

# The Old Covenant

GOD'S FIVEFOLD PROMISE  
of  
RECOVERY

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# The Old Covenant

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# Introduction

**I**F CONVERSATIONS are necessary among the Trinity, one no doubt occurred before God's breath became man's spirit (Gen. 2:7). An exchange may have even taken place without a word being spoken. Perhaps the Father simply gazed into his Son's eyes, an unstated thought passing between them. And in that moment before moments existed the Son understood his destiny.

"Yes Father," he said, "I will go."

The Son would do what the first man would not. The Son would embrace the cross. For even though government breaks down in created moral beings, it always works perfectly in the Godhead.

Jesus Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8). He knew what would be required of him before the world was made.

Adam's sin neither surprised God nor thwarted his plan. God had been prepared for this very occasion. He did not give up on rebellious man. He did not leave man alone to die in sin. In his mercy and grace he had already made arrangements to demonstrate his plan for the restoration of the severed relationship. Immediately following his encounter with Adam in the garden, God began to methodically unveil his program of recovery for the fallen race of man.

The systematic unfolding of God's recovery plan is disclosed in historical sequence one piece at a time. His plan for restoration is called the covenant. The old covenant is like a shadow of the substance to come in the new covenant Christ. There are many scriptural illustrations of God's covenantal promises but our study will include only the five most widely acknowledged.

# The Adamic Covenant

**THE ADAMIC COVENANT.** Adam and Eve knew they had failed God. They sewed garments for themselves out of fig leaves to clothe their newly discovered nakedness. And Adam's guilt sent him running for cover when he heard God's voice in the garden. Both actions demonstrate Adam's and Eve's awareness of their sin, their alienation from God and from one another.

**Fig Leaf Religion.** Man's attempt to cover for sin is sometimes called fig leaf religion. All religion is an attempt by man under the misguidance of his own rebellious regime, to explain, hide or cover his nakedness in the face of God. But the scriptures are clear. All of our righteousness is as filthy rags (Is 64:6). All philosophies of life, aside from the true philosophy born in heaven, are misdirected efforts which can in no way restore or repair the breach opened by man's rebellion. Fig leaf religion has its origins in the tree of knowledge of good and evil with as many expressions as there are unredeemed souls in the earth.

God offered a twofold response to man's sin. Both responses—the curse and the covenant—are promises of God.

**The Curse.** Because of their rebellion, God spoke a curse of the first man and woman. To Eve he promised to greatly multiply her sorrow in conception and child bearing and pledged her that her desire would be toward her husband who would rule over her (Gen 3:16). To Adam he promised that the ground which he tilled would be cursed, that his life would be filled with thorns and thistles, that hard labor would be required to bring a harvest and that eventually, his body would die (Gen 3:17-19).

**The Covenant.** But God also made a different promise to Adam and Eve. He

made provision for Adam's and Eve's nakedness.

*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them*

(Gen 3:21)

There are at least two things we can learn from God's actions here in the garden.

**1. Only God can redeem.** Skin coats succeeded where fig leaves failed because coats of skins are entirely God's work. There is not one thing Adam could do to redeem or cover himself. Man's fig leaf covering is never adequate. God's animal skin covering always is. God originated the skin covering concept, rejecting outright the fleshly attempts of Adam and Eve to cover themselves. God's ways are always superior. Man's ways are always inferior. God's actions also demonstrate his initiative in the recovery process. In his first redemptive act, God accepts absolute responsibility for restoring and reconciling fallen man.

**2. The shedding of blood is essential to fulfill the covenant.** Skin coats succeeded where fig leaves failed because coats of skins come from animals which require the shedding of their blood. The scriptures teach that the life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:11) and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Matt 26:28; Heb 9:22). Adam's and Eve's choice to reject God's commandment and take the government upon their own shoulders brought with it the curse of death. At the advent of sin, death became an inevitable consequence of life. Here in the garden, God is picturing the future blood-shedding redeemer, Jesus Christ, the one who would come and offer his life as a ransom for many (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). Christ is the

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Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) and robes us in his righteousness (Rev 7:14).

***Cain's rejected sacrifice.*** Adam's and Eve's firstborn son, Cain, made an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground (Gen 4:3). Their second son, Abel, also made an offering to the Lord. Abel's offering was of the firstborn of his flock (Gen 4:4). Why did God accept Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's? Because Cain did not humble himself and bring God a blood offering for his sin. Cain needed a blood offering for the resentment in his heart toward his brother Abel whom he soon murdered (Gen 4:8). God is making

it very clear even this early on in time that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.

In his curse God promised pain, hardship and eventually physical death. In his covenant he promised a redeemer. The coats of skins foreshadow the coming of Christ, the second man (1 Cor 15:47), the one whose sacrificial offering will purchase back the fallen race of man through his blood and restore the broken relationship. Christ represents the absolute, unmerited favor of God and the promise of God that he will redeem.

# The Noahic Covenant

**THE NOAHIC COVENANT.** Several generations passed and Adam's descendants drifted further and further away from God who grieved over their wicked hearts and decided to destroy mankind (Gen 6:5-7). But Noah found grace in God's sight (Gen 6:8). God instructed Noah to build an ark and gather male and female of all of the animals of the earth. Noah brought the animals and his family into the ark. Then God sent forty days of rain and flooded the earth, obliterating the human race.

The ark is a symbol of God's covenantal provision of salvation, God making a way of escape from the curse of death. There are four arks in the scripture.

- Noah's ark delivered Noah and his family from God's curse of death (Gen 6:13-8:19).
- Moses's ark of bulrushes delivered Moses from Pharaoh's curse of death (Exodus 2:3-5).
- The Ark of the Covenant bore the presence of God (Exodus 25:10-22).
- The Heavenly Ark in the eternal temple of God (Heb 8:5, 9:24; Rev 11:19).

Note the similarity between Noah's ark and Moses's ark. Both are defined by the Hebrew word *tebah* which means vessel and these two places are the only places in the scripture where this Hebrew word is used. Both arks are covered with pitch. Both Noah and Moses are deliverers. The emergence of both men from their respective water surrounded arks could also be considered a symbol or type of Christian baptism following new birth.

Before God's covenant is pronounced, Noah built a sacrificial altar to the Lord.

*And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

(Gen 8:20)

Noah's offering consisted of every clean animal and bird—blood offerings. God was pleased with the aroma of Noah's blood offerings and determined to make a covenantal promise to Noah and his descendants (Gen 8:21).

In his covenant, God promised the following:

- He would never again curse the ground for man's sake.
- He would never again destroy every living thing.
- As long as the earth remains God promises that:
  - the earth will continue to bring forth fruit
  - the seasons will continue
  - day and night will not cease
- He would never again destroy all flesh by a flood.
- He would never again destroy the earth by a flood.

But God's covenant came with several commandments to Noah and his descendants:

- Be fruitful.
- Multiply and fill the earth.
- Do not eat flesh with life still in it.

God also instituted civil government by empowering men with judicial authority to administer judgment against murderers. Homicidal blood or bloodshed against the image of God (man) is here distinguished

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from animal blood which God accepts as sacrifice for sin (Gen 9:5-6).

As a sign of his covenant with Noah, his descendants and the earth, God placed a rainbow in the heavens. He promised to look upon the rainbow and remember his promise to never destroy the earth again (Gen 9:12-17).

## ***The Tower of Babel--More Fig Leaf Religion and Another Rebel Government.***

Shortly after Noah, we read about the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). At this time, all of the earth spoke one language. On a plain near the land of Shinar, the children of men determined to construct a city with a tower whose top would reach into the heavens. The children of men had gathered

themselves together in one place, in direct disobedience to God's command to fill the earth (Gen 1:26; 9:11). God, concerned that the children of men were seeking to make a name for themselves and create a community separate and apart from his design, visited Babel, destroyed their tower, confused their language and scattered them across the earth. From this point in history ethnicity and diverse cultures begin to spring up across the earth.

The tower of Babel is another example of man's desire to reach God in his own strength--*Fig Leaf Religion*. Babel's idea of "nothing shall be impossible to us" is the collective version of Lucifer's and Adam's idea of "ye shall be as gods." Thus it becomes the corporate expression of man's rebel government.

# The Abrahamic Covenant

**T**HE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT. Although God reveals himself and his promises in multiple ways throughout the old testament, his covenant with Abraham is unquestionably the pinnacle of his old testament covenant expression to man. God's covenant with Abraham might be considered the pivot or turning point of the Old Testament. Abraham is referred to as the father of our faith. His faith is legendary. Because of Abraham's faith, God considered him righteous.

*And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

(Gen 15:6)

(see also Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6)

Over four hundred years later, when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, he revealed himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

*Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.*

(Exodus 3:6)

The scriptures refer often to these three men of faith (Deut 1:8; 9:5, 27; Jer 33:26; Matt 8:11; Luke 13:28; Heb 11:8-9). God refers to this triple patriarchy when speaking of his covenant.

*And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.*

(2 Kings 13:23)

**Abraham.** God chose Abraham and called him to become the father of many nations. God's promise is of course fulfilled through the Hebrew nation (descendants of Isaac and Jacob) but also through the Ishmaelites (Hagar's son Ishmael--Gen 17:20), the Edomites (Isaac's firstborn Esau--Gen 25:23; 36:1-43) and his descendants through his second wife, Keturah (Gen 25:1-4). But most significantly are the numerous nations of every tribe and language born of faith in Christ, Abraham's seed (Rom 4:16-17; 15:8-12; Gal 3:29; Rev 7:9).

Unlike Noah who was a righteous man, there is no indication that Abraham possessed righteousness. God called Abraham to come out from his home, his family and his geographical area and sent him on a journey to the land of Canaan which he promised to give to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:1-3).

Here are God's initial promises to Abraham:

- He would give Abraham a new land.
- He would make Abraham a great nation.
- He would bless Abraham.
- He would make Abraham's name great.
- He would make Abraham a blessing.
- He would bless those who bless Abraham.
- He would curse those who curse Abraham.
- He would bless all the families of the earth through Abraham.

God called an unrighteous man to seed his purpose. Nothing in Abraham merited God's favor. God's choice of unrighteous Abraham tells all the world that salvation is God's work, that there is nothing man can do to generate his own salvation.



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When Abraham arrived in Canaan, he built an altar to the Lord.

*And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.*

(Gen 12:7)

After sojourning in Egypt, Abraham returned to Canaan and God again spoke to him, renewing his covenant promise.

*And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*

(Gen 15:5)

Abraham questioned God. God's masterful response to Abraham's query bears profound significance not only for Abraham but for all of mankind. God instructed Abraham to take a three year old heifer, a three year old she goat, a three year old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Abraham took these animals, divided them down the middle and laid the pieces opposite of each other. He did not divide the birds. Then, as the sun went down, Abraham fell into a deep sleep where he experienced a great horror and darkness. God spoke to Abraham and prophesied of things to come, telling of the future bondage of his descendants and also of their deliverance.

Next came the revelation of God's very heart in his dealings with mankind, the very essence of God's redemptive work in history. For as Abraham slept, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the animal pieces.

In ancient times the actual passing of two parties between animal parts was the way men made covenants. The slain animals represented what would happen to either party should they fail to keep the covenant. But in this case Abraham, the second party to the covenant, was sound asleep. The smoking furnace and the burning lamp were emblems of God's holy presence. He is here explaining to both Abraham and the world that he alone will bear responsibility for keeping this covenant.

The story of God's covenant with Abraham is filled with such power and meaning that it warrants more than a moment of reflection. Many books have been written on the Abrahamic covenant. Every Christian should make it a point to study and ponder the profound meaning of this redemptively charged event.

**Isaac.** God's covenant with Abraham is reiterated to Abraham's son Isaac.

*And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;*

(Gen 26:4)

**Jacob.** God's covenant with Abraham is again restated several times to Isaac's son Jacob. Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel, became the father of the twelve tribes of the Hebrew nation.

*And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.*

(Gen 28:4)

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*And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I [am] the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

(Gen 28:13)

(see also Gen 35:10-15)

***The Threefold Patriarchy.*** As noted above, God introduced and connected himself to Moses and the nation of Israel through these

three men. God is not content to allow the redemption of the human race revolve around one man (Abraham) but elects to include his son and grandson. In God's marvelous typologic illustration, Abraham symbolically represents the Father, Isaac represents the Son and Jacob represents the Holy Spirit. God seems concerned that all three members of the Trinity are retained in the knowledge of Israel. Jesus, when issuing the Great Commission, also indicates the imperative of satiating the world with knowledge of the trinitarian God (Matt 28:19). The redemptive and governmental work of God is trinitarian in nature.

# The Mosaic Covenant

**THE MOSAIC COVENANT.** The Mosaic covenant or the covenant of Moses, the fourth covenant in our study, takes us on a slightly different turn. God's covenant with Adam is redemptive in nature. His covenant with Noah is redemptive in that he spares Noah and his family from judgment and promises to spare the earth and its inhabitants of specific future judgments. His covenant with Abraham is also redemptive.

But God's covenant with the nation of Israel as mediated by Moses is a governmental covenant.

In the beginning, God spoke order into the created universe. He spoke ten words (Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26,28,29). Now with ten new words (the Ten Commandments) God speaks order into the society of men. The first four commandments specify how man is to relate to God. The last six commandments specify how men are to relate to one another.

The Ten Commandments are often referred to as the Decalogue, a Greek term meaning "ten words." These ten words stand as a testimony of God's highest and best for man, his design for man both in man's relationship to God in the created order and in mankind's relationship to himself in the societies of men.

Most products on the market today include an owner's manual providing instructions on how assemble and operate the product. Most products also include a warranty, a guarantee that if the instructions are complied with and the product is operated as the manual instructs, the product will be replaced if it fails for some reason. If, however, the product fails because the instructions were not followed, the manufacturer's warranty becomes void.

The ten commandments are like an owners manual and manufacturer's warranty. They are a guide from God instructing us on how we are designed to live. Mankind was created to operate or function best when working according to the instructions. But Adam, Eve and all of us who have come from them, have not followed God's instructions. We have failed to perform according to the manual. We all have sinned (Rom 3:23). And in our sin, we have voided the warranty. The scriptures teach that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). In fact, each of the ten commandments have the penalty of death attached to them.

*1st commandment* - Death for worshipping other gods - Lev. 18:21-29; 20:1-6; Deut 17:2-7

*2nd commandment* - Death for making idols - Deut 17:2-7; 18:20-22; 30:15-19

*3rd commandment* - Death for blasphemy - Lev. 24:10-16,23; Num 15:30-31

*4th commandment* - Death for not honoring the sabbath - Ex. 31:14-15; Num 15:30-36

*5th commandment* - Death for dishonoring parents - Ex 21:15,17; Deut 21:18-23; 27:16

*6th commandment* - Death for murder - Ex 21:12,14,15,23; Lev. 24:17

*7th commandment* - Death for adultery - Lev. 18:20; 20:10-22; Deut 22:20-30; 27:20-23

*8th commandment* - Death for stealing - Ex 21:16

*9th commandment* - Death for being a false witness - Rev. 21:8

*10th commandment* - Death for covetousness - Joshua 7:21-26 (a covetous heart leads to death)

The Mosaic covenant is distinguished from the first three covenants explored in this chapter. In the Mosaic covenant God in his

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covenantal partnership with man lays out sanctions for obedience and disobedience. Man is obligated to participate. The blessings and curses discussed in chapter three and found in Deuteronomy 28 best demonstrate this concept. Man has a covenantal responsibility to keep the commandments. When he does he is blessed. When he does not, he is cursed.

Between the giving of the law to Moses and the advent of Christ, the mediator of the New Covenant, God enforced his covenant through the covenantal lawsuit. The prophets, God's attorneys, prosecuted Israel for their failure to keep the covenant.

