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Week 6: The Eight Covenants of the Bible

Since much of **ADONAI's** relationship to mankind is based upon **covenantal** relationships is a very important aspect of correctly understanding Scripture. The most common way to divide the Bible is by **dispensations**. **The dispensations**, however, are based upon specific **covenants**, and knowledge of these **covenants** will help Bible readers to **rightly divide the word of Truth (Second Timothy 2:15)**. Although **the dispensations** may come to an end, **the covenants themselves** often continue.

A. Types of Covenants: There are two types of **covenants** in the Bible: **conditional** and **unconditional**. It is important to distinguish between these two types of **covenants** in order to have a clear picture of what the Bible teaches.

1. Conditional Covenants:A conditional **covenant** is a bilateral **covenant** in which a proposal of **God** to mankind is characterized by this formula: **God** says, "If you will do such-and-such, then I will do such-and-such." In other words, **ADONAI** promises to grant special blessings to **His** people . . . providing mankind fulfills **certain conditions contained in the covenant. Sometimes this is called** a Suzerain-Vassal **Covenant** (see my commentary on **Deuteronomy, to see link click Ah – Treaty of the Great King**). One's response to **the covenant** agreement brings either blessings or cursing. The blessings are secured by obedience and man must meet the conditions before **God** will meet **His**. Two of the eight **covenants** are conditional: **The Edenic and Mosaic Covenants**.

2. Unconditional Covenants: An unconditional covenant is a unilateral **covenant** and is a sovereign act of **God** whereby **He unconditionally** obligates **Himself** to bring to pass definite blessings and conditions for the covenanted people. This **covenant** is characterized by the formula: **"I will . . ."** which declares **ADONAI's** determination to do as **He** promises. Blessings are secured by the grace of **God**. There may be conditions in **the covenant** by which **God** requests the covenanted one to fulfill out of gratitude, but they are not themselves the basis of **God's** fulfilling **His** promises. Six of the

eight **covenants** are **unconditional**: **The Adamic Covenant, the Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Land Covenant, the Davidic Covenant** and **the New Covenant**.

B. Covenants with Isra'el: Five of these **covenants** were made exclusively with **Isra'el** while the others were made with mankind in general. Only one of **the** five **covenants** made with **Isra'el** is conditional: **the Mosaic Covenant**. The other four **covenants** with **Isra'el** are all **unconditional**: **the Abrahamic Covenant, the Land Covenant, the Davidic Covenant,** and **the New Covenant.**

Four things should be noted concerning the nature of **the unconditional covenants** made with **Isra'el**. First, they are literal **covenants** and **their** contents must be interpreted literally as well. Second, **the covenants** that **God** has made with **Isra'el** are eternal and are not in any way restricted or altered by time. Third, it is necessary to re-emphasize that these are **unconditional covenants** that are not abrogated because of **Isra'el's** disobedience; because **the covenants** are **unconditional** and totally dependent upon **God** for fulfillment, **their** ultimate fulfillment can be expected. Fourth, these **covenants** were made with **my kinsmen according the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as God' children, the Sh'khinah of the covenants has been with them (Romans 9:3-4).** These verses clearly point out that these **covenants** were made with the covenanted people and are **Isra'el's** possession.

This is brought out again in **Ephesians 2:11-12**, where we read: **Thus, remember your former state: you Gentiles by birth – called the Uncircumcised by those who, merely because of an operation on their flesh, are called the Circumcised – at that time had no Messiah. You were estranged from the national life of Isra'el. You were foreigners to the covenants embodying God's promise. You were in this world without hope and without God.** Five of the eight Bible **covenants** belong to **the people of Isra'el** and, as the passage notes, **the Gentiles** were considered **foreigners to the covenants.**



C. The timing principle of the covenants: **A covenant** can be signed, sealed, and made a special point of history, but this does not mean that all the provisions immediately go into effect. In fact, three different things happen once **a covenant** is sealed: first, some into effect right away; second, some provisions go into effect in the near future, which may be twenty-five years away or five hundred years away; and third, some provisions go into effect only in the distant prophetic future, not have been fulfilled to this day.

