnation; but it was in the context of an inferior knowledge of the Covenant. After Christ had actually shed His blood, God insistently commands all men to repent. All men are to see in Christ their only means of salvation, which is why God simultaneously commanded that the Gospel, the written Word of God, be sent into all the world. In John 3:23, the insistence to obey the Gospel is clear:

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love on another, as he gave us commandment.

Not only have the people of the world a natural knowledge of God, as Romans 1 ND 2 teach us, but it is God's intention that they are to increasingly and more specifically know of their need and God's provision for it. This knowledge is given when the Gospel is sent into the world. Isaiah 24:5 teaches and Romans 1:31 declares all of mankind are Covenant-breakers. No one naturally wants God's salvation plan.

Thus far we have seen that God's solution (His Covenant), to man's sin is available to anyone who comes to God on His terms and pleads for mercy. Man by nature knows that God is the only One who can help him; but he does not want God on God's terms. He will not come to God; he is a Covenant-breaker, as Isaiah 24:5 and Romans 1:312 indicate. In his rebellion against God, he has made the Covenant void and of no effect.

God's Covenant With Noah

We have begun to understand something of what the Covenant is as it is presented to us in the Bible. We must consider anything and everything the Bible offers concerning the Covenant. When we have harmony with every Bible reference to the Covenant, then we may believe we have come to an understanding of the subject.

We will now look at the first reference to the Covenant, found in regard to Noah and the flood. In Genesis 6:17,18, we read:

And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

After the flood, God further revealed His intention concerning the Covenant, in Genesis 9:8-17: And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth* with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my Covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting Covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.* And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth. [*Emphasis added]

In this surprising passage, God speaks of a Covenant not only with Noah and his seed, but also with the animals and birds. What Covenant is this?

Remember, we learned earlier that the Covenant is the Gospel. Those with whom God has made a Covenant are those who have come under the Gospel. Certainly Noah and his family had come under the Gospel, because we read in Genesis 6:8 that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. But what about the animals? Do they, too, somehow come under God's salvation plan as it is given in the Bible? Or is the Covenant spoke of in Genesis 9 a Covenant other than the Covenant of grace, which is the Gospel?

The Covenant made with Noah is the same Covenant we have been studying. Earlier, we learned that God's Covenant is concerned with all mankind. In this revealing passage of Genesis 9, God indicates that the Covenant of grace, the Gospel, impinges on the whole creation.

Because of man's sin, God put the whole creation under a curse. Although God had created a perfect universe, man, who had been appointed by God to rule over the creation, rebelled against God and came under the curse of God.

To correct the anomaly that developed from a perfect universe being ruled over by cursed man, God brought His curse upon all creation. We read in **Romans 8:19-22:**

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

In this informative passage, God tells us that the creation was made subject to vanity; that is, it, too, came under the curse of God, which is why animals die, and why we have volcanoes, earthquakes, deadly viruses, thorns and thistles.

God teaches that when His salvation plan is completed and man receives his resurrected body, then the curse will be removed from the universe. Actually, in other passages God indicates that the present universe will be destroyed by fire and then recreated as a new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1). Thus, we can be sure that God's Covenant, that is the Gospel, is intimately involved with the whole universe.

Animals Used By God To Represent The Whole Earth

However, the question must be answered, Why does God speak of the Covenant, the Gospel, with the animals? When God raises the dead on the last day and believers enter the new heaven and new earth, will He resurrect animals to eternal life?

The animals will not be resurrected, and they do not have eternal life. The Bible does not allow animal resurrection. God speaks of animals and birds in a Covenant or Gospel relationship because God uses them as a type or figure of the whole earth. He used the lamb, the bullock, the lion, and the turtledove as types and figures of Christ, and He used animals and birds as types and figures of the whole earth.

This is seen dramatically, for example, when God destroyed the firstborn of Egypt prior to Israel being set free. The firstborn of the animals were killed and the firstborn of the men of Egypt were killed. The death of the firstborn pointed to the judgment of God upon mankind and also the destruction of the universe.

When the people of the cities of Canaan, such as Jericho and Ai, were destroyed, God specifically decreed that all the cattle were to be destroyed. The destruction of the people of these cities points to Judgment Day, and the destruction of the animals points to the destruction of the earth at the end of time.

In Genesis 9, it is taught that God's Covenant is made not only with mankind, but with the whole earth. That is, the Gospel has an impact not only on the human race but on the whole universe.