*Hear the word of the LORD . . . give ear unto the law of our God . . .*  
(Isaiah 1:10)

*Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*  
(Isaiah 5:24)

*. . . ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt . . . that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth . . . Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah.*  
(Jer 44:8-1)

God's prosecuting attorneys, the prophets, brought lawsuits against the nation of Israel, holding up the covenant of Moses as the

standard of judgment. Like in our modern courts, the prosecuting attorneys or prophets worked on the side of the law, indicting the nation of Israel for crimes against the law of God, calling forth God's judgment and wrath.

At times, however, even the prosecuting attorneys appealed to God for mercy.

*Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street.*  
(Lam 2:19)

*I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon.*  
(Lam 3:55)

In the midst of his wrath, God also promised mercy. For even though men and nations have violated his law, God is the keeper of the covenant.

*And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.*  
(Isa 30:18)

*Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name;*  
(Eze 39:25)

*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*  
(Lam 3:22)

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***The Nations.*** God did not see the law as applying only to Israel. Covenantal lawyers prosecuted all the nations of the earth.

*The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have*

*transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.*

(Isa 24:5)

(see also Isa 13:10-23; 24:1-27; 28:1-33:24)

# The Davidic Covenant

**THE DAVIDIC COVENANT.** The Davidic covenant is God's covenant to bring about his kingdom in the earth. David, the most beloved king in the history of Israel brought Israel a time of joy and peace not experienced before or since. Though certainly not without its blemishes, the reign of David represents the high water mark of Hebrew history prior to the advent of Christ.

After many years under the government of the judges, the Israelites rejected God as their King and asked the prophet Samuel to give them a king like the other nations (I Sam 8:1-7). God's government had been rejected again.

In Hebrew, the word Saul means *asked for*. Saul was the *asked for* king and his reign represents the government of man. Saul, chosen and elected by man to govern in place of God, governed ineffectively. His governmental regime was characterized by disobedience, witchcraft, rash judgment and overall failure.

But even as God was rejecting Saul, he was choosing David. David the gentle shepherd boy who defeated the giant Goliath is a type or picture of Christ the good shepherd. As God rejected Saul, he spoke of David as being a man after his own heart.

*. . . the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people . . .*

(1 Sam 13:14)

Prior to Saul's kingship the Israelites foolishly took the ark of the covenant into battle and lost it to the Phillistines. But David's rule saw the restoration of the ark of the covenant and the return of God's glory

and presence to Israel. David united Israel and Judah. He defeated the Phillistines, the Moabites, the Syrians, the Hamathites and the Edomites (II Sam 8:1-14). His government was characterized by justice and judgment (II Sam 8:15).

God made a covenant with David to establish his kingdom forever and to build his house through David's seed.

*And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.*

(2 Sam 7:12-16)

In Isaiah, God's covenantal promise was further clarified and linked more clearly to the coming Christ.

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.*

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*The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

(Isa 9:6-7)

(See also Isaiah 11:1-16)

This new kingdom, patterned after King David's, establishes God's throne of

government in the earth again—built not upon the shoulders of men but upon the shoulders of Christ the King. This new government is ever increasing and has no end.

# Summary

**SUMMARY.** After man dethroned God from his life, God demonstrated in several ways his desire to re-establish a relationship with mankind. His promise is called the covenant and its expressions and characteristics are numerous.

The five basic covenantal expressions in the Old Testament:

- **The Adamic Covenant.** God promises to cover man's sins.
- **The Noahic Covenant.** God promises to preserve the earth and its inhabitants.
- **The Abrahamic Covenant.** God promises to raise up a family of the faithful.

- **The Mosaic Covenant.** God establishes the parameters for all human relationships.
- **The Davidic Covenant.** God promises to restore his governmental rule in the earth.

Developing a Christian World View requires us to have a basic understanding of the covenantal nature of God in his dealings with men. Men must realize that God alone can fulfill his covenant. Without God, man is completely helpless to achieve a restoration of the broken relationship and God's governmental rule over his life and creation.