

Covenants are Everywhere

I. What is a covenant?

- A covenant is “a formal agreement involving two or more parties” (Knoppers).
- Big consequences for breaking a covenant; big blessings for keeping it.
- Sometimes the parties are equals (e.g., a husband and wife). Other times the parties are different in status: e.g., a conquering king over a conquered king, or God over his people.
- Purpose of a covenant: to bring order to a relationship and to seal commitments to each of the parties. After the covenant, you are now *bound* to certain things.
- Modern analogues: contracts, treaties, wills.
- God is completely free. But in making a covenant with people, he willingly binds himself to a particular path.

II. Why should I care about covenants?

- Covenants are everywhere.
 - The most important relationships in your life are governed by covenants.
 - Your relationship with God.
 - Your relationship with your spouse (Prov 2:17; Mal 2:14).
 - All of nature is governed by covenants.
 - Instead of impersonal “laws of physics,” the Bible says that the motion of heavenly bodies is determined by a covenant God has made with his creation (Jer 31:35–36; 33:20, 25).
 - God has orderly relationships with everything he has made.
- The entire Bible is about God’s covenants.
 - “Old Testament” and “New Testament”: really, “Old Covenant” and “New Covenant”
 - Kline: “The documents which combine to form the Bible are in their very nature ... covenantal. In short, the Bible *is* the old and the new covenants.” The genre of the Bible is “authoritative treaty words.”
 - You cannot understand the Bible (and why the OT is sometimes so different from the New) without understanding God’s covenants.
- Covenants are the DNA of history. They are the deep rationale for why the world is the way it is. The world runs on covenants.
 - God spoke the universe into being with *covenant* words; he upholds the universe by these *covenant* words (Gen 1; Heb 1:3).
 - If you have a wrong view of God’s covenants, you will relate to him wrongly.
 - Great joy and clarity comes from understanding his covenants.

III. Goals for this class

1. To have a basic understanding of each of the big covenants in the Bible.
2. To see how the whole story of the Bible and the history of the world are the results of God’s covenants.
3. To better understand how God has promised to relate to you, and how you are obligated to relate to God.
4. To see the connections between God’s covenants and what we believe about things like God’s law, infant baptism, etc.
5. To learn how to use our knowledge of covenants in our spiritual struggles.