

COVENANT (DIATHEKE)  
Biblical Words  
Banska Bystrica, 20th June 2020

οἵτινες εἰσιν Ἰσραηλῖται, ὧν ἡ υἰοθεσία καὶ ἡ  
δόξα καὶ αἱ διαθήκαι καὶ ἡ νομοθεσία καὶ ἡ  
λατρεία καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι

**Rom 9:4** They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

- past topics: ▶ Scripture; ▶ Law; ▶ Gospel; ▶ Sin; ▶ Repentance; ▶ Faith; ▶ Hope; ▶ Love; ▶ Kingdom of God; ▶ Church; → Covenant
- [*The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*] 'Covenant' (Hebrew b'rith, meaning 'bond' or 'fetter that carries a sense of obligation') is arguably the most important biblical term characterizing God's relationship with ISRAEL and God's relationship, through Jesus Christ, with Jews and Gentiles alike. Some scholars argue that 'KINGDOM OF GOD' is more fundamental in the Bible than 'covenant'. Others contend that the two terms are interdependent, two sides of the same coin. Christians have chosen the word 'covenant' to characterize their Bible's fundamental division between the Old and New 'Testaments' (i.e., covenants).

- [LLOYD-JONES *Great Doctrines*] The covenant is a gift from God which has been ushered in by the death of Christ, and because it comes from God it is something which is certain, and inviolable, and unbreakable. And yet we must hold on to this idea of a covenant, because God in His wonderful love and grace and condescension chose to reveal His purposes in this particular way.

## 0.1. COVENANTS IN THE BIBLE

- Dr. Arnold G. FRUCHTENBAUM *The Eight Covenants of the Bible*.
  - I. THE EDENIC COVENANT (Gn 1:28-30; Gn 2:15-17; Hos 6:7)
  - II. THE ADAMIC COVENANT (Gn 3:14-19)
  - III. THE NOAHIC COVENANT (Gn 9:1-17)
  - IV. THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT (Gn 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 22:15-18)
  - V. THE MOSAIC COVENANT (from Ex 20:1)
  - VI. THE LAND COVENANT (Dt 29:1-30:20 → regathered Israel)
  - VII. THE DAVIDIC COVENANT (2Sa 7:11b-16; Ps 89)
  - VIII. THE NEW COVENANT (Jer 31:31-34)

## 0.2. THE WORD "COVENANT"

- Rohacek Bible: "smluva" 334x

### 0.2.1. HEBREW

- [VINE] "The KJV translates (בְּרִית) as "covenant" 260 times. The word is used of "agreements between men," as Abraham and Abimelech (**Gn 21:32-33**) So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines. <sup>33</sup> Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.) David and Jonathan made a "covenant" of mutual protection that would be binding on David's descendants forever (1Sam 8:3; **1Sa 20:16-17**) And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD take vengeance on David's enemies." <sup>17</sup> And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul.). In these cases, there was "mutual agreement confirmed by oath in the name of the Lord." Sometimes there were also material pledges (Gen 21:28-31). ...The great majority of occurrences of are of God's "covenants" with men, as in Gen. 6:18 above. The verbs used are important: "I will establish my covenant" (**Gn 6:18**) But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you)—literally, "cause to stand" or "confirm." "I will make (וַאֲתָנָה בְּרִיתִי) my covenant" (Gn 17:2, RSV). "He declared to you his covenant" (**Dt 4:13**) And he declared to you his covenant [וַיְבַרְרֶנּוּ], which he commanded [וַיְצַוֶּנּוּ] you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone). "My covenant which I commanded them ..." (**Jos 7:11**) Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings).

### 0.2.2. GREEK

- [VINE] "The NT uses of the word may be analyzed as follows: (a) a promise or undertaking, human or divine, Gal. 3:15; (b) a promise or undertaking on the part of God, Luke 1:72; Acts 3:25; Rom 9:4; 11:27; Gal 3:17 Eph 2:12; Heb 7:22; 8:6, 8, 10; 10:16; (c) an agreement, a mutual undertaking, between God and Israel, see Deut. 29-30 (described as a 'commandment,' Heb 7:18, cf. v. 22); Heb. 8:9; 9:20; (d) by metonymy, the token of the covenant, or promise, made to Abraham, Acts 7:8, (e) by metonymy, the record of the covenant, 2 Cor. 3:14; Heb. 9:4; cf. Rev. 11:19; (f) the basis, established by the death of Christ, on which the salvation of men is secured, Mat 26:28; Mark 14:24; Lk 22:20; 1Co 11:25; 2Co 3:6; Heb. 10:29; 12:24; 13:20.

## 1. THE MEANING

- the “what” of covenant

### 1.1. BINDING RELATIONSHIP

- **MUTUAL**: bond of fidelity and peace (marriage) **Mal 2:14** the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant (וְהָיָא חֲבֵרְתְּךָ וְאִשְׁתְּ בְרִיתְךָ) **Pr 2:16-17** So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, <sup>17</sup> who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God (וְאִתְּ-בְרִית אֱלֹהֶיהָ שָׁכַחָה)
- **PROMISE**: **Gn 17:1-2** When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, <sup>2</sup> that I may make my covenant between me and you (וְאִתְּנָה בְרִיתִי בֵינִי וּבֵינְךָ), and may multiply you greatly."
- “bond,” “obligation” “oath”

### 1.2. THE NEW COVENANT

- **Lk 22:20** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant (τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη) in my blood **1Cor 11:25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood (τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἔμῳ αἵματι). Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. **2Cor 3:6** ...who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant (διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης), not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life
- **Jer 31:31-33** Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
- **Heb 8:6-13** But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the *covenant* he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. <sup>7</sup> For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. <sup>8</sup> For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, <sup>9</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. <sup>10</sup> For this is the *covenant* that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts (διδούς νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν ἐπιγράψω αὐτούς), and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>11</sup> And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. <sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." <sup>13</sup> In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.
- **Heb 7:18-22** On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness <sup>19</sup> (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. <sup>20</sup> And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, <sup>21</sup> but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'" <sup>22</sup> This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.
- **Heb 10:16-17** "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," <sup>17</sup> then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

## 2. THE SIGNS, SYMBOLS AND GUARANTEES

- the “how” of covenant

### 2.1. SACRIFICES

- **Gn 15:9-12** He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup> And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. <sup>11</sup> And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. <sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. ...**Gn 15:17-18** When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. <sup>18</sup> On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates"
- **Ex 24:8** And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant (הַנְּהַרְתָּ דַם-הַבְּרִית) that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words"
- **Mt 26:27-28** And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant (τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης), which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

### 2.2. RAINBOW

- **Gn 9:12-13** This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup> I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth

### 2.3. CIRCUMCISION

- **Gn 17:11** You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you

### 2.4. THE BOOK

- **Ex 24:7** Then he took the Book of the Covenant (סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית) and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient"
- **Dt 29:1** These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb

### 2.5. THE DECALOGUE

- **Ex 34:28** So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant (וַיִּכְתֹּב עַל-הַלְחָת אֶת דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית), the ten commandments (עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים)
- **Dt 9:9** I went up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD made with you (לָקַחְתָּ לְנֹחַת הָאֲבָנִים לְנֹחַת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר-כָּרַת יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם) **Dt 9:15** ...the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands (וַשְּׁנֵי לְחָת הַבְּרִית עַל שְׁתֵּי יָדַי)

### 2.6. THE ARK

- **Nu 10:33** ...the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days' journey...
- **Heb 9:4** ...the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.
- **Jer 3:16-17** And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, declares the LORD, they shall no more say, "The ark of the covenant of the LORD." It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again. <sup>17</sup> At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.

[KEIL & DELITZSCH *Jeremiah 3:16*] At that time will they call Jerusalem the throne of Jahveh. The ark was

the throne of Jahveh, inasmuch as Jahveh, in fulfilment of His promise in Ex xxv. 22,<sup>1</sup> and as covenant God, was ever present to His people in a cloud over the extended wings of the two cherubim that were upon the covering of the ark of the law ; from the mercy-seat too, between the two cherubs, lie spake with His people, and made known to them His gracious presence : Lev. xvi. 2 ; cf. 1 Chron. xiii. 6, Vs. lxxx. 2, 1 Sam. iv. 4. The ark was therefore called the footstool of God, 1 Chron. xxviii. ~ \ I', zcix. 5, exxxii. 7 ; Lam. ii. 1. But in future Jerusalem is to be, and to be called, the throne of Jahveh : and it is in such a manner to take the place of the ark, that the people will neither miss it nor make any more mention of it.

## 2.7. SALT

- **Lv 2:13** You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering
- **Nu 18:19** It is a covenant of salt (בְּרִית מֶלַח עוֹלָם הוּא) forever before the LORD for you and for your offspring with you.

## 2.8. SANCTIONS

- **Dt 29:21** ... the curses of the covenant (אֲלוֹת הַבְּרִית) written in this Book of the Law...

## 2.9. THE MESSIAH

- **Mal 3:1** "Behold, I send my messenger (מַלְאָכִי) and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant (מַלְאָךְ הַבְּרִית) in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

## 3. THE REASONS

- the "why" of covenant

### 3.1. THE CHARACTER OF GOD

- **Dt 7:9** Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים הָאֵל הַנֶּאֱמָן שֹׁמֵר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֶסֶד) with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations

### 3.2. SAFETY

- **Mal 3:6** "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed (כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שֵׁנִיתִי וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא כִלִּיתֶם)

### 3.3. FAITH / TRUST

- **Heb 6:17-20** So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the **promise** the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an **oath**,<sup>18</sup> so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.<sup>19</sup> We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,<sup>20</sup> where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- BOICE, James Montgomery *Základy křesťanské víry* Návrat domů, 1999, (ss. 465; 494)
- RYRIE, Charles C. *Základy teologie*, BIBLOS, 1994, (s. 523-533)
- FRUCHTENBAUM, Arnold G. *The Eight Covenants of the Bible*, Ariel Ministries' Messianic Bible Study, 1983, 2005 Ariel Ministries
- Brown M. G. and Keele Z. *Sacred Bond*, Crossway, 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> **Ex 25:22** There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel