

THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS IN SALVATION HISTORY

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Covenant (Hebrew *bĕrît*; Greek *diathēkē*) is the Bible’s term for “a chosen [as opposed to natural] relationship in which two parties make binding promises to each other,” often with God as the witness.¹ That is, a covenant’s core is a non-biological, oath-bound relationship like those in clan alliances (Gen 14:13), personal agreements (Gen 31:44), international treaties (Josh 9:6; 1 Kgs 15:19), national agreements (Jer 34:8–10), and loyalty agreements (1 Sam 20:14–17), including marriage (Mal 2:14).² Some scholars assert that “covenant” or “the covenantal kingdom” is *the* controlling center of the Christian canon.³ Others more modestly argue that the covenants’ progression “forms the backbone of Scripture’s metanarrative.”⁴ Through covenants God relates to others, reverses sin’s ruinous effects, and introduces his saving reign into the world.

The concept of covenant correlates closely with that of canon, for the latter is by nature the authoritative written word of a covenant lord.⁵ The Bible grew up in the context of covenant and is, therefore, canonical revelation.⁶ This fact led the early church fathers to designate the

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 13; cf. Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 11; Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 164–66.

² Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 162–63.

³ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, vols. 1–2 of *OTL* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961, 1967); Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

⁴ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 31; cf. Daniel I. Block, “Covenant: A Whole Bible Perspective,” in *The Triumph of Grace: Literary and Theological Studies in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic Themes* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 62.

⁵ Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1989), 21–44.

⁶ Many studies since the 1950s establish how the biblical covenants are closely aligned with 2nd millennium BC treaty patterns. See, especially, George E. Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” *BA* 17.3 (1954): 50–76; George E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: The Presbyterian Board of Colportage of Western Pennsylvania, 1955); Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 13–44; J. A. Thompson, “The Significance of the Ancient Near Eastern Treaty Pattern,” *TynBul* 13 (1963): 1–6; J. A. Thompson, *The Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1964); Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969); Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*, 2nd ed., *Analecta Biblica* 21 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981); Kenneth A. Kitchen, “The Fall and Rise of Covenant, Law and Treaty,” *TynBul* 40 (1989): 118–35; K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 283–307; K. A. Kitchen and Paul J. N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East, Part 1–3* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012). In contrast, Julius Wellhausen argued the concept of covenant grew up very late, and a number of scholars continue to build on his conclusions. See Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel with a Reprint of the Article Israel from the “Encyclopaedia Britannica,”* trans. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies

Bible's two parts as *Testaments* (i.e., "covenants"), with the Mosaic (old) covenant controlling the first and the new covenant dominating the second.

A development of the covenants guides the biblical storyline. Each historical covenant includes both common grace and saving grace elements that Jesus's person and work culminate or realize. This study overviews the nature and interrelationship of the five main historical covenants between God and his creatures, which I refer to as the Adamic-Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and new.⁷ The specific covenant head or mediator determines the names of the first four, and the title *new* covenant derives from its contrast with and superseding of the old Mosaic administration.

1. Adamic-Noahic Covenant

Adam's headship in the covenant with creation

Because the word "covenant" (*b'ērît*) first appears in Gen 6:18 in relation to Noah, some question if God formally makes a covenant with creation through Adam.⁸ However, Yahweh's interactions with David in 2 Samuel 7 identify that the substance of a "covenant" can exist without the term (cf. 2 Sam 23:5; Pss 89:3; 132:11–12). Furthermore, the Bible's earliest chapters depict the results of God's choosing to initiate a kinship-type bond with creation through Adam's representative headship (see Gen 1:1; 5:1–3; Jer 33:20, 25), and this is a covenant's essence.⁹

While creation was "very good" (1:30), it was incomplete. Thus, this elected relationship includes both God's pledge to providentially sustain terrestrial life (Gen 1:29–30) and humanity's conditional responsibility to fulfill the Lord's charge to serve as his image-bearing priest-kings who expand a God-dependent community and the garden sanctuary to the ends of

(Edinburgh: Black, 1885); cf. Lothar Peritt, *Bundestheologie Im Alten Testament*, WMANT 36 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969); John Van Seters, "Confessional Reformulation in the Exilic Period," *VT* 22 (1972): 448–59; Ernest W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); cf. Richard J. Bautch and Gary N. Knoppers, eds., *Covenant in the Persian Period: From Genesis to Chronicles* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015). For two helpful synopses of the scholarly dialogue, see George E. Mendenhall, "The Suzerainty Treaty Structure: Thirty Years Later," in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 85–100; Scott Hahn, "Covenant in the Old and New Testaments: Some Current Research (1994–2004)," *CurBR* 3 (2005): 263–92.

⁷ For a helpful comparison of the constituent parts of the various covenants, see Roger T. Beckwith, "The Unity and Diversity of God's Covenants," *TynBul* 38 (1987): 103–107.

⁸ E.g., Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Plan*, NSBT 23 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 52–58, 69–76; Block, "Covenant," 63–64; cf. Beckwith, "The Unity and Diversity of God's Covenants," 100–101; Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 128–30. Block affirms that the creation account includes "elements that would later be picked up and built into covenantal arrangements," but he concludes that, "since the narratives do not use covenantal language before [Gen] 6:18, we should ... certainly not impose a covenant on Gen 1–2." Later, however, he does assert that in Eden "God, his creatures including humans, and the environment lived in perfect *covenantal* harmony." Block, "Covenant," 64, 75, italics added.

⁹ Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: Volume 1: The Common Grace Covenants* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014), 46–50; Richard P. Belcher Jr., "The Covenant of Works in the Old Testament," in *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 64–66; cf. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1980), 17–25, 67–87.

the earth (1:26–28; 2:15–18).¹⁰ Adam and his offspring were to obey in order to enjoy wisdom and lasting life.¹¹ Adam transgressed the covenant (Isa 43:27; Hos 6:7) when he, functioning as covenant head/representative, failed to listen to God’s word and to protect and lead his wife (3:1–6). As a result, God cursed the earth and condemned humanity to spiritual and physical death (Gen 2:17; cf. Isa 24:4–6; Jer 25:30–38). Thus, “one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people,” and “through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners” (Rom 5:18–19).

