

FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

INTRODUCTION TO GOD'S COVENANTS

Where we've been, where we're at , and where we're going:

Sept.-Dec. '24 we covered the Sermon on the Mount and discovered the heart and character of Jesus towards humanity. For the next several weeks, *The Faithfulness of God: God's Covenants* series will be a discovery of the heart of God, the Father. The One who is holy, sovereign, loving, trustworthy and provider of all good things. Afterwards, we will journey on into the Person & Work of the Holy Spirit, dissecting the Fruit of the Spirit as well as discovering your spiritual gifts. So now, let's begin our dig into His Covenants. Let's read 2 Peter 3:9 as our springboard into this series!

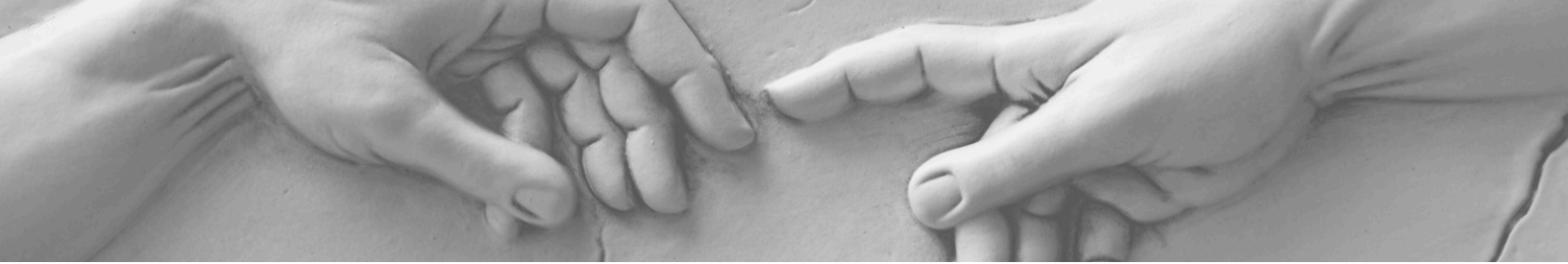
What Is a Covenant?

A covenant is a sacred agreement or promise between God and His people. It reveals God's commitment to humanity and often includes terms, blessings, symbols, and consequences. The Covenants of God are all initiated by God, and not man. Each covenant reveals the heart of *God the Father* in pursuing a loving and blessed relationship with His creation, while establishing protective boundaries for our own benefit.

***The elements of a Covenant:**

- Terms and Conditions: What is required of each party in the covenant?
- Blessings: What rewards are promised if the covenant is kept?
- Penalties / Consequences: What results are there if the covenant is broken?
- Symbols: What physical sign or symbol represents the covenant or time period of it?
- God's Attribute: Which of God's characteristics does this covenant reveal?
- Conditional or Unconditional
- Nature of the Covenant Relationship:
 - Conditional (aka. Suzerain - Vassal Relationship)
 - A covenant between a king and his subjects, initiated by the king. The king pledges protection of the servants and their realm, conditional on the servants absolute faithfulness and loyalty to him. Participants called each other "lord" and "servant" or "father" and "son".
 - Unconditional (aka. Royal Grant Relationship)
 - A king's grant to a loyal servant for faithful or exceptional service. The grant was normally perpetual and unconditional, but the servant's heirs benefited from it only as they continued their father's loyalty and service.
 - Parity Relationship
 - A covenant between equals, binding them to a mutual friendship or at least to mutual respect for each other's spheres or interests. Participants called each other "brothers".

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LET'S EXPLORE THE STRUCTURE OF COVENANTS!

Structure of a Covenant

- Terms and Conditions: What is required of each party in the covenant?
- Blessings: What rewards are promised if the covenant is kept?
- Penalties: What consequences are there if the covenant is broken?
- Symbols: What physical sign represents the covenant?
- God's Attribute: Which of God's characteristics does this covenant reveal?
- Conditional or Unconditional
- Nature of the Covenant Relationship:
 - Relationships: Suzerain - Vassal, Royal Grant, or Parity

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think is the difference between a promise and a covenant?
2. Why do you think God uses covenants to build relationships with His people?
3. What qualities of God might a covenant reveal? (e.g., love, justice, mercy)

Match the Parts of a Covenant

Below are examples of terms, blessings, penalties, and symbols. Match each to the correct category. Discuss your choices with your group.

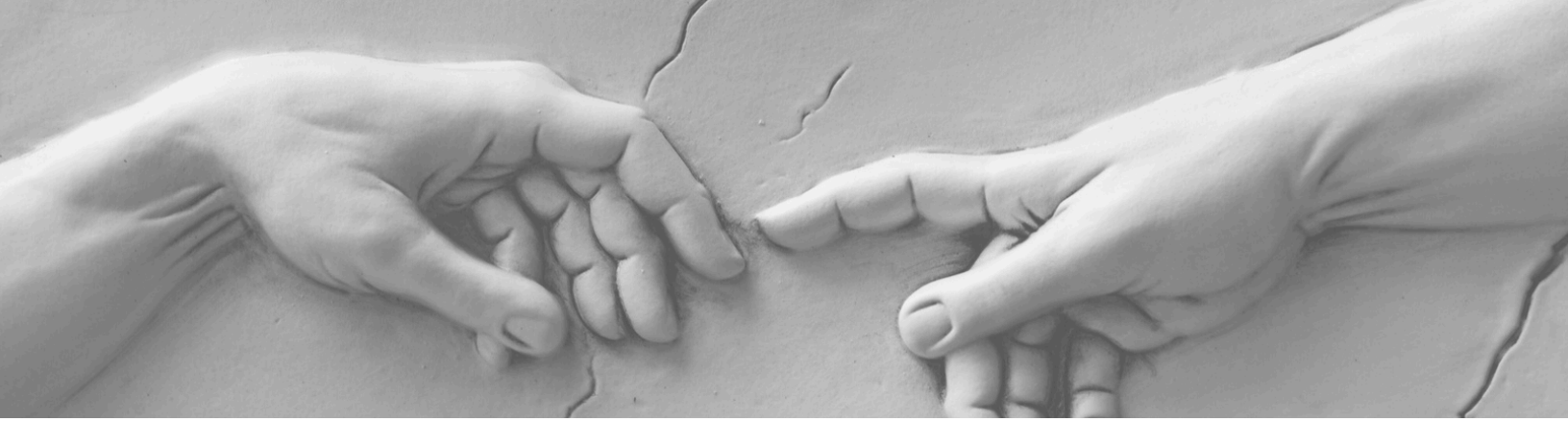
- A rainbow in the sky
- "If you obey My voice, I will bless you."
- The land flowing with milk and honey
- Destruction or exile if the covenant is broken

Terms and Conditions

Blessings

Penalties

Symbols



COVENANT ACTIVITY

Create Your Own Covenant Between Two Parties

Use the structure below to guide you:

1. Parties: Who is involved in the covenant?
2. Terms and Conditions: What are the rules or requirements?
3. Blessings: What is promised if the covenant is kept?
4. Penalties: What happens if the covenant is broken?
5. Symbols: What physical sign represents the covenant?
6. God's Attribute: Which characteristic of God is revealed (e.g., faithfulness, mercy)?
7. Nature of the Covenant Relationship: Suzerain - Vassal, Royal Grant, or Parity

Terms and Conditions

Blessings

Penalties

Symbols

Homework

Next week's study will be on the Edenic and Adamic Covenants in Genesis 1:26-30 and Genesis 2:15-17. For greater preparation for this new series on *The Faithfulness of God: God's Covenants*, you're welcome to read:

- Genesis 9:1-17
- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- 2 Peter 3:9
- Numbers 23:19