1. The Edenic Covenant (Genesis 1:28-30; 2:15-17; Hosea 6:7): **The Edenic Covenant** was made between **God** and **Adam** in **the garden of Eden**, in which **Adam** stood as the representative head of the human race. Thus, the actions of **Adam** are attributed to the whole of humanity. When man fell **(Genesis 3:1-8)**, **the Edenic Covenant**, being **conditional**, came to an end, and was the basis for **the Dispensation of Innocence** (see my commentary on **Genesis Ap – The Dispensations of God**).

2. The Adamic Covenant (Genesis 3:14-19): **God** and **Adam** are involved in this **covenant** in which **Adam** again represented the whole human race. Thus, the judgment on **Adam** is a judgment on all humanity. **God** individually addressed **the serpent**, **Satan**, **Eve**, and **Adam**. **The Adamic Covenant** was the basis for **the Dispensation of Conscience** (see **Genesis Bb – The Dispensation of Conscience**). As an **unconditional covenant**, is it still in effect.

3. The Noahic Covenant (Genesis 9:1-17): This **covenant** was made between **God** and **Noah**. Like **Adam**, **Noah** stood as the representative for the entire human race. As a result of the Flood, not only is all humanity descended from **Adam**, but also from **Noah**. The judgments of the Great Tribulation against **the Gentiles** will come because of violations of **the Noahic Covenant**. According to **Isaiah 24:5-6**, the judgment comes because humanity has violated **the everlasting covenant,** a name given to **the Noahic Covenant** in **Genesis 9:16**. **The Noahic**

Covenant became the basis for **the Dispensation of Civil Government** (see **Genesis Ct – The Dispensation of Civil Government**). Although that dispensation has been superseded, the **unconditional** nature of **the Noahic Covenant** is in effect today.

4. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3, 12:7, 3:14-17, 15:1-21, and 17:1-21): **God** and **Abraham** are involved in this **covenant**, in which **Abraham** stood as the representative head of the whole Jewish nation, not for all humanity. **Abraham** was to be **the father** of a great nation, **Isra'el**. **He** was to possess all of **the Promised Land**. The nation of **Isra'el** was to become great, ultimately innumerable. It was to possess all of the Promised Land. It was to receive victory over its enemies. The fact that the promises were made to both **Abraham** and **his** seed shows that these blessings have not yet reached their fulfillment but await the Messianic Kingdom. **The Gentiles** would be blessed for blessing **Isra'el** and cursed for cursing **Isra'el.** Also, they were to receive spiritual blessings, but ultimately these were to come through one specific **Seed of Abraham**, **the Messiah**. While the physical blessings were limited only to **the Jews**, the spiritual blessings were extended to **the Gentiles**, but only through **the Messiah**. Reducing **the Abrahamic Covenant** to its very basics, it can be seen that it contained three aspects: **the Land** aspect, **the Seed** aspect, and **the Blessing** aspect. **The Land** aspect is developed in **the Land Covenant**; **the Seed** aspect is developed in **the Davidic Covenant**; and the Blessing aspect is presented in **the New Covenant**. **The Abrahamic Covenant** became the basis for **the Dispensation of Promise** (see **Genesis Ds – The Dispensation of Promise**). Because it is **unconditional**, it is still in effect even though it has remained largely unfulfilled. The ultimate fulfillment will come in the Messianic Kingdom.

5. The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 20:1 to Deuteronomy 28:68): The parties involved in this **covenant** were **God** and **Isra'el**. **The covenant** was made with **Isra'el** and not merely with **Moses** acting as a representative of **Isra'el (Exodus 19:3-8)**. **The covenant** was not made with **the Gentiles** or the Church, but with **Isra'el** only, a point also made in **Deuteronomy 4:7-8; Psalm 147:19-20,** and **Malachi 4:4**. A key provision of **the Mosaic Covenant** are the 613 commandments. This **covenant** was never given as a means for salvation **(Romans 3:20** and **28; Galatians 2:16, 3:11** and **21)**. It was **conditional**, and resulted in blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. For the purposes of **the Mosaic Covenant** see my commentary

on **Deuteronomy Ay – Moshe and the Torah**. The clear-cut teaching of the B'rit Chadashah is that **the Mosaic Covenant** is no longer in effect as a result of the death of **the Messiah (Romans 7:5-6** and **10:4; Gal 3:19** to **4:7; Heb 7:11-18; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ephesians 2:14-15; Second Cor 3:3-11). The Mosaic Covenant** was the basis for **the Dispensation of the Torah** (see my commentary on **Exodus Da – The Dispensation of the Torah**). Therefore, it has completely ceased to function as an authority over us and is no longer the rule of life for the believer. But today, it is our blueprint for living. The more we study and follow Torah, the more our lives will benefit.

6. The Land Covenant (Deuteronomy 29:1 to 30:20): This **covenant** was made between **God** and **Isra'el**, the same two parties as in **the Mosaic Covenant**. The importance of **the Land Covenant** is that it reaffirms the title deed to **the Land** as belonging to **Isra'el**. Although **she** would prove unfaithful and disobedient, this **covenant** says that **the Land** will never be taken from **her**. **The Abrahamic Covenant** teaches that ownership of **the Land** is **unconditional**. **The Land Covenant** received its confirmation centuries later in **Ezeki'el 16:1-63**. **The Land** aspect is developed in **the Land Covenant,** and being **unconditional**, is still very much in effect. **Isra'el** will repent at the end of the Great Tribulation **(Hosea 6:1-3)**, **the Messiah** will return, **Isra'el** will be regathered and for the first time possess all of the Promised Land. Therefore, **the Land Covenant** was the basis for **the Dispensation of the Messianic Kingdom** (see my commentary on **Revelation Fh – The Dispensation of the Messianic Kingdom**).

7. The Davidic Covenant (Second Samuel 7:11b-16 and First Chronicles 17:10b-14): This **covenant** was made between **God** and **David**, who stands as the head of **the Davidic House** and **Dynasty**, the only rightful claimant to **the Davidic Throne** in Jerusalem. For the provisions of **the Davidic Covenant** (see my commentary on **the Life of David Ct – The LORD's Covenant with David**). The unique importance of **the Davidic Covenant** is that it amplifies **the Seed** aspect of **the Abrahamic Covenant**. According to **the Abrahamic Covenant**, **the Messiah** was to be **the Seed of Abraham**. This merely stated that **He** was to be **a Jew** and could come from any of **the Twelve Tribes**. Later, in **Jacob's** day, **the Seed** aspect was limited to a member of **the Tribe of Judah** only **(Genesis 49:10)**. Now **the Messianic Seed** aspect is further narrowed to one family within **the Tribe of Judah**, the family of **David**. **The Davidic Covenant** is an **unconditional** – eternal **covenant**. Thus, **the Davidic Covenant** is the basis for **the Eternal State** (see my commentary on **Revelation Fq – The Eternal**

State).

8. The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34): This **unconditional covenant** is made between **God** and **Isra'el**, and receives further confirmation in **Isaiah 55:3, 59:21, 61:8-9; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezeki'el 15:60, 34:25-31, 37:26-28;** and **Romans 11:26-27.** It is an **unconditional covenant** made with **Isra'el** and not **the Gentiles** or the Church. For the provisions of **the New Covenant** see my commentary on **Jeremiah Eo – The Days are Coming, declares the LORD, When I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el**. The blood of **Messiah** is the basis of **The New Covenant** that reveals the blessing aspect of **the Abrahamic Covenant**. And since **the Gentiles are grafted in (Romans 11:16-18)**, **they** are able to participate in the blessings of **the New Covenant**, but are not a "partner," so to speak, with **Isra'el** in those blessings. As a result, **the New Covenant** is the basis for **the Dispensation of Grace** (see the commentary on **Hebrews Bp – The Dispensation of Grace**).

In conclusion, all spiritual blessings for believers are in **Messiah**, whether they are **Jews** or **Gentiles**. And through **His** death on the cross for our sins, believers reap spiritual benefits that would never be theirs otherwise. **The** eight **covenants** of the Bible are very explicit in **their** provisions and are valuable for a proper understanding of Scripture.