Though Adam failed, his antitype—the last Adam Jesus Christ—would succeed, securing “justification and life for all people” (5:18).¹² Hence, the Lord “subjected [the creation] to frustration ... in hope” (Rom 8:20). Before Adam’s punishment (Gen 3:17–19), God cursed the serpent and promised that the woman’s male offspring would eventually destroy the evil one (3:14–19).¹³ By naming his wife “Eve” (*hawâ*), which resembles the Hebrew term for “life” (*hay*), Adam professes his faith in the promise that the coming Savior would overcome the curse of death. God then clothed his royal priests with animal skin garments likely because a substitutionary sacrifice was necessary to reestablish his relationship and partnership with them (3:20–21).¹⁴

Covenant affirmation through Noah

Rebellious humanity expands, and Yahweh preserves a remnant of those calling on his name.¹⁵ Yet, because of mankind’s wickedness (Gen 6:5, 13), the Lord sent a great flood that resulted in the death of “everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life” (7:22). He saved only eight people, the head of whom was Noah, who “found favor [i.e., grace] in the eyes of the LORD” (6:8) and who in turn “walked faithfully with God” and “was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time” (6:9).

After the flood, Yahweh fulfilled his promise (6:18) to “establish ... the everlasting covenant” between himself and all living creatures on the earth, including Noah and his descendants (9:16). This singular covenant included God’s promise to never again destroy all life

¹⁰ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 81–122.

¹¹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 103–107.

¹² Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 670–77; cf. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 54–57; Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: Volume 2: The Special Grace Covenants—Old Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017), 13–17; Guy Prentiss Waters, “The Covenant of Works in the New Testament,” in *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 79–97.

¹³ For this messianic reading of Gen 3:15, see C. John Collins, “A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman’s Seed Singular or Plural?,” *TynBul* 48.1 (1997): 139–48; T. Desmond Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *TynBul* 48.2 (1997): 363–67; James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *SBJT* 10.2 (2006): 30–55; Kevin Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019); Jonathan M. Cheek, “Genesis 3:15 as the Root of a Biblical Theology of the Church and the World: The Commencement, Continuation, and Culmination of the Enmity between the Seeds” (PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 2019); Jonathan Cheek, “Recent Developments in the Interpretation of the Seed of the Woman in Genesis 3:15,” *JETS* 64.2 (2021): 215–36.

¹⁴ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 145–53; William N. Wilder, “Illumination and Investiture: The Royal Significance of the Tree of Wisdom in Genesis 3,” *WTJ* 68 (2006): 51–69.

¹⁵ Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the Toledot Structure of Genesis,” *JETS* 56.2 (2013): 219–47.

with a flood (9:9–11; cf. 8:22).¹⁶ Recalling his earlier command to the first couple (1:27–28), God charges Noah and his offspring to fill the earth with his image (9:1, 7). The sign of the covenant was his rainbow in the clouds, which symbolically portrays that Yahweh’s war-bow was raised and that a season of common grace was now blowing over the world (9:12–17).

A substitutionary blood-sacrifice was necessary for the Lord to declare, “Never again will I curse the ground because of humans.... And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done” (8:21). The burnt offering of clean animals was a “pleasing aroma” to Yahweh (8:20), and it moved him to proclaim the covenant promises. Because even among the survivors of the flood “the inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood” (8:21; cf. 6:5), the Lord’s blood-bought grace alone could justly allow him to make “his sun to rise on the evil and the good” and to send “rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt 5:45). That is, the symbolic and predictive nature of the substitutionary sacrifice of clean animals after the flood anticipated the atoning work of Jesus. This fact identifies that what God would ultimately accomplish through Christ purchased the very context of common grace that allows for saving grace to become operative.

At least two features identify that God affirms with Noah his pre-existing relationship with creation under Adam’s headship (thus, the Adamic-Noahic *covenant* [singular]), though with some developments. First, parallels suggest that God recreates the world with Noah at covenant head: (1) (re-)creation begins in watery chaos (1:2 // 7:17–24); (2) the Spirit/wind moves (1:2 // 8:1); (3) God’s image bearers are creation’s stewards (1:26–27 // 7:1–3; 9:2, 6); (4) animals are “according to their kind” (1:21–22, 24, 28 // 7:2–3, 13–14); (5) God blesses/commands humans to be fruitful (1:28 // 9:1, 7), (6) designates food (1:29–30; 2:16 // 9:3–4), and (7) restricts food (2:17 // 9:4); (8) both families include father, mother, and three sons (4:1–2, 25 // 6:10; 7:13). Second, God’s “establishing” (Hiphil *qûm*) rather than “cutting/making” (*krî*) the Noahic covenant (*hēqîm bēřîr*; 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17) points to God’s *affirming* or *sustaining* his earlier covenant with creation rather than his *initiating* (e.g., Gen 15:8; Exod 24:8; Deut 5:2–3; 28:69[29:1]) or *renewing* an old one either after it has been broken (e.g., Exod 34:10) or with a new party (e.g., Josh 24:25; 2 Chr 34:31).¹⁷ Scripture applies “affirmation” language with the Noahaic (Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17), patriarchal (Gen 17:7, 9, 21; Exod 6:4; Lev 26:9; Deut 8:18), Mosaic (Lev 26:9), and new (Ezek 16:60, 62) covenants.

Additionally, God’s affirmation with Noah develops the divine-creation relationship. Fear and defense of human life now occur within humanity’s dominion (Gen 9:2, 6). God sanctions animal life as food (9:3; cf. 1:29), and he also guarantees the new context’s perpetuity for redemption by specific promises and the covenant sign of the rainbow (9:12–17).¹⁸

¹⁶ Against Kline and Van Pelt, both of whom see two covenants with Noah. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 230–34; Miles V. Van Pelt, “The Noahic Covenant of the Covenant of Grace,” in *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 111–32.

¹⁷ Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: Volume 1*, 192, 198–99; Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: Volume 2*, 139–74; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 187–95; cf. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 232; William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenant Theology*, 2nd ed. (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013), 15–23; against Paul R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenantal Development in Genesis*, JSOTSup 315 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 195–203; John Day, “Why Does God ‘Establish’ Rather Than ‘Cut’ Covenants in the Priestly Source,” in *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson*, ed. A. D. H. Mayes and Robert B. Salters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 91–109; Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 70–75.

¹⁸ Cf. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 109–25.