In Genesis 9, the special focus of the Covenant or Gospel is not so much on salvation as it is on preservation. In order for God's Gospel plan to be carried out, the earth and its inhabitants must continue until the end of time. If God would again bring a flood such as that of the time of Noah, God's plan to send the Gospel into all the world could be seriously interrupted. By saying that a flood would never again destroy the whole earth, God effectively declares that His Covenant, His Gospel program, will be worked out in the world.

Later in the Bible, God further defines and delineates what His Gospel program is to be. In Genesis 9, God simply declares that such a Gospel does exist and that it will have an impact on the whole world. The only intimation we have in Genesis 6 and in Genesis 9 that this Covenant is the Covenant of grace is the statement **of Genesis 6-8: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."**

The ark serves as a beautiful figure of Christ as our Savior. This is suggested by **Genesis 6:18,19:**
But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

The inclusion of the animals and birds into the safety of the ark implies that God's Covenant of grace impinges on the whole creation. Because of the Gospel of redemption, not only are believers saved, but the whole creation is rescued from the curse of God, as **Romans 8** teaches.

The Rainbow - The Sign Of The Covenant

Interestingly, God later made the sign of the Covenant the act of circumcision, but in Genesis 9 the sign of the Covenant was the rainbow. The sign of circumcision was particularly focused on the requirement of the shedding of blood and upon the seed, Christ, Who was to come. It was a far clearer sign as to the true nature of the Covenant than the sign of the rainbow. On the other hand, the rainbow spoke of the universal nature of the Covenant, and even more particularly, of the fact that God would preserve this world until the end of time, when His Covenant promises could be fulfilled.

The Rainbow Ties The Covenant To Christ

The Book of Revelation teaches us that the rainbow is totally identified with Christ. Revelation 4:3 declares:

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

Revelation 10:1 speaks of a mighty messenger ("angel" in King James translation), who is not an angel. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has a rainbow around his head. Rev. 10:1:

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.

These verses teach that the rainbow is a picture of Christ. Thus, the rainbow of Genesis 9 points to Jesus, our Mediator, the One through whom the curse of God would be removed – not only from believers, but also from the creation.

In the Bible, clouds are frequently used as a symbol of God coming in judgment. For example, in **Revelation 14:14-16**:

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

This passage points to Christ coming as the Judge of the earth. A cloud is prominently featured in this content and identifies with Christ as Judge. Thus, the Genesis 9:14 declaration that the bow shall be seen in the cloud surely points to Christ the Mediator Who keeps God's judgment from coming upon the saved, and Who guarantees that the universe will not be eternally destroyed as a consequence of man's sin.

The concept that the Covenant of grace is universal in character is seen also in **Isaiah 24**. The context of this chapter includes the whole earth. **Verses 1-3** establish this with the language of judgment upon the earth. Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word.

Verse 5 reinforces this concept and relates it to the Gospel.

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

Mankind has broken the everlasting Covenant. They have made of no effect the Gospel of salvation. They have made it void or empty of salvation for them. Therefore, the earth is in the precarious position of being eternally cursed. **Isaiah 24, verse 20 warns:**

The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.

Grace barely shines through. We will learn that the New Covenant signifies that in spite of the fact that all men by nature are Covenant-breakers, God will be victorious in the Gospel, in His everlasting Covenant. Completely apart from any action of man, God will establish His Covenant, His Gospel as He desires.

In **Chapter 25 of Isaiah**, we see the glorious reality. **Verse 1** anticipates victory.

O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

In **verses 6-9**, God shows that He is the one who will gain the victory. He alone brings about the complete fulfillment of all His promises.

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well defined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Verse 8 says that God will take away the rebuke of His people "from off all the earth," which means that the curse that was put upon the universe because of man's sin will also be removed by the action of God.

Later it will be seen how wonderfully the New Covenant is anticipated in these verses. For now, rejoice that God is not frustrated by man's natural abhorrence to the Gospel, whereby even though God commands men to believe and be saved, no one will believe. God Himself will complete all of the salvation action, so that the obligations of God's will or Covenant will be carried out. All who are to receive the inheritance will receive it.

Thus far we have learned from Deuteronomy 29 and Isaiah 24 that the Covenant of Grace embraces, to some degree, all of mankind. We discovered that Romans 1 and 2, Colossians 1, and Psalm 19 support this principle. We found that God's Covenant embraces not only all mankind but the whole universe.

We have much more to learn about the Covenant. God relates the Covenant to certain historical events recorded in the Bible. These events are types and figures that point to Christ.

