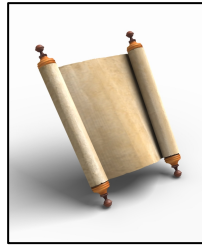


The Covenants: God Is Faithful to His Promises - Part 1



- Do you struggle with trusting God when you are facing difficulty?
- Have you learned to take special note of God's promises in His Word and claim the promises?
- If you were asked to make a list of the promises of God to you, what promises would you be able to list?

The Bible repeatedly reminds us that God is faithful to His promises (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 36:5; 57:10; 71:22; 86:15; 89:1-2, 5, 8, 14; 100:5). God is pleased when we have faith in Him (Heb. 11:6). Sometimes God allows us to experience hardship to test us and to develop our faith in His faithfulness. *Have you learned to claim God's promises and trust in His faithfulness?*

A study of the covenants of God helps us in several ways:

1. It helps us to better understand **GOD'S NATURE**—He is faithful (as well as being holy, loving, merciful, just, all-powerful, all-knowing, etc.). We need to know God's attributes.
2. It teaches us the important lesson about **TRUSTING God's faithfulness** especially when we are facing hard times. When we are tempted to doubt God's concern for us and think He has forgotten about us—we are strengthened when we remind ourselves of God's faithfulness and patiently wait for God's time to intervene in our problems.
3. It helps us see the "**BIG PICTURE**" of God's plan of redemption and the end times. The various covenants form a thread that runs through the story of the Bible. God made unconditional promises to humanity and Israel. To date, these promises have been partially fulfilled. They will be fully and literally fulfilled in the end times. We need to learn to trust God for our present life situations as well as trust Him with the future.

The Central Lesson
God can be trusted because He is faithful to His promises.

What Are Covenants?

Throughout the Bible, we read about God making "covenants" with different individuals. A covenant is a *contract between two or more individuals who agree to abide by specific terms*. Both the Hebrew and Greek words used in the Bible for "covenant" mean "an agreement" or "an arrangement." In the Bible, God binds Himself to His people through covenants to keep specific promises. There are two kinds of covenants: **conditional** and **unconditional**.

- The *conditional* covenant is a covenant where God fulfills His promise only if His people live up to their end of the agreement. The conditional covenants are the **Edenic** and **Mosaic** covenants.
- The *unconditional* covenant is a covenant where God fulfills His promise regardless of the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