2. Abrahamic Covenant

After the flood and Shem, Ham, and Japheth’s families multiplied and rebelled against God by exalting themselves, Yahweh confused their languages and dispersed some seventy nations across the globe (Gen 11:8–9; cf. ch. 10). From one of them, he then distinguished Abram and his offspring through whom he purposed to reverse the global curse and reconcile the world to himself.¹⁹

God fulfills the covenant in two stages

Yahweh commissioned Abram to “go” to the land of Canaan and there “be a blessing.” These two coordinated commands (12:1b, 2d) are each followed by one or more conditional promises (12:2abc, 3ab), and the second command-promise unit includes the ultimate promissory result, global blessing (12:3c).²⁰

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
	so that I may make you into a great nation,	2
	and may bless you,	b
	and may make your name great.	c
Stage 2: <i>Realized in the New Covenant</i>	Then be a blessing,	d
	so that I may bless those who bless you,	3
	but him who dishonors you I will curse,	b
	with the result that in you all the families of the ground may be blessed.”	c

The two command-promise units identify how God would reverse the punishments of property and progeny from Genesis 3:14–19.²¹ They also foresee two major stages in salvation history.²² Stage one relates to Abraham fathering one nation with a kingdom centered in Canaan, which the Lord fulfills through the Mosaic covenant after Egypt afflicted Israel four hundred years (Gen 15:13, 18; 17:8; cf. Exod 2:24; 6:4–5, 8; 33:1; Deut 1:8; 9:5). God gave Israel Canaan for the twelve tribes during the days of Joshua (Josh 11:23; 21:43–45; cf. Gen 17:8), but it is not until Kings David and Solomon reigned that Israel’s realm stretched from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River (2 Sam 7:1; 1 Kgs 4:20–21; cf. Gen 15:18).

Stage two occurs when God’s representative “blesses” the “clans/families/peoples” Yahweh dispersed (Gen 12:2d–3; cf. 10:32). Christ fulfills this stage by creating the new

¹⁹ DeRouchie, “The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the Toledot Structure of Genesis,” 235.

²⁰ On this structure, cf. Gen 17:1–2. See also Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 78–79; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 73–76; Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 209–11, 247–50; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 266–70.

²¹ James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” *TynBul* 58.2 (2007): 253–73.

²² DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 209–11; cf. Thomas Edward McComiskey, *Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985), 172–74, 195–210; Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 332–40; Block, “Covenant,” 65–66.

covenant community (Luke 1:54–55, 72–73). Genesis 17 contrasts Abraham’s fatherhood of a single covenant nation in Canaan (17:7–8) with his becoming “a father of many nations” (17:4–6; cf. 35:11), which fulfills the promise in 12:3 and 15:5 (cf. Rom 4:16–17). Fulfilling the promise of a singular “offspring” in Gen 3:15, Yahweh will raise up the patriarch’s biological “offspring” and multiply him like the stars (Gen 15:3–5; cf. 22:17).²³ He will be named through Isaac (21:12; cf. 17:19, 21), conquer his enemies’ gate, and stand as the agent of blessing for all nations (22:17–18).²⁴ Although God refers to both the limited “Canaan” and the larger suzerain state with the singular “land” (15:18; 17:8), this singular offspring from Gen 22:17–18 would inherit plural “lands” (26:3–4). Thus, God would overcome the world’s curse, and Abraham would inherit “the world” (Rom 4:13; cf. Ps 2:8; Dan 2:35; Matt 5:5; Eph 6:3). Citing the land promises in Gen 13:15; 17:8; and 24:7 and with allusion to 22:18, Paul identifies Christ as the “offspring/seed” that blesses the world (Gal 3:16; cf. 3:8, 14), and those belonging to him become “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:29).²⁵

The fulfillment of God’s promise is both conditional and certain

The Abrahamic covenant testifies to the conditional nature *and* certain fulfillment of its promises. Conditionally, the patriarch must “go” to the land and there “be a blessing” to overcome curse and bless the world (Gen 12:1–3). For Yahweh to confirm the covenant, the patriarch must “walk before” God and “be blameless” (17:1–2). The covenant sign of circumcision reminded recipients of this priestly commission (cf. Exod 19:5–6), portrayed the curse of excision for violators, and distinguished Abraham’s offspring from all other ancient peoples.²⁶ Alternatively, Yahweh stresses certain fulfillment through his self-imprecatory oath-sign and promise (Gen 15:17–21; cf. 1 Sam 11:7; Jer 34:18)²⁷ and by swearing upon himself, following Abraham’s faith-filled obedience wherein he nearly sacrificed Isaac (22:16–18; cf. 26:3–5).

Hence, Yahweh vows to fulfill both covenant stages ([1] great nation; [2] blessed world), but he would do so only in response to his covenant “son’s” obedience (cf. Rom 5:18–19; 8:4; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 2:8).²⁸ Using the infinitive absolute + *yiqtol* construction in Gen 18:18 followed by the conditional reason + purposes statements in 18:19 highlights the certainty yet contingent nature of God’s promise: “Abraham *will surely become* [*hāyô yihyê*] a great and powerful nation,

²³ On this reading of Gen 15:5–6, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “Lifting the Veil: Reading and Preaching Jesus’ Bible through Christ and for Christ,” *SBJT* 22.3 (2018): 167–77.

²⁴ For my messianic reading of Gen 22:1–19, see the case study in Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Redemptive-Historical Christocentric Approach,” in *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament*, ed. Andrew M. King and Brian J. Tabb (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), forthcoming.

²⁵ C. John Collins, “Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?,” *TynBul* 54.1 (2003): 75–86; Jason S. DeRouchie and Jason C. Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise? An Evaluation of N. T. Wright on Galatians 3:16,” *SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 36–48; Jason S. DeRouchie, “Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets: New Covenant Ecclesiology in OT Perspective,” *JETS* 58.3 (2015): 478–85.

²⁶ Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968); Jason S. DeRouchie, “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor,” *BRR* 14 (2004): 182–89; John D. Meade, “The Meaning of Circumcision in Israel: A Proposal for a Transfer of Rite from Egypt to Israel,” *SBJT* 20.1 (2016): 35–54.

²⁷ Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, 16–17, 41–42; Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 7–15, 128–46; Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 168–215; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 286–94.

²⁸ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 775–82; cf. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: Volume 2*, 123–29.

and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. *For [kī] I have chosen him, so that [l^ema ‘an] he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that [l^ema ‘an] the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.*²⁹ Abraham’s covenant mediating obedience does secure initial fulfillment (Gen 22:18; 26:5), but his faith rested in the promised obedience of singular, male “offspring,” who would become numerous like the stars (Gen 15:5–6; 22:17ab), expand the kingdom turf from land to lands (22:17c; 26:3–4), and be the agent through whom the nations regard themselves blessed (22:18; 26:4).³⁰

The Abrahamic covenant parallels ancient royal grants, which obligated every generation to loyalty but promised irrevocable or perpetual promises ensuring the pledged land or kingship remained in the family, even if disloyal individuals forfeited their participation in the covenant blessings. This stands in contrast to suzerain-vassal treaties, which a suzerain could terminate when a vassal rebelled. The following excerpt supplies an example of a grant of royal succession and land that Hattusili III of Hatti bestowed on Ulmi-Teshshup of Targuntassa: “If any son or grandson of yours commits an offense, then the King of Hatt I shall question him.... If he is deserving of death, he shall perish, but his household and land shall not be taken from him and given to the progeny of another.”³¹ Whereas as both grants and suzerain-vassal treaties were conditional for every generation, grants alone ensured that the property or dynasty would remain in the family. The Mosaic covenant is similar to the suzerain-vassal treaties in the way Israel’s rebellion resulted in the covenant’s termination. In contrast, the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants express the conditional yet perpetual qualities found in ancient grants.³² Paul likely emphasizes this distinction when he draws attention to the Abrahamic covenant’s promisory quality in contrast to the Mosaic law-administration: “The law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the

²⁹ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 132–34.