Next, we will examine the matter of types and figures whereby God teaches many things concerning the nature and character of His Covenant

Types And Figures Illustrate The Covenant

God's Covenant of grace, that is, the Gospel, is presented to mankind in many types and figures. One of the most dramatic is Israel's release from Egyptian captivity. God refers to this in **Hebrews 8:8,9**:

... Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out in the land of Egypt*; because they continued not in my Covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. [*Emphasis added]

The physical departure of the nation of Israel from Egypt and their entrance into the land of Canaan is an outstanding example of elements that are present in the Covenant of grace or God's salvation plan. In **Exodus 6:3-8**, God identifies this event with the Covenant.

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan,* the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord. [*Emphasis added]

A number of elements in the Covenant of grace as they were typified in the historical pictures of the Covenant are:

The unbeliever is in bondage to sin and is in slavery to Satan. So, too, Israel was enslaved to the Egyptians in Egypt.

Mankind has no means in himself to be free from the bondage of sin and enslavement to Satan. Israel had no means in itself to obtain freedom from the bondage to Egypt.

It is God's intention to bring His own from among the unsaved into the Kingdom of God. It was God's intention to bring Israel into the land of Canaan.

To free men from sin requires the shedding of blood, actually, the blood of the only begotten Son of God.

When Israel was set free from Egypt, God took the lives of all the firstborn of Egypt. Those who come under the blood of Christ do not come into judgment. Those who took the blood of the lamb and placed it on the doorposts did not have death enter their homes. Those who become saved must first go through Hell. Christ, of course, did this on behalf of believers. So, too, Israel went through the Red Sea and the Jordan River on dry ground. (Both the Red Sea and the Jordan River typified Hell.) A way through the waters had been prepared for believers. The damnation from which the believer escapes comes upon the enemies of the Gospel. The armies of Egypt were destroyed by the waters of the Red Sea.

After the believer is saved, he is sustained in this life by the spiritual bread and water of the Gospel, which identifies with Christ Himself. Israel was sustained by heavenly manna and water that flowed from the rock.

Salvation is a free gift that the believer in no way deserves. God says of Israel in **Deuteronomy 7:7,8**:

The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people: But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Salvation is a wonderful gift for which the believer does no work. Deuteronomy **6:10, 11** declares of Israel:

And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full.

In **Joshua 24:13** we read:

And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.

God guarantees salvation. God promised that Israel would be given salvation. **Genesis 15:18-21** states:

In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites and the Kenizzites and the Kadmonites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

God kept that promise, as we read in **Joshua 23:14**:

And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

In **Nehemiah 9:8** God declares:

And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words;* for thou art righteous. [*Emphasis added]

To enable us to have salvation, death was required. This was typified by the death of the firstborn sons of Egypt and by the numerous sacrifices of lambs, bullocks, etc., that were required of Israel. It was also typified by the death of the Canaanites whose cities were given to Israel. **Isaiah 43:3,4**:

For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

The list of types and figures recorded in connection with God's dealings with ancient Israel is much longer. Those listed will serve to make the point that God in a remarkable way outlined His Covenant, or Gospel, through historical types.

Types And Figures Do Not Give The Full Picture Of The Covenant

Types and figures serve to illustrate many aspects of the Covenant of grace, as it is called in the Old Covenant or First Covenant, but the picture is incomplete. They do not point to every aspect of God's Covenant. This is seen in the comparison of the impact of the Covenant of grace upon those who become saved with the impact of God's mercies upon Israel.

One goal of the Covenant is realized when a person becomes saved. He discovers within himself an

intense desire to do the will of God. He becomes a new creature in Christ. At the completion of his salvation, he is given a resurrected body and will never again sin. This is the goal of the Covenant that God made with mankind and with Israel. It is seen in the language that God uses to describe the types and figures He utilized to demonstrate His covenant.

In **Deuteronomy 7:11,12** God declares:

Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, to do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers.

In **Deuteronomy 28:9-13**, God declares:

The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee. And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord swore unto thy fathers to give thee. The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them.* [*Emphasis added]

Unfortunately, the result of God bringing Israel out of Egypt into the land of Canaan did not result in a people that loved the Lord and wished to serve Him. **Hebrews 3:17-19** tells of the typical reaction to God's mercies to Israel.

But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

God anticipated this reaction in Israel to His Covenant blessings, as is seen in the language of **Deuteronomy 31:16**, where God prophesied to Moses:

And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?

Another goal of the covenant, which is seen in God's repeated statement that His Covenant is an everlasting Covenant, is that it will provide eternal life for His people. In **Genesis 17:7** God decrees:

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

In **Genesis 17:19**, God says:

And God said, Sarah, thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

In **Psalms 111:9** God declares: "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend in his name.

However, when we look carefully at the types and figures that point to this Covenant or salvation program, it does not appear to be everlasting in nature. For example, Israel did not possess the land of Canaan forevermore. As a consequence of their rebellion against God, they were driven from the land.

Apparently, the Covenant or the Gospel of grace as presented many places in the Bible and particularly as typified by God's dealings with ancient Israel did not accomplish the purposes promised in it. This is seen in the continued sin of Israel, which resulted in God's judgments coming upon them.

Spiritually, this is the result of the fact that man's heart is desperately wicked. He is dead in his sins. Therefore, no matter how insistently God commands his people to believe in Christ, no matter how lovingly God promises eternal blessings to those who become saved, mankind will not respond to the Gospel. Instead, every human being is a Covenant-breaker, even as **Deuteronomy 31:16** decrees, "this

people will rise up...and break my Covenant which I have made with them." Isaiah 24:5 declares,

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

The problem is not with God's action or promise; the problem is with man's heart, as **Romans 8:3** puts it,

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

The Law of God is an integral part of the Covenant, the Gospel. The Law of God is perfect (Ps. 19:7); the defect is in the flesh of man. The fault lies with man, not with God. **Hebrews 8:7,8** puts the blame on "them," that is, mankind.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them,* he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. [*Emphasis added]

In Galatians, God addresses the problem of the perverseness of mankind. In Galatians 3:19, He explains that the Law was added because of transgressions until the seed should come. As was seen, the Ten Commandments are also the Covenant, and in fact, the whole Bible is called the Covenant. By means of the Bible, mankind should see his sin and his need of a Savior. He should, therefore, cry to God for mercy.

Mankind made a ruin of the Covenant by trying to obtain the blessings by keeping the Law. He effectively turned the Covenant of grace, as presented in the Old Covenant, into a Covenant of works.

God speaks of the Covenant in Galatians 4 where He contrasts the Old Covenant with the New Covenant. **Galatians 4:21-24:**

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

Abraham had been given Covenant promises. He tried to make them come to fruition by his action – his work. He tried to produce the promised seed, which was an integral part of the Covenant, by obtaining it from Hagar. This typifies what mankind did with the Covenant. Rather than look through the Law of God to the seed – the Savior Who could pay for their sins – they attempted to become worthy by keeping the laws. The Covenant, or Gospel, that God declared to them was no defective. What was defective was their sinful hearts; they tried to produce salvation by good works. **Romans 9:31,32** declares:

But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone.

In Galatians 4, God speaks of the new Covenant, which is based on God's promises, typified by the miraculous birth of Isaac, through whom the seed, Christ, was to come. This is the second of the two Covenants spoken of in Galatians 4:24.

Circumcision: The Covenant Sign

Significantly, God indicates in Genesis 17 that the sign of the Covenant was circumcision. The man who was not circumcised was to be cut off, and he was called a Covenant-breaker.

Spiritually, one becomes circumcised by being saved. God circumcises the foreskins of our hearts (to use the language of Deuteronomy 30), which indicates that the command of the Gospel, or the end of the Gospel, is to provide salvation. If man does not become saved, he has made the Gospel of no effect in his life, and he is still subject to damnation.

Circumcision was the sign of the Covenant because: It involved the shedding of blood, which pointed to the shed blood of Christ, the requirement for salvation.

It involved the reproductive organ, and thus indicates the seed who would come as the Mediator of the Covenant.

It involved cutting off flesh, which pointed to the fact that those who become saved must have their sins cut off.

All who participated in the rite of circumcision effectively demonstrated that they had knowledge of the Covenant the Gospel of grace. Adults accompanied it with a declaration of assent to God's salvation program. In children, it indicated that the parents pledged to bring them up within the salvation program.

Exodus 12:48:

And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

Unfortunately, mankind tries to rewrite God's rules. This was true, for example, with the sign of circumcision. This ceremonial act was a sign that pointed to man's need of salvation, but ancient Israel turned it into a guarantee of salvation. They adopted the conclusion that the physical act of circumcision guaranteed the salvation of the one circumcised.

When ancient Israel was in the wilderness, the Gospel or the Covenant was very close to them, but they perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. Their knowledge of the Gospel was not mixed with faith.

The Covenant, or Gospel, can make no headway with mankind, because everyone is dead in sin. He not only will not come to God with a broken and contrite heart and plead for mercy, but he cannot. Spiritually, he is a corpse. Therefore, he will never of himself come to God on God's terms.

So God speaks of a new Covenant. Is this a different Covenant from the one we have been studying? We will examine this question in the next chapter.

To Him be all glory and power and praise. Amen.

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