

THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS IN SALVATION HISTORY

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Covenant: “A chosen [as opposed to natural] relationship in which two parties make binding promises to each other,” often with God as the witness (Schreiner, *Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World*, 13; cf. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 11).

1. Adamic-Noahic Covenant

- a. Adam’s headship in the covenant with creation
- b. Covenant affirmation through Noah

2. Abrahamic Covenant

- a. God fulfills the covenant in two stages

Genesis 12:1–3, DeRouchie		
	And Yahweh said to Abram,	1
Stage 1: <i>Realized in the Mosaic Covenant</i>	“Go from your land and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you,	b
	<i>so that</i> I may make you into a great nation,	2
	and may bless you, and may make your name great.	b c
Stage 2: <i>Realized in the New Covenant</i>	Then be a blessing,	d
	<i>so that</i> I may bless those who bless you,	3
	but him who dishonors you I will curse, <i>with the result</i> that in you all the families of the ground may be blessed.”	b c

- b. The fulfillment of God’s promise is both conditional and certain
- c. The single Abrahamic covenant

3. Mosaic Covenant

- a. The Mosaic covenant fulfills stage one of the Abrahamic covenant
- b. The Mosaic covenant brings death
- c. The Mosaic covenant anticipates the new covenant

4. Davidic Covenant

- a. The nature of the Davidic covenant
- b. Other scriptural reflections on the Davidic covenant

5. New Covenant

- a. The Old Testament terminology associated with the new covenant
- b. The Old Testament depiction of the new covenant community
- c. The New Testament sets forth how the new covenant is realized

6. Summary

The Bible's storyline progresses through the historical covenants between God and his people. Jesus fulfills each covenant in different ways. The Adamic-Noahic covenant with creation establishes the crisis and context of global curse and common grace out of which the other covenants clarify God's solution and saving grace. The Abrahamic covenant forecasts the hope of Christ and new creation through its conditional yet certain kingdom promises of land(s), seed, blessing, and divine presence. The remaining covenants clarify how God fulfilled these promises in two progressive stages. In the Mosaic covenant (stage 1) Abraham's offspring as a single nation experience blessing and curse, which results in their exile from the promised land. The Davidic covenant recalls the promises of a royal Deliverer and declares the specific line through whom he will rise. Then the new covenant (stage 2) realizes these hopes in an already-but-not yet way through the person and perfect obedience of Christ Jesus, whose kingdom work overcomes the curse with universal blessing, makes Abraham the father of many nations to the ends of the earth, and reconciles all things to God through the new creation.¹

¹ For a fair overview of how the various theological systems understand how the historical covenants progress, integrate, and climax in Christ, see Benjamin L. Merkle, *Discontinuity to Continuity: A Survey of Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020); cf. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 31–158; Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), 101–97. For progressive dispensationalism, see Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993); Robert Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). For progressive covenantalism, see Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, eds., *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016); Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*. For covenant theology, see Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006); Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006); Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether, eds., *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020).