³⁰ I read the Hithpael of *brk* in Gen 22:18 and 26:4 as an estimative-declarative reflexive. See Chee-Chiew Lee, “גויים in Genesis 35:11 and the Abrahamic Promise of Blessings for the Nations,” *JETS* 52.3 (2009): 472. Scripture uses the Hithpael form only where the singular offspring-deliverer is explicitly in view, and the reflexive identifies how his coming marks the ability to specifically regard oneself as blessed in him. In contrast, the passive Niphal of *brk* always occurs where the text identifies a patriarch and, at times, his plural offspring-nation as the agents of God’s blessing (and the ones from whom the messianic deliver would rise: Gen 12:3; 18:18; 28:14). Cf. Michael B. Shepherd, *The Text in the Middle*, StBibLit 162 (New York: Lang, 2014), 22.

³¹ Gary M. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, ed. Harry A. Hoffner Jr., 2nd ed., WAW 7 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999); cf. Moshe Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East,” *JAOS* 90 (1970): 189–90; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 74–91; Gary N. Knoppers, “Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants and the Davidic Covenant: A Parallel?,” *JAOS* 116 (1996): 683–92.

³² Scholars commonly link the Abrahamic, Davidic, and new covenants with royal grants and call them unconditional-unilateral relationships, whereas they tie the Mosaic covenant with suzerain-vassal treaties and call it a conditional-bilateral relationship. While the promises a superior gave in a grant were unconditionally secure for a family’s posterity and thus perpetual, any given generation could forfeit their own enjoyment of those blessings through disloyalty. The language of *unconditional-unilateral* is, therefore, misleading. See, e.g., Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 128–211; Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 23–110; Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 17–43; Eugene H. Merrill, “The Covenant with Abraham: The Keystone of Biblical Architecture,” *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 12.36 (2008): 5–17. While Gentry and Wellum are correct that all the biblical “covenants consist of unconditional (unilateral) and conditional (bilateral) elements blended together,” the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants still bear a perpetually binding quality not found in the Mosaic covenant, and this quality aligns them with ancient royal grants. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 662–66; cf. 68–69, 451, 455.

inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise” (Gal 3:17–18; cf. Rom 4:13–14).

The single Abrahamic covenant

Williamson argues that Yahweh builds off his commission in Genesis 12:1–3 by initiating two distinct covenants with Abraham; (1) Genesis 15’s temporary, national, and unilateral covenant, and (2) Genesis 17’s eternal, international, and bilateral.³³ However, both chapters include national (Gen 15:18; 17:7–8) and international (15:5; 17:4–6) elements, later Scripture always speaks of a single “covenant” with the patriarchs (e.g., Exod 2:24; 2 Kgs 13:23; Neh 9:7–8; Ps 105:9; Acts 3:25), and the switch from God’s “cutting” (*krt*, 15:18) to “affirming” a covenant (Hiphil *qûm*, 17:7, 19, 21) strongly suggest a single covenant administration that develops over two redemptive-historical stages.³⁴ Both the Mosaic and new covenants fulfill different aspects of the single Abrahamic covenant.

3. Mosaic Covenant

The Mosaic covenant fulfills stage one of the Abrahamic covenant

After Yahweh brought Israel through the exodus to Mount Sinai, he charged them to respond to his salvation by heeding his voice, keeping his “covenant,” and being his treasured possession amid the world so that they might ultimately serve him as “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod 19:5–6; cf. Deut 10:12–13).³⁵ God called Israel to love him with all their hearts (Deut 6:4–5) and to love their neighbor as themselves (Lev 19:18). By treasuring God and valuing his image in others they would mediate and display his worth and beauty to their neighbors through lives of surrendered loyalty (cf. Deut 4:5–8)—something that could happen only by the Lord’s presence igniting holiness (Exod 33:16; cf. Lev 9:23–10:3; 20:8; 21:8; 22:32).

The “covenant” they were to keep (Exod 19:5) fulfilled stage-one of the Abrahamic covenant (2:24; 6:4; cf. Gen 17:7).³⁶ This link between Sinai and Abraham is apparent in at least three ways: (1) After the golden calf rebellion Moses pleads for the people’s pardon by urging him to remember his covenant promises to the patriarchs (Exod 32:13; Deut 9:27), and this resulted in Yahweh’s restoring the covenant (Exod 34:1–2, 27–28). (2) Moses’s covenant renewal sermons at Moab in Deuteronomy frequently identify that what God was doing in giving Israel the land was in direct fulfillment of his pledge to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 29:13; 30:20; cf. 29:1[28:69]).³⁷ (3) The Abrahamic covenant sign of circumcision (Gen 17:10–11) continues into the Mosaic covenant as a mark of God’s covenant people (Exod 12:43–49; Lev 12:3).

³³ Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations*, 212–14; Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 89–91.

³⁴ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 312–18; cf. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: Volume 2*, 103–38, 139–74.

³⁵ For the start of the apodosis at Exod 19:6, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “Understanding and Applying Exodus 19:4–6: A Case Study in Exegesis and Theology,” *JBTS* 6.1 (2021): 92–96; cf. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 226–29.

³⁶ John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6*, JSOTSup 395 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 49; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 113–14; Block, “Covenant,” 69–73.

³⁷ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 416–40.

