



Covenant Theology

Putting the Bible Back Together

1

References

- Douglas Kelly
- Richard Pratt
- Ligon Duncan
- O. Palmer Robinson – *The Christ of the Covenants*
- Michael Horton – *Introducing Covenant Theology*

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Covenant Theology Presentation Outline

- I. Covenant Theology Explained
- II. The Structure of the Covenants
- III. The Covenants of Scripture
- IV. Dispensationalism: Covenant Theology's Opponent
- V. The Importance of Covenant Theology

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I. Covenant Theology Explained

Hebrew –
berit

Greek -
diatheke

Latin -
*Testamentu
m*

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Definition

- *A covenant is the whole sovereign arrangement by which God saves us and relates to us.*
– Douglas Kelly
- *A covenant is a bond in blood sovereignly administered.*
– O. Palmer Robinson

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Covenant as Bond

- Covenant as bond: a covenant at the most essential level is that which binds people together.
 - The term throughout scripture points to a bond relationship between God and man.
 - The result of a covenant is the establishment of a relationship where one is committed to another established with oaths and bonds.
 - In Biblical covenants God is always the one who initiates the relationship.

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Covenant as Bond in Blood

- Covenant as a “bond in blood” or bond in life or death: **God never enters a casual relationship with man.**
 - The implications of his bonds extend to life and death.
 - The phrase translated “to make a covenant” (tyrIB. tr;K') in the Old Testament literally reads “to cut a covenant.”
 - “Apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins” – Hebrews 9:22
 - Once a covenant relationship is entered, the shedding of blood alone initiates the obligations of the covenant.

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Covenant as Sovereignly Administered

- The Covenants between God and man are always unilateral (one-sided) no bartering or bargaining.
- The Covenants are administered by God and on His conditions.

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Westminster Confession of Faith

- 7.1 The distance between God and the creature is so great that, even though rational creatures are responsible to obey him as their Creator, yet they could never experience any enjoyment of him as their blessing and reward except by way of some voluntary condescension on his part, which he has been pleased to express by way of covenant.

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Immanuel Principle

- God is with us...

*This unity of theme is the heart of the covenant as it relates God to his people, a single phrase recurs as this summation of the covenant relationship – “I will be your God and you will be my people.” This phrase may be designated as the Immanuel principle of the covenant. **The heart of the covenant is that God is with us.***

- O. Palmer Robinson.

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Covenant in the Bible

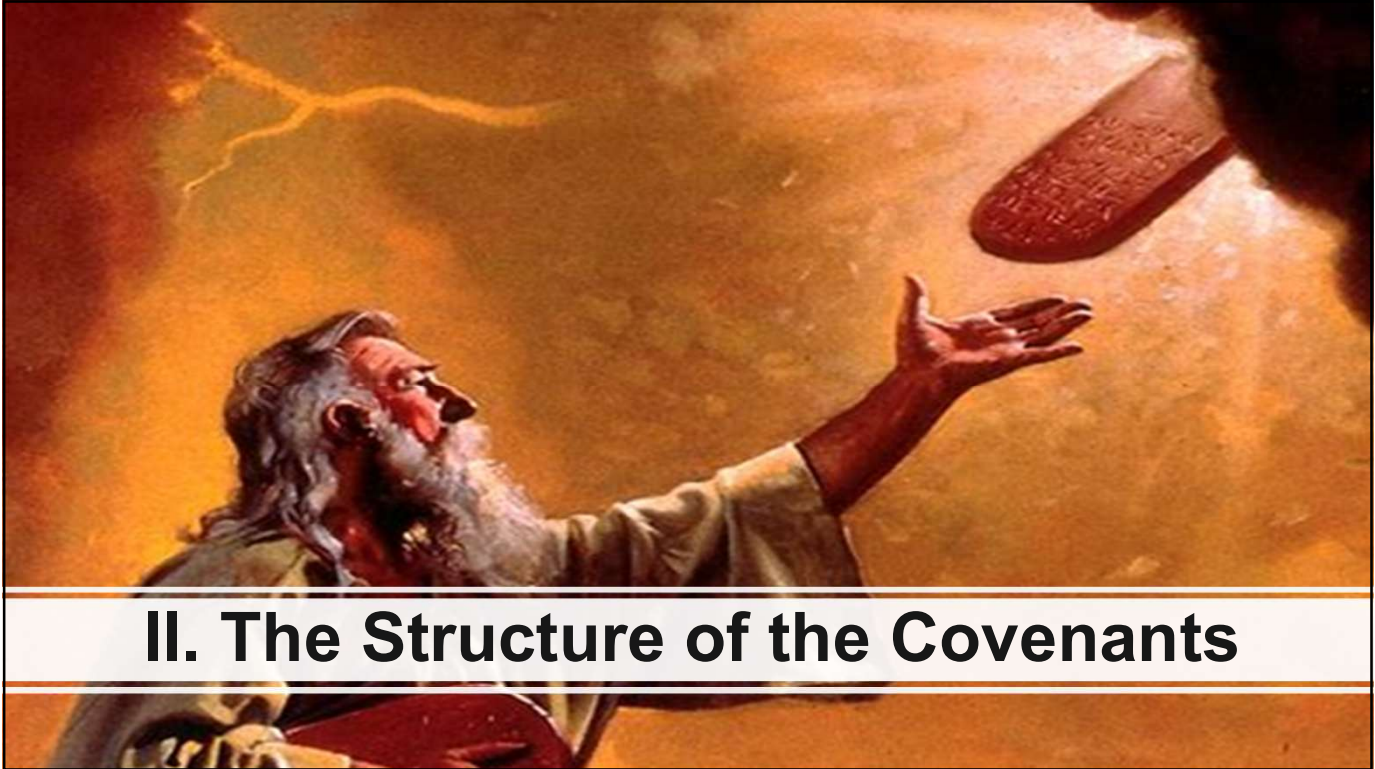
- The word “covenant” is found almost 300 times in the Old Testament and 33 times in the New Testament.

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Categories of Covenants

- Unilateral between God and man
- Bilateral between man and man (cf. Josh. 9)
- Conditional – dependent on something else being done
- Unconditional – not dependent on something else being done
- Covenant Renewal – the renewal of an old covenant established by God, and not the making of a new one

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II. The Structure of the Covenants

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Covenant	Covenant
Linguistic <i>Birtu</i> "love" = "loyalty"	Linguistic
Ritualistic Maledictory Ceremonies	tyrIB Ritualistic "love" = "loyalty" Maledictory Ceremonies
Literary (cutting) Preamble, Prologue, Stipulations, Witnesses	tyrIB Literary Preamble, Prologue, Stipulations, Witnesses

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Types of Covenant Treaties in ANE

Treaties between Greater and Lesser Kingdoms

Egypt → Canaanite Cities

- Parity Treaties
- Suzerain – Vassal Treaties

Parity Treaties

- Bilateral Bargaining
- Mutual Obligations

Suzerain Treaties

- Unilateral Terms
- Mutual

Types of ANE Treaties

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Types of Covenants in Israel

Yahweh as Emperor → Israel as Vassal

All National Religious Covenants

- Parity Covenants
- Suzerain-Vassal Covenants

Unilateral Terms

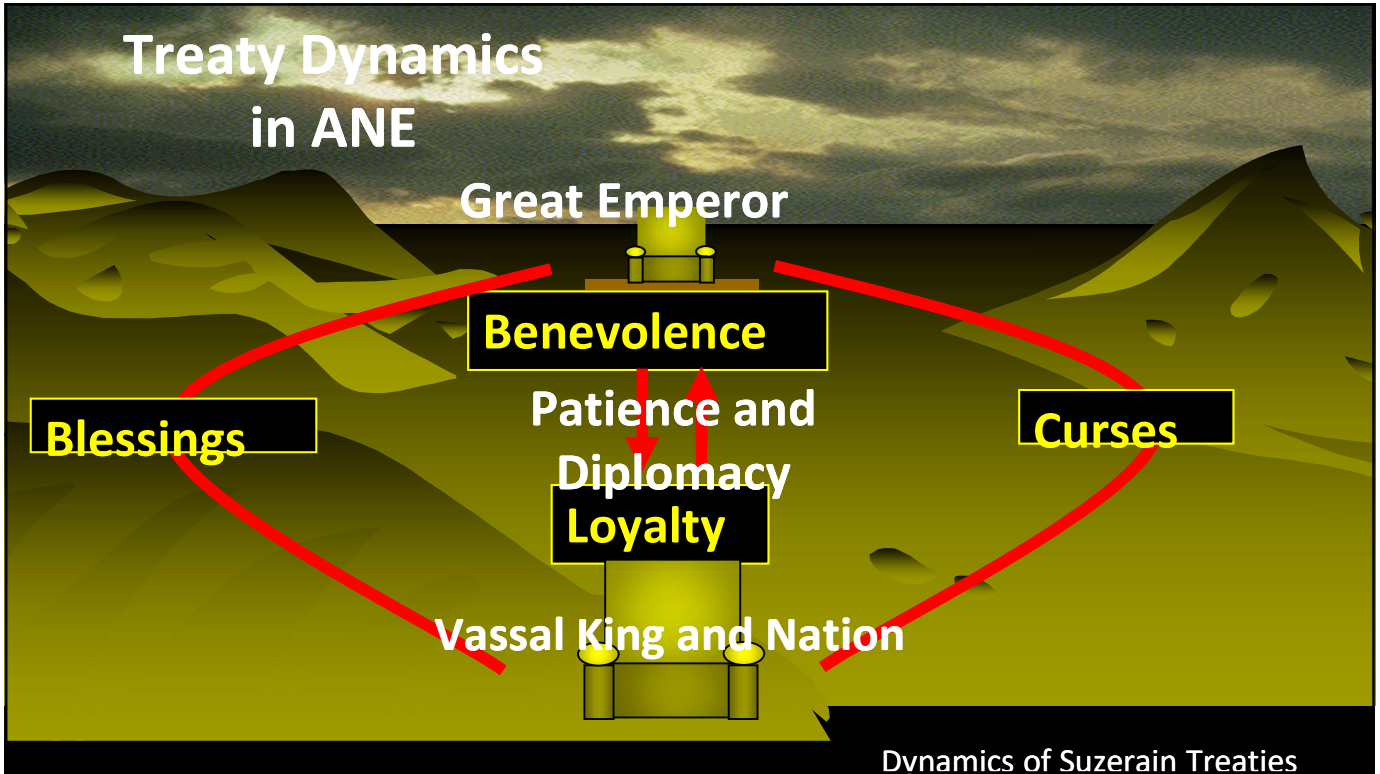
Yahweh Dictates Terms

Mutual Obligations

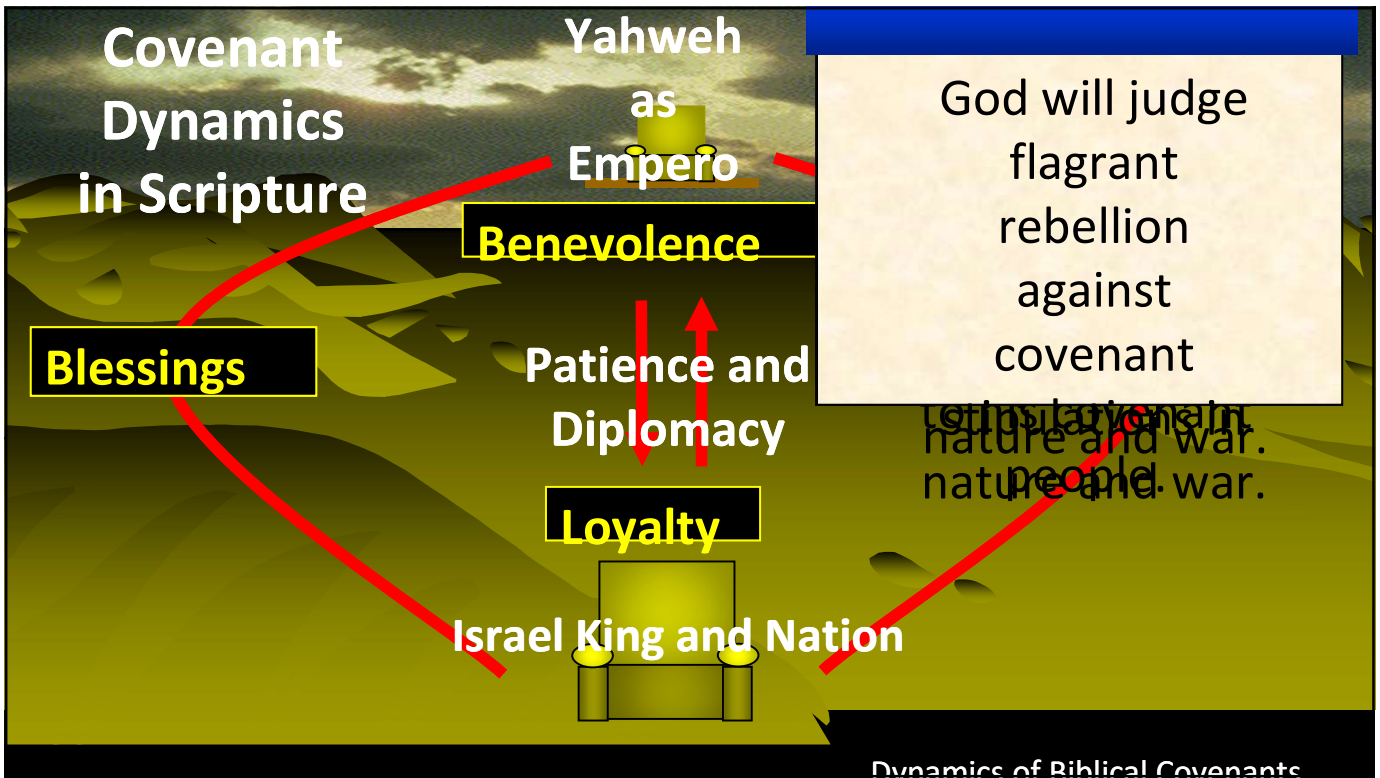
Yahweh and Israel Obligated to Each Other

Covenant in Bible

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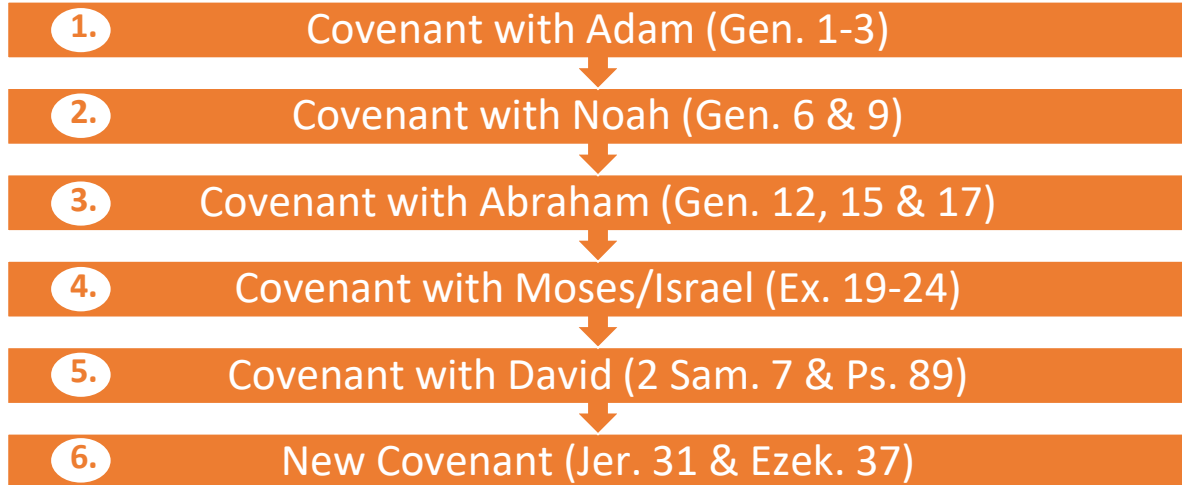


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III. The Covenants of Scripture



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1. Adam: The Covenant of Works (Pre-Fall)

- And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17 ESV).
- WCF 7.2 The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works in which life was promised to Adam and, in him, to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

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Adam: The Covenant of Grace or Redemption (Post-Fall)

- The Fall: Adam's disobedience to the Covenant of Works
 - Adam was no longer able to have a relationship with God and was under His curse of death and eternal separation.
 - Without a divine remedy there was no hope.
 - God gave a remedy in The Covenant of Redemption or The Covenant of Grace.

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Protoeuangelion

Genesis 3:14-15 The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, **cursed** are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring [seed] and her offspring [seed]; he shall bruise your head,

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Seed Theology

- The rest of the history of redemption is the playing out of these two seeds.
- Enmity (hostility to the point of murder):
 - Seed vs. Seed (Satan does not have offspring so reference is to Spiritual seed)
 - Jesus vs. Satan

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- Progressive development – there is in the covenants a building or progression as the Kingdom of God and the History of Redemption unfolds.
 - Old Covenants do not disappear with the institution of new ones.
- Organically linked - To speak of an organic relationship is to suggest a living, vital connection as over against an isolation or compartmentalization.
 - The Covenants are not compartmentalized dealings with man but an organically linked plan of redemption. (c.f. Romans 11)

Fulfillment of the Covenant of Grace

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2. Covenant with Noah

- *The Noahic covenant was a one-sided promise on God's part with no conditions attached – Michael Horton.*
- The redemptive aspects of the Noahic covenant involve believers in the line of fidelity to Noah and especially through Shem.
- Covenant sign: Rainbow

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3. Covenant with Abraham

- God's unconditional covenant with Abraham is the heart of the Covenant of Grace.
- A covenant not based upon the merits of man but the promise of God. "I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you" (Gen. 17:6).
- Genesis 15 – Contains God's self-maledictory oath (walking between cut animals).
- Involves both the offspring of Abram and the land where they are to dwell.
- Sets up the Nation of God
- Covenant sign: Circumcision

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4. Covenant with Moses

- Gives law to establish Israel as a nation and guide them in the purposes of Yahweh.
- Establishes a theocracy over Israel with means of authority, worship, and legislation.
- **Does not provide an alternate means of salvation.**
- Undergirded by grace of Yahweh already set forth in the previous covenants.
- Requires national obedience to the Law.
- “They got in by grace but stayed in by obedience.” – E. P. Sanders

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5. Covenant with David

- Development of an empire for the Glory of God.
- Centralization of the worship of God.
- Introduction to the kingship of God.
- Promise of a son to rule forever
 - Davidic line reigns for 400 years
 - Major Passages: 2 Samuel 7/Ps. 89
 - Fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the “Son of David”

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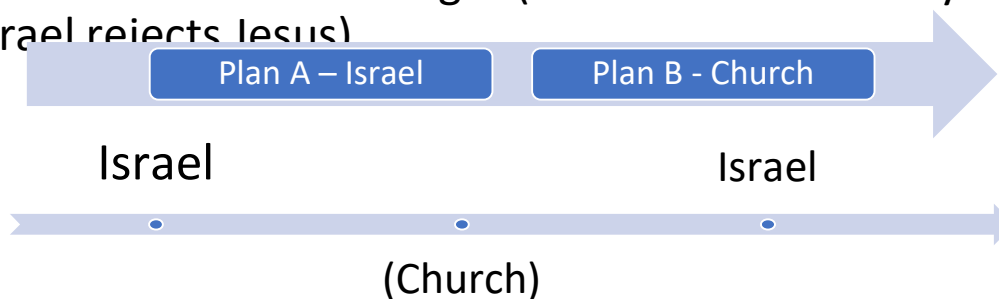
6. The New Covenant

- Fulfillment of all the previous covenants.
- All of the types and shadows in the previous covenants are embodied in Christ (Epistle of Hebrews).
- The New Covenant surpasses the old in its perfect and final sacrifice and therefore gives the final sign and seal of the Holy Spirit.
- Gives personal knowledge of God, whereas all the other covenants could only give a taste.
- The Immanuel Principle is fulfilled and awaiting completion.
- Major Passages: Jer. 31 / Ezek. 37 / Book of Hebrews
- Covenant Sign: Filling of Holy Spirit

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IV. Dispensationalism: Covenant Theology's Opponent

- Places the history of Redemption in Seven dispensations or epochs
- Presents redemption as only applying to Israel with the Church as an after thought (Church comes in only after Israel rejects Jesus)

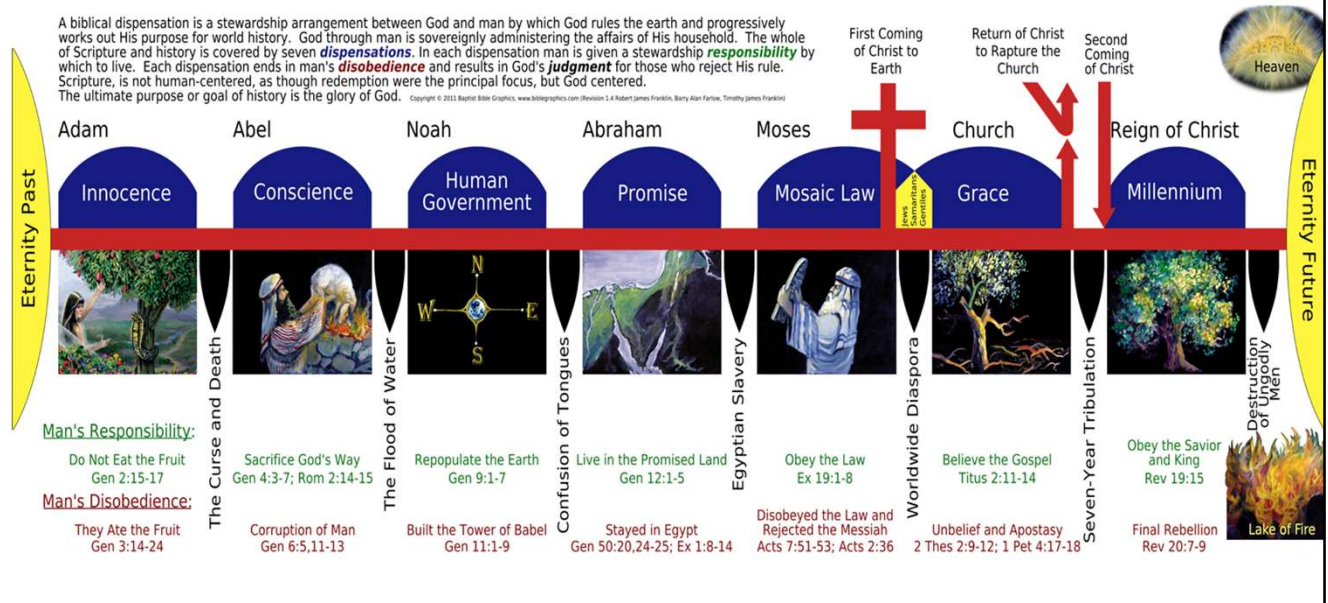


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Dispensationalism overview

A biblical dispensation is a stewardship arrangement between God and man by which God rules the earth and progressively works out His purpose for world history. God through man is sovereignly administering the affairs of His household. The whole of Scripture and history is covered by seven **dispensations**. In each dispensation man is given a stewardship **responsibility** by which to live. Each dispensation ends in man's **disobedience** and results in God's **judgment** for those who reject His rule. Scripture, is not human-centered, as though redemption were the principal focus, but God centered. The ultimate purpose or goal of history is the glory of God.

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V. The Importance of Covenant Theology

- It gives a coherent wholeness to the Scriptures.
- It avoids individualism with an emphasis on the Sovereignty of God and people of God.
- A Biblical view of covenant makes marriage more secure in a time of massive divorce.
- Covenant concepts are the foundation to civil and religious liberty.
- Key to understanding God's Immutability
- Key to understanding the Sacraments

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