

BLUEPRINTS OF THE INCARNATION

Introduction

The Bible contains many covenants; a few are major covenants and lead to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus.

What is a covenant? Simply put, **a covenant is a *created* (not natural), *binding*, and *obligatory* relationship.**

Let's use marriage as an example. Marriage is a *created* relationship; no one is born married. Marriage is a *binding* relationship, not just in a legal sense but, more importantly, in a moral and personal sense. And marriage is an *obligatory* relationship; the husband and wife both have obligations within the relationship.

On the other hand, the relationship between a parent and child is not a covenant. While the Bible sets *obligations* for parents and children and makes it unthinkable to dissolve the *bonds* between parent and child, it is a *natural* relationship, not a created one.

The Bible makes it clear that Yahweh has a *single* plan for creation. I don't say it is a *simple* plan; it has many parts and pieces, and only God could bring it to pass. But it is a single plan rather than many plans that are woven together.

As we review the major covenants of Scripture this morning, I want to keep the idea of a single plan before you by thinking of them as blueprints for a magnificent building. A complicated house might have many blueprint pages, each describing a different part of the home. The architect has the finished project in his mind; he can see it and imagine it even when it is only described on paper. But the rest of us look at the blueprints and can barely grasp their meaning. Only when the home is finished can we appreciate everything the architect intended.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ADAM

Genesis 2:15-17

The first covenant we encounter in Scripture is the God's covenant with Adam.

It was a covenant of **works**, not grace; it was a **mutual** covenant between God and man. God's covenant with Adam was very simple. It contained a single stipulation.

15 Then Yahweh God took the man
and set him in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.
16 And Yahweh God commanded the man, saying,
“From any tree of the garden you may surely eat;
17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,
you shall not eat from it;
for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”
(**Genesis 2:15–17, 2022 LSB**)

As head of the human race, what Adam did affected all of his descendants. He acted on behalf of us. Had Adam obeyed God, we would have reaped the benefits of his obedience. Because he disobeyed God, we suffer the consequences of his disobedience.

12 ... through one man sin entered into the world,
and death through sin,
and so death spread to all men,
because all sinned [in Adam] (**Romans 5:12, 2022 LSB**)

It was a sad state of affairs. Adam's sin was not theoretical. He saw the effects of it all around him and, perhaps most painfully, in his children.

Christ and God's Covenant with Adam

But God's covenant with Adam was a blueprint for another Adam, a “last Adam,” as First Corinthians 15:45 calls Jesus. Jesus was also the head of a race. Not the race of

Adamic mankind, born in sin, but a new race of spiritual mankind, born again, born from above, in righteousness. All who are in Adam die; all who are in Christ live (First Corinthians 15:22).

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

Genesis 9:8-13

The next major covenant we encounter in Scripture is God's Covenant with Noah. By the time Noah was born, barely 1,000 years after Adam, the world was in a terrible state. With the exception of Noah and his wife, all mankind was bent on evil. Animal life on the earth had become filled with violence as well (Genesis 6:5, 11-12).

God's answer to this was a global flood, a cataclysm. All life was destroyed, except for the people and animals protected by Yahweh on a massive boat, an ark, which He commanded Noah to build.

After the flood, Noah built an altar and worshiped Yahweh, sacrificing one of every clean animal and bird as a burnt offering. Yahweh then said,

11 “Indeed I establish My covenant with you;
and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood,
and there shall never again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

12 Then God said, “This is the sign of the covenant
which I am giving to be between Me and you
and every living creature that is with you,
for all successive generations;

13 I put My bow in the cloud,
and it shall be for a sign of a covenant
between Me and the earth.” (**Genesis 9:11–13, 2022 LSB**)

Where God's covenant with Adam was a covenant of **works** – it depended on Adam's obedience – God's covenant with Noah was a covenant of **grace** – it depended only on God's faithfulness. God's covenant with Noah was **unilateral**; God alone made it and

was responsible for keeping it. God didn't even need human faith to keep His covenant with Noah. It truly didn't matter whether anyone believed Him or not; He would keep His promise. Of course, it is impossible to please God apart from faith in Him. Those who don't believe God's promise face His judgment, but not a worldwide flood.

Christ and God's Covenant with Noah

God's covenant with Noah is a blueprint for the sovereign, merciful rescue of God's people from judgment through an ark of His choosing. The second ark would be His own incarnate Son. He places us in Christ by His grace through our faith in Jesus. Keep in mind that the faith we have in Jesus is the Father's gift to us.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

Genesis 15:1-21

Next, we come to God's covenant with Abraham. All of Genesis 15 is involved, but Genesis 15:3-6 states it clearly:

3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no seed to me, behold, one born in my house is my heir."
4 Then behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, saying, "This one will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."
5 And He brought him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your seed be."
6 Then he believed in Yahweh; and He counted it to him as righteousness."
(Genesis 15:3-6, 2022 LSB)

Like the covenant with Noah, God's covenant with Abraham is a covenant of **grace**, not works. Like the covenant with Noah, it was a unilateral covenant; God alone made

it, and God alone was responsible for fulfilling it.

Abraham's part was simply to believe God's promise. He did, and – remarkably – his faith was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham received far more than a son through this covenant; he received eternal life. God's promise that Abraham would have innumerable descendants was fulfilled physically through his children, but Abraham has even more descendants spiritually:

7 know that those who are of faith,
those are sons of Abraham. (**Galatians 3:7, 2022 LSB**)

Christ and God's covenant with Abraham

God's covenant with Abraham is a blueprint for justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Jesus became the instrument of justification through His sinless life, His atoning death, and His glorious resurrection. By God's grace (and only by God's grace) we are justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL

Exodus – Deuteronomy

God's covenants with Adam, Noah, and Abraham are found in just a few verses. His covenant with Israel, mediated through Moses, takes most of four books of the Bible: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. I won't read all four books this morning if you don't mind! Exodus 24:3 summarizes it, though:

3 Then Moses came and recounted to the people
all the words of Yahweh and all the judgments;
and all the people answered with one voice and said,
"All the words which Yahweh has spoken we will do!"
(**Exodus 24:3, 2022 LSB**)

There it is: signed, sealed, and delivered.

Like God's covenant with Adam, His covenant with Israel was a covenant of **works**, not grace. It was a **mutual** covenant; both Yahweh and Israel had obligations to fulfill. The covenant clearly stated what blessings Israel would receive for obedience, and what curses they could expect for disobedience. Their failure was not just a possibility; it was a certainty. But the covenant also included a promise about what would happen when the covenant had been violated, and *all* the curses had taken place:

6 “Moreover Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart
and the heart of your seed,
to love Yahweh your God with all your heart
and with all your soul, so that you may live.”
(Deuteronomy 30:6, 2022 LSB)

Christ and God's covenant with Israel

Unlike the people of Israel, Jesus came to keep the Law (Matthew 5:17-18), and kept it perfectly (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus elevated all of the Scriptures, and most specifically the Law of God, throughout His life and ministry. Even following His resurrection, instead of unhitching His disciples from the Old Testament, Jesus opened their minds to understand it (Matthew 24:45). The entire scope of Jesus' life and ministry was carried out according to the Scriptures.

Why would God make a covenant with Israel if He knew that they would never keep it and would, in fact, violate it in every way possible? To emphasize the depth, extent, and power of human sin. Romans 3:20 says that the Law was not given as a means of justification, but to reveal sin. It is a diagnostic tool, an x-ray or MRI for the soul.

But, Romans 8 says,

3 what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did:
sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh
and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us,
 who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
 (Romans 8:3–4, 2022 LSB)

GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

Second Samuel 7

This is another lengthy passage, but it is well summarized in Second Samuel 7:12-13:

12 “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers,
 I will raise up one of your seed after you,
 who will come forth from your own body,
 and I will establish his kingdom.
 13 He shall build a house for My name,
 and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”
 (2 Samuel 7:12–13, 2022 LSB)

The immediate fulfillment of this promise was through Solomon, but the eternal fulfillment comes through the Lord Jesus Christ. As with the covenants with Noah and Abraham, this is a covenant of grace, not works. It is a unilateral covenant; God alone makes it, and God alone is responsible for fulfilling it. He would raise up an eternal King – a last King – from the line of David.

Christ and God's covenant with David

Even as a small child, Jesus was recognized as the King of Israel (Matthew 2:2).

Nathanael recognized Jesus as King at the very outset of His public ministry (John 1:49).

Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as the King of Israel (John 12:13).

Jesus was mockingly called “King” by the Roman soldiers who flogged Him, and by Pontius Pilate (Matthew 19:3, 14). Pilate even hung a sign above His head on the cross that read, “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.” (John 19:19).

The Jewish leaders mockingly called Jesus “King” as He hung dying on the cross (Mark 15:32).

But Jesus is the King of the nations (Revelation 15:3). He is King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14, 19:16). On the day of judgment, He will condemn the wicked to hell (Matthew 25:40) and welcome the righteous to eternal life (Matthew 25:34) as King.

THE NEW COVENANT

Jeremiah 31:31-39; Ezekiel 11:17-21, 36:22-36

More lengthy passages! Let me summarize the New Covenant for you.

First, it is a covenant of **grace**, not works. It is a **unilateral** covenant; Yahweh made a promise, and He will keep His promise.

Second, the New Covenant is new on many levels. It was not only new in comparison to the Covenant with Israel but promised new life to sinners.

- Sins would be forgiven.
- The sin nature would be removed.
- A perfect and eternal relationship with God would be instituted.
- God would give sinners a new heart and a new spirit.
- He would put His Holy Spirit within them and cause them to obey Him.
- No one would need to urge another, “Know the Lord,” because ALL in the New Covenant know Him.

The New Covenant also includes promises to national Israel.

- Israel would be restored to the land.
- Yahweh would never again reject her as His nation.
- Jerusalem would be rebuilt and never again uprooted or pulled down.
- The Jews would be gathered from every place and brought to Israel.
- The land would be fruitful and never again suffer famine.

The New Covenant in Christ

The promises of the New Covenant are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, our sins are forgiven. We are joined with Jesus in His death and resurrection and given living hearts and living spirits. He fills us with His Holy Spirit so that we know Him and grow in obedience to Him.

And one day, Jesus will return to bring about the perfect completion of the New Covenant. As I understand Scripture, every living Jew will be restored to faith in Him, and He will never again reject Israel. Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem, which will never again be destroyed. There will be a new creation where nothing wicked or sinful dwells.

BRINGING IT HOME

As I said at the beginning of the sermon, we can compare the covenants to the blueprints for a magnificent home. The blueprints are necessary to build the home, but they can't begin to compare with the beauty and wonder of the finished building.

In 1935, Frank Lloyd Wright created a blueprint for a house in southwest Pennsylvania to be partially built over a waterfall. The house has become known as Falling Water and can be toured today.

You can find blueprints for Falling Water on the internet; believe me, they don't compare to the beauty of the finished home.

Do you get the idea? The blueprints were necessary for building this beautiful home, but they can't compare to the beauty of the home itself.

God's various covenants are the same. They are incredibly significant on their own. But it is only in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of His ministry that we see what the covenants were about.

Jesus obeyed where Adam sinned. All who are in Adam die; all who are in Jesus live.

Jesus is the ark of God, which protects and carries God's people above His judgment of the wicked.

Jesus is our righteousness. We are not justified by works but by faith in Jesus Christ. His righteousness is credited to our account through faith.

Jesus obeyed every Law given to Israel. He satisfied the righteous requirements of the Law on our behalf.

Jesus is the Son of David whom God has placed on the eternal throne. He was King at birth, King throughout His life, King in His suffering and death, King in His resurrection, King today as we await His Second Coming, and King for all time.

And Jesus is the fulfillment of the New Covenant. In a few moments, we will share the Lord's table together. Jesus said to His disciples during the Last Supper, "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in My blood." What does that mean? It means that the New Covenant was instituted at the cross of Christ, and we become beneficiaries of it when we trust in Jesus.