After synthesizing (Exod 20:1–17) and detailing (20:22–23:19) the covenant obligations, Yahweh formalized his relationship with Israel (24:1–11). Leviticus and Deuteronomy’s Book of the Law then develop the covenant through their holiness instructions and sanctions, and Deuteronomy’s Book of the Law supplies a formal covenant renewal after the exodus generation’s rebellion in the wilderness (cf. Deut 29:20; 30:10; 31:26). The way Deuteronomy organizes the Book of the Law resembles second millennium BC suzerain-vassal treaty patterns,³⁸ and this link aligns with the way Scripture describes this covenant’s contingent and temporary nature. The Mosaic covenant guided the evaluation of Israel’s history, determined the indictments, instructions, warnings and hopes of the prophets, and supplied the framework for the wisdom of the sages. It governed God’s people’s existence until the coming of Christ (see Josh 1:7–8; Mal 4:4[3:22]; Luke 16:16), but now the new covenant has superseded it. As Paul states, “Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith” (Gal 3:23–26; cf. Heb 8:6–13).³⁹

The Mosaic covenant’s sign was the Sabbath (Exod 31:13–17). Yahweh instituted it to supply rest (Deut 5:14) and to develop holiness by testing obedience and nurturing trust (Exod 16:4–5, 23–26). Ultimately though, the weekly and yearly Sabbath cycles reminded Israel that through them and their Messiah Yahweh would reestablish right order in his world (cf. Matt 11:27–12:8; Heb 4:9–10) and would restore the sovereign peace he enjoyed with his creation in the beginning (Gen 2:1–3; cf. Ps 132:7–8, 13–14). Israel’s Sabbath, therefore, represented a future reality to which both Israel and the world were to hope—a hope now realized in Jesus.⁴⁰

The Mosaic covenant brings death

While displaying similarities to both 2nd millennial law codes and suzerain-vassal treaties (see Kitchen 1989; 2003, 283–89; cf. Kitchen and Lawrence 2012), the Mosaic covenant’s conditionality and revocability most approximate the latter.⁴¹ Yahweh’s gift of righteousness, blessing, and lasting life depended upon Israel perfectly obeying *all* God’s commands (Lev 18:5; Deut 4:1; 6:25; 8:1; 28:1–2). Thus, in the old covenant, righteousness was the *goal* and not the *ground* (Deut 6:25; cf. 16:20). Where disobedience prevailed, curse and death reigned (27:26; 28:15).⁴²

Israel’s problem was that at the core they were unrighteous (9:6) and spiritually disabled (29:4[3]) and needed heart surgery (10:16). They were stubborn, unbelieving, and rebellious (9:6–7, 23–24; 31:27). Their spiritual inability should have moved them to recognize their deep neediness and that their only hope was for God to reconcile them by grace through faith in his provision of a substitutionary sacrifice, which would atone for them if they realized their guilt

³⁸ Kitchen, “The Fall and Rise of Covenant, Law and Treaty”; Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 283–89; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East, Part 1–3*; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 397–402.

³⁹ See also 1 Cor 9:20–21; 2 Cor 3:4–16.

⁴⁰ DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 449–53.

⁴¹ Kitchen, “The Fall and Rise of Covenant, Law and Treaty,” 118–35; Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 283–89; cf. Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East, Part 1–3*.

⁴² For a development of this thesis, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “From Condemnation to Righteousness: A Christian Reading of Deuteronomy,” *SBJT* 18.3 (2014): 87–118; Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12: A Redemptive-Historical Reassessment,” *Them* 45.2 (2020): 240–59.

and confessed their sins (e.g., Lev 5:5–6; Num 5:6–7). If they were to enjoy any blessing, it would be solely because of God’s grace and not because they earned it. It would be because they would enjoy a right standing only attainable by faith (Rom 9:30–32; cf. Gen 15:6) and because the Lord’s past pardoning of them would produce for them power to obey and purchase promises that would motivate loyalty (Deut 30:6, 8).

While a remnant of true believers existed in Israel (e.g., Moses, Rahab, Ruth, David, Isaiah, etc.; cf. Rom 11:7), the majority needed heart surgery (Deut 10:16), for they were unrighteous, stubborn, unbelieving, and rebellious (9:6–7, 23–24; 10:16; 31:27). Due to their spiritual inability (29:4[3]), Israel should have recognized that their only hope was God reconciling them by grace through faith in his provision of a substitutionary sacrifice, which would atone for them if they realized their guilt and confessed their sins (Lev 5:5–6; Num 5:6–7). Any blessing they were to enjoy would be solely because of God’s justifying grace apart from works (Rom 9:30–32; cf. Gen 15:6).

Nevertheless, Moses saw that Israel’s stubbornness would lead them to rebel even more in the land and then experience God’s just exilic wrath (Deut 4:25–28; 31:16–17, 27). The lengthy covenant curse lists (Lev 26:14–39; Deut 28:15–68; much longer than the blessing, Lev 26:3–13; Deut 28:1–14) forecasted what was to come, and Israel’s history unfolded just as Moses predicted (e.g., 2 Kgs 17:13–18; Dan 9:11–14).

Because the Mosaic covenant era included a sustained hardness that resulted in the people’s destruction (Rom 11:7–8; 2 Cor 3:14), Paul rightly noted that “the law is not of faith” (Gal 3:12).⁴³ The Mosaic covenant bore a “ministry of condemnation” (2 Cor 3:9; cf. 3:7) and demonstrated Israel and the world’s need for the promised Deliverer (Rom 3:19–22; 5:20), whose new covenant mediation would result in a “ministry of righteousness” (2 Cor 3:9).⁴⁴

The Mosaic covenant anticipates the new covenant

Moses himself recognized that the covenant he mediated would bring Israel’s death (Deut 4:25–28; 31:16–17, 27) and also that after exile Yahweh would remember his covenant promises to the patriarchs (Lev 26:42) and the exodus generation (26:45), restore his people, transform the remnant’s hearts, curse their enemies, and secure their life (Deut 4:30–31; 30:1–14; cf. Hab 2:4).⁴⁵ Through Yahweh’s promised Savior’s new exodus, blessing, and global dominion (Num 24:5–9, 17–19), other nations would gather to and rejoice in Yahweh (Deut 32:43; 33:19; cf. Isa 60:15; Rom 15:10), and this would ignite jealousy to draw Israelites back to God (Deut 32:21; cf. Rom 10:19). In this age, the remnant would heed Moses’s commandments (Deut 30:8; cf. Matt 5:19) because a prophet like Moses would supersede Moses’s role (cf. 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 9:15; 12:24), perform signs and wonders (Deut 34:10–12; cf. John 20:30–31), clarify the divine word (Deut 18:15, 18; cf. Matt 5:17–18; 17:5), and ensure its internalization within God’s people (30:8–14; cf. Isa 59:21; Matt 28:20; Rom 10:6–8).⁴⁶

⁴³ DeRouchie, “The Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” 240–59.

⁴⁴ DeRouchie, “From Condemnation to Righteousness,” 87–118.

⁴⁵ Kenneth J. Turner, *The Death of Deaths in the Death of Israel: Deuteronomy’s Theology of Exile* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Kenneth J. Turner, “Deuteronomy’s Theology of Exile,” in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 189–220.

⁴⁶ On the eschatological reading of Deut 30:11–14, see Steven R. Coxhead, “Deuteronomy 30:11–14 as a Prophecy of the New Covenant in Christ,” *WTJ* 68 (2006): 305–20; Colin James Smothers, “In Your Mouth and in

4. Davidic Covenant

During the Mosaic covenant era after Israel settled the promised land, Yahweh advanced his promise of a coming royal Savior by pledging to David an eternal kingdom (2 Sam 7:8–16; 1 Chr 17:7–14). While the narrative accounts do not call the event a “covenant,” other Scriptures do (2 Sam 23:5; Pss 89:3, 28, 34, 39[4, 29, 35, 40]; 132:12).

The nature of the Davidic covenant

Scripture progressively reveals God’s commitment to raise up a royal offspring to deliver the world. He would overcome the curse with blessing, expand God’s kingdom, and come from the first woman (Gen 3:15) and from the lines of Shem (9:26–27), Abraham (17:6, 16; 22:17–18), Isaac (17:19; 21:12; cf. 26:3–4), Jacob (35:11; Num 24:17–19), and Judah (Gen 49:8–10). He would lead a new exodus, overcome enemies, and bestow blessings (Num 24:7–9). His reign would curb the self-rule of God’s people (Judg 21:25), be the means by which the Lord would judge the ends of the earth (1 Sam 2:10), and fulfill the hope for a faithful royal priest around whom Yahweh would build a sure house (2:35; cf. Ps 110:4; Zech 6:12–13). God’s covenant with David now also reveals that this Savior would come from his royal line.⁴⁷

While describing his prior (2 Sam 7:8–9) and subsequent (7:9–11a; cf. Ps 89:21–23, 27[22–24, 28]) accomplishments for David, Yahweh echoes the Abrahamic covenant. Yahweh then vowed that after David’s death he would build David a “house/dynasty” (2 Sam 7:11b–16). David’s biological descendant (“offspring”) would build a “house” for God’s name, enjoy a lasting kingdom, and be Yahweh’s royal son (7:12–15). David’s house, kingdom, and throne would remain steadfast and established forever (7:16). In response, David recognized that such promises bore hope and guidance for the world (7:19).⁴⁸ Thus, David’s final words before death unpack his hope for this Deliverer to work justice, overcome the curse, and establish a new creation (23:3–7).

Because of the royal son’s potential for sin (7:14) and because Solomon was convinced that his temple fulfilled God’s promise that David’s son would build Yahweh’s “house” (1 Kgs 8:18–20), Solomon initially and typologically fulfilled God’s promise of a royal son. Nevertheless, as with royal grants, Yahweh promised that the royal son’s throne would last forever (2 Sam 7:13, 16) but also stressed how fulfillment was conditioned on the king’s lasting loyalty (1 Kgs 2:4; 8:25; 9:4–5; Ps 132:12). Hence, only a monarch with perfect obedience and an eternal reign would fulfill God’s Davidic promises—facts manifest only in the new covenant through Christ Jesus (Isa 9:6–7[5–6]; 11:4–5; 50:5–9; 55:3; Luke 1:32–33; Acts 2:29–36).⁴⁹

Your Heart: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul’s Letter to the Romans in Canonical Context” (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

⁴⁷ For David as a type of this coming royal figure, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Heart of YHWH and His Chosen One in 1 Samuel 13:14,” *BBR* 24 (2014): 467–89.

⁴⁸ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity,” in *The Law and The Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. John H. Skilton (Nutley, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1974), 298–318; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 230; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 456–59.

⁴⁹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 459–80.

Other scriptural reflections on the Davidic covenant

The writing prophets identified the promised Savior of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets with David's seed and noted that through him God would work a new exodus and new creation and reconcile many from Israel and other nations to himself (Isa 9:7; 11:1–12:6; Jer 23:5–8; 30:9; Ezek 37:24; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11–15; Zech 12:10; 13:1; cf. Acts 15:16–18). The royal psalms also anticipate this Davidide, who would be Yahweh's "begotten son" (Ps 2:7; 89:27[28]; cf. Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5), receive Yahweh's everlasting blessing (Ps 21:6[7]; 45:2[3]; cf. 72:17), fulfill the Davidic covenant promises (89:28–37[29–38]; 132:11–12, 17–18), and inherit both the nations (2:8–9; cf. Rev 5:9–10; 12:5; 19:15) and Melchizedekian priesthood (Ps 110:1–4; cf. Heb 5:6; 7:17, 21).⁵⁰

Peter identifies the Christ as the descendant whom God promised to sit on David's throne (Acts 2:30–31). The author of Hebrews views Jesus as fulfilling the promise, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" (Heb 1:5). And the rest of the NT stresses that Jesus's already and not yet end-time reign realizes all Davidic kingdom hopes (Matt 1:1; Luke 1:68–75; Rom 1:1–4; Rev 22:16).

5. New Covenant

The new covenant in Christ between God and his church realizes the hopes of Scripture's previous divine-human covenants. The new covenant solves the global problem of sin and death that the Adamic-Noahic covenant creatures. It also fulfills the universal blessings promised to the patriarchs, overcomes the Mosaic administration's condemnation and realizes its restoration blessings, and embodies the Davidic kingdom hopes. The OT seers, sages, sovereigns, and song writers foresaw from a distance the glories that you and I now enjoy in the person of Jesus (Matt 13:17; Luke 10:24; John 8:56; Heb 11:13; cf. 1 Pet 1:10–20).

The Old Testament terminology associated with the new covenant

Among the various labels the OT uses for the end-times relationship between Yahweh and those reconciled in Christ are "covenant" (Jer 31:33; Ezek 16:62; Dan 9:27; Hos 2:18; Zech 9:11; Mal 3:1), "new covenant" (Jer 31:31), "everlasting covenant" (Isa 55:3; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26), and "covenant of peace" (Isa 54:10; Ezek 34:25; 37:26). Yahweh also tags the messianic servant himself a "covenant" (Isa 42:6; 49:8; 59:21; cf. 55:3; Dan 9:27). The relationship is commonly associated with other features like:

- new exodus (Isa 11:10–12, 15–16; Jer 16:14–15; 23:7–8; Hos 11:10–11; Zech 10:8–12; cf. Mark 1:1–3; Luke 9:30–31; 2 Cor 6:17–18);
- new "David" (Isa 9:7; 16:5; 22:22; 55:3; Jer 23:5–6; 30:9; 33:15; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech 12:10; 13:1; cf. Luke 1:32–33, 68–69; Acts 2:30–35; Rev 5:5; 22:16);
- restoring past fortunes (Zeph 3:20; *to a remnant of Israel/Judah*: Jer 29:14; 30:3, 18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7, 11, 26; Ezek 39:25; Hos 6:11; Joel 3:1; Amos 9:14; Zeph 2:7; *to a remnant of other nations*: Jer 48:47; 49:6, 39; Ezek 16:53; 29:14; cf. Deut 30:3);

⁵⁰ J. Alec Motyer, *Look to the Rock: An Old Testament Background to Our Understanding of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 23–38; J. Alec Motyer, "Messiah," *NBD*, 755–56; DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 64–65.

- new “heart” (Jer 24:7; 32:39; Ezek 11:19; 36:26; cf. Deut 30:6; Rom 2:29);
- the outpouring of God’s Spirit (*on the messianic Servant*: Isa 11:2; 42:1; 59:21; 61:1; cf. Matt 12:18–20; Luke 4:18–19; *on the people*: Isa 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:27; 37:14, 27; Joel 2:28–29; Zech 12:10; cf. Acts 2:16–18; Rom 2:29; Gal 3:14);
- a new “Jerusalem” (Isa 2:2–4; 4:2–6; 11:6–9; 65:18, 25; Jer 3:16–17; cf. Gal 4:25–26; Heb 12:22) that appears coterminous with a new creation (Isa 43:19; 48:6; 65:17; 66:22; cf. Rev 21:1–2).

From one perspective, in the new covenant *affirms* Yahweh’s original patriarchal covenant promises (*hēqîm bĕrît*; Ezek 16:60, 62 with Lev 26:42). But contrasting with the temporary Mosaic covenant, Scripture also treats the covenant Christ mediates as *new and freshly initiated* (*kāraṭ bĕrît*; Jer 31:31; 32:40; Ezek 34:25; 37:26).⁵¹ Only in Jer 31:31 does the OT use the adjective “new” to describe the end-times relationship between God and humanity that Jesus inaugurates through his death and resurrection (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 9:15). This covenant’s newness brings “righteousness” and contrasts with the old Mosaic covenant that brought “death” and “condemnation” (Jer 31:32; 2 Cor 3:6–7, 9, 14). In relation to the outworking of the Abrahamic covenant promises, Hebrews’ author notes that the Mosaic administration was the “first covenant” and the “new covenant” the “second” and that because of Christ the new covenant supersedes the old, which is now “becoming obsolete and growing old” and will soon “vanish away” (Heb 8:6–8, 13).

The Old Testament depiction of the new covenant community

The prophets at times portray the new covenant in national terms (Jer 31:36; Mic 4:7; Ezek 37:22; cf. 1 Pet 2:9).⁵² Nevertheless, they also testify that the restored community includes a remnant from Israel/Judah (Isa 10:20–22; 11:11, 16; Mic 2:12; 7:18; Zeph 2:7, 9; Zech 8:11–12) and—fulfilling the Abrahamic promises (Gen 12:3; 22:18; cf. Isa 54:1–3; Jer 4:1–2; Acts 3:25–26; Gal 3:8, 14)—many from other nations (Amos 9:12; cf. Isa 2:2–4; 49:6; Jer 3:17–18; Zech 8:22–23). Because of the righteous Servant-person’s substitutionary sacrifice and victorious resurrection (Isa 53:10–11; Zech 12:10; 13:1), Yahweh incorporates the latter peoples into his single people (Isa 19:24–25; Jer 12:16; Zech 2:11). Together they serve Yahweh their God and the Davidic king (Jer 30:9; Hos 3:5), and all are part of one family, enjoying new birth certificates identified with the new Jerusalem (Ps 87; cf. Ezek 16:61).⁵³ Thus, God counts as Abraham’s offspring the single “Israel of God” (Gal 3:29; 6:16; Eph 2:13–22; cf. Rom 2:28–29; Phil 5:3) whom Yahweh’s Servant-person “Israel” justifies (Isa 45:25; 49:3, 6; 53:10–11; 54:2–3; 59:21; cf. Isa 50:12–16; Hos 14:4–8; Zech 13:7–10).⁵⁴ These are Christ’s church and God’s new “holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9; cf. Rev 5:10) identified with the heavenly “Jerusalem” (Gal 4:25–26; Heb 12:22).

Whereas sin once characterized the hearts of foreigners (Jer 3:17) and Israelites/Judeans alike (4:4; 9:26; 17:1), every member of the new covenant will gain new, united, law-filled hearts (3:17; 31:33; 32:39; cf. Ezek 11:19–20; 36:26–27). Yahweh will restore his relationship

⁵¹ For two alternative, reasonable approaches to Ezek 16:59–63, see Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: Volume 2*, 165–69; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 585–88.

⁵² See also Jer 33:6–16; Ezek 36:24–38.

⁵³ DeRouchie, “Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets,” 445–85.

⁵⁴ Cf. G. K. Beale, “Peace and Mercy upon the Israel of God: The Old Testament Background of Gal. 6,16b,” *Bib* 80 (1999): 204–23.

with them (Jer 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 37:23, 27; Zech 8:8), and from the least to the greatest, all will know, fear, and obey God because every covenant member will experience blood-bought forgiveness (Isa 43:25; 44:22; 54:13; Jer 31:33–34; 32:39–40; Ezek 36:25–26, 33; cf. Matt 26:28; John 6:45; Heb 10:26; 1 John 2:20–21). God will count many as righteous, all on account of the righteous Servant-person’s substitutionary sacrifice and victorious resurrection (Isa 53:10–11; Zech 12:10; 13:1; cf. Isa 45:25; 50:7–9; Rom 5:19).

The New Testament sets forth how the new covenant is realized

Jesus’s ministry inaugurate the new covenant and God’s end-times reign that the OT anticipates (Matt 26:28–29; cf. Mark 14:24–25; Luke 22:20). Christ is Abraham’s singular, male “offspring” (Gal 3:16). Through him believers from every nation become God’s children and inherit every promises (3:8, 14, 28–29; cf. Acts 3:13–14; 1 Cor 2:20).⁵⁵

Many faithful evangelicals, especially in paedo-Baptist circles, claim that Christ has only partially inaugurated the new covenant, thus allowing both regenerate and non-regenerate covenant membership.⁵⁶ The use of perfect verbs in Heb 8:6, 13, however, suggests that Christ has fully initiated (though not brought to completion) the new covenant. “Christ *has obtained* [*tetychen*] a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it *is enacted* [*nenomothetēai*] on better promises” (Heb 8:6). Indeed, “By calling this covenant ‘new,’ [God] *has made* the first one *obsolete* [*pepalaiōken*]; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear” (8:13 NIV; cf. John 1:16–17; 2 Cor 3:9–10). If the new covenant is fully inaugurated, then all, and not just some, of its members are already experiencing the internal transformation that God promised (Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8:8–12). Furthermore, we know that “by a single offering [Christ] *has perfected* [*teteliōken*] for all time those who are being sanctified” (Heb 10:14)—that is, those who are part of the new covenant, in whose hearts Yahweh has already put his law and whose sins he remembers “no more” (10:16–17; cf. Jer 31:33–34). Such teaching reaffirms that only those who actually “share in Christ,” the new covenant priestly mediator, “hold our original confidence firm to the end” (Heb 3:14), for sustained sinning results in punishment (10:26–27). One does not over-realize the new covenant by stressing that membership into it comes only by faith in Christ’s covenant mediating, priestly-salvific.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Collins, “Galatians 3:16,” 75–86; DeRouchie and Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise?,” 36–48; Kevin P. Conway, *The Promises of God: The Background of Paul’s Exclusive Use of “Epangelia” for the Divine Pledge* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); DeRouchie, “Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets,” 445–85; Jason S. DeRouchie, “Is Every Promise ‘Yes’? Old Testament Promises and the Christian,” *Them* 42 (2017): 16–45.

⁵⁶ Richard L. Pratt, “Infant Baptism in the New Covenant,” in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 172; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 269–72; Michael G. McKelvey, “The New Covenant as Promised in the Major Prophets,” in *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 196–98; Scott R. Swain, “New Covenant Theologies,” in *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 566–69.

⁵⁷ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 670–83; Stephen J. Wellum, “The New Covenant Work of Christ: Priesthood, Atonement, and Intercession,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 517–40; cf. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 799–824.

Within the Abrahamic covenant, physical circumcision depicted an excising curse, marked one out for God's service, and typologically foreshadowed a heart circumcision that would bring about the required devotion.⁵⁸ Until Christ's coming, for most Israelites the sign announced only their coming punishment rather than actual loyalty. However, in his death, Jesus underwent the excising curse to which the physical circumcision pointed (Col 2:11; cf. 1:22; John 3:14–15; 1 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13)⁵⁹ and secured the new covenant's sign of promised heart circumcision for those believing in him, thus identifying the new people of God as true "Jews." (Rom 2:28–29; Gal 6:15; Phil 5:3; cf. Rev 2:9).⁶⁰ Baptizing believers in the Triune God's name externally testifies to this inward reality (Matt 28:19; cf. John 3:23; Acts 8:36–39) and signifies membership in Christ's church as the new people of God (Mark 1:4–5; Rom 2:28–29; 4:16; Gal 3:7). Rather than replacing circumcision in the flesh, water baptism symbolizes primarily the believer's union with Christ in his death and resurrection (Rom 6:3–4; Col 2:11–12) and secondarily the believer's cleansing from sin (Heb 10:22; 1 Pet 3:21). Because heart circumcision as the antitype is now realized among all new covenant members, physical circumcision as a type is no longer necessary (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; cf. 3:28–29).

Along with the one-time rite of water baptism, gathered members of Christ's church regularly partake of the Lord's supper (1 Cor 11:17–20, 22) in order to remember Christ (11:25) and receive spiritual nourishment (10:16–17; cf. John 6:53–57, 63). We eat bread signifying his body given for his people, and we drink the Lord's cup signifying the new covenant in his blood (1 Cor 11:23–26; cf. Luke 22:20).

The contrast of the old and new covenants parallel a number of other NT end-times old and new contrasts like old wine in old wineskins vs. new wine in fresh wineskins (Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37–38), old man vs. new man (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22–24; Col 3:9–10), oldness of the letter vs. newness of the Spirit (Rom 7:6; cf. 2:29; 2 Cor 3:6), old leaven vs. new leaven (1 Cor 5:7–8), and old creation vs. new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). Furthermore, Paul highlights a series of theological contrasts that often parallel the old and new covenant distinction: law vs. faith (Rom 3:20, 28; 4:13–14; 9:30–10:8; Gal 2:16–21; 3:1–14; Phil 3:9), first Adam vs. last Adam (Rom 5:14, 18–19; 1 Cor 15:22, 45), sin vs. righteousness (Rom 5:21; 6:20; 8:10), flesh vs. Spirit (Rom 8:4–13; Gal 3:3; 4:29; 5:16–25; 6:8), letter vs. Spirit (Rom 2:29; 7:6; 2 Cor 3:3, 6), and slavery vs. freedom (Gal 4:21–5:1). All of these highlight two different ages and place Jesus's person and work as the decisive turning point in salvation history.⁶¹ In Christ, God fulfills what he promised, and Christ realizes what the OT anticipates.

⁵⁸ Kline, *By Oath Consigned*; DeRouchie, "Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums," 182–89; Meade, "The Meaning of Circumcision in Israel," 35–54; John D. Meade, "Circumcision of Flesh to Circumcision of Heart: The Typology of the Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant," in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 127–58.

⁵⁹ Kline, *By Oath Consigned*.

⁶⁰ Meade, "Circumcision of Flesh to Circumcision of Heart," 127–58; cf. Stephen J. Wellum, "Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants," in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 97–161.

⁶¹ N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009); cf. DeRouchie, "The Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12," 240–59.

Jesus is a better covenant mediator than Moses (Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24; cf. Deut 18:15–16) because he offers a superior sacrifice (Heb 9:6–10:18) that brings better results, better provision, and better promises. Whereas the first Adam failed to secure lasting life, Christ as the last Adam succeeds, winning justification unto life for all who believe (Rom 5:18–19; cf. 1 Cor 15:45). Through his perfect covenant keeping unto death (Rom 5:19; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 2:8), he triumphs over all powers of darkness (Col 2:15), satisfies God’s wrath against his elect (Rom 5:9; 8:1; Gal 3:13; Col 3:14; Heb 9:26), and secures for them every eternal blessing and consummate inheritance (Gal 3:14, 29; Eph 1:3, 14; 1 Pet 1:3–5), including eternal redemption, forgiveness, adoption, sonship, peace with God, righteousness, sanctification, and glorification (Rom 5:1; 8:4, 30; Eph 1:3–14; Heb 9:12; 10:10, 14). “Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb 9:28). In that day, the victorious King will punish his enemies, consummate his new creation, and empower all his redeemed to reign with him forevermore (2 Thess 1:9–10; Rev 5:10; 21:1–22:5)

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.⁶²

⁶² 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. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 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); Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*; 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 Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*; Horton, *God of Promise*; Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether, eds., *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020).