

Covenants Survey, Part 1

Intro

- Two goals for today:
 - present the concept of covenant
 - briefly examine the scope & terms of a few covenants

Similarities Between Contract and Covenant

both are legal agreements which define relationships

both have terms or lists of expectations

both have blessings or benefits for adhering to the terms

both have curses or penalties for violating the terms

both require all parties involved to affirm the agreement

both may require legal witnesses

Differences Between Contract and Covenant

Contract

defines a potentially adversarial or hostile relationship

each party focuses on self-interests, maximizes own benefits within contract terms

specifies protection of each party from the other to prevent abuse or harm

defines a conditional relationship based on performance

can be changed or even canceled

exchanging property or service is primary importance; e.g., payment in exchange for product or service

sealed by a promise (each gives his word or signature; only as good as the party's character)

Covenant

defines a loving relationship

each party is fully committed to the other's success & well-being within the covenant terms

protection of each party from the other is unnecessary

defines an unconditional, enduring relationship

is a binding, unbreakable obligation between two parties; breakable only by death

exchanging abilities & resources is part of covenant, but secondary importance

sealed by an oath (usually by the name of God; therefore as good as God's character)

- The Bible is a covenant book
- God initiates every covenant he makes with man
- Our relationship with God is a covenant

Scope & Terms

- General
 - “scope & terms”: legal terminology
 - define the covenant’s purpose
 - identify what’s included in covenant
 - identify each party’s role & responsibilities
- God’s covenant with Israel
 - Ex 19:3-6 (after the Exodus from Egypt), “Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, ‘This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.’”
- Scope & terms of God’s covenant with Israel
 - Ex 24: 3-4, 7, “When Moses went and told the people all the Lord’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, ‘Everything the Lord has said we will do.’ Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said. . . . Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, ‘We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.’”
 - Ex 34:27-28, “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’ Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant — the Ten Commandments.”
 - Israel’s responsibilities are documented in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers:
 - civil law: Ex 19-23; Lev 19-20
 - ceremonial & religious law: Ex 25-31, 33, 35-40; Lev 21-25
 - dietary law: Lev 11, 17
 - health law: Lev 12-15
 - moral law: Lev 18
 - God’s responsibilities
 - Ex 23:22-23, “If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. My angel will go ahead of you and bring

you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out.”

■ What are God’s responsibilities?

- Ex 23:25-27, “Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span. I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run.”

■ What are God’s responsibilities?

- Israelites refused to enter Promised Land
 - in the desert 40 years
 - second covenant with their children
 - first covenant described in Exodus & Leviticus
 - second covenant described in Deuteronomy
- Major difference from first covenant: second one gives laws for the land
 - emphasizes Israel’s right to the land
- God’s covenant with Christians
 - Lk 22:20 (the “Last Supper”), “In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’”
 - New Testament literally is the New Covenant
 - Our entire relationship with God is based on this covenant
 - Main purpose of new covenant: restore man to relationship with God, which he did through Jesus the man
- Scope & terms of God’s covenant with Christians
 - Heb 9:15. “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”
 - Jesus Christ mediated a new covenant, so we can receive the promised inheritance
 - So what control does sin now have over us?
 - Three basic responsibilities
 - Ac 26:20-21 “First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.”

- “Repenting” literally means changing the way you think
- Requires you to reprogram your mind, make it conform to what Bible says
- If there is no significant change in my life, no change in lifestyle, then I really didn’t repent, even if I think I did.
- Changed behavior is result of repentance, not repentance itself
- Heb 11:6. “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”
 - What else does our covenant require us to do?
- Jn 15:14-17, “You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.”
 - What is the significance of the word, “friend”?
 - What condition is there for being a covenant friend?
- Our top covenant responsibilities are what?
- Marriage is a covenant relationship
 - Mal 2:14, “It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.”
 - God created marriage & defined it as a covenant
- scope & terms of marriage covenant
 - Mt 19:6 (Pharisees tested Jesus by asking if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any & every reason; Jesus replied in part), “So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”
 - An emphatic statement, not a suggestion
 - 1 Co 7:33-34, “But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world — how he can please his wife. . . . A married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world — how she can please her husband.”
 - What responsibilities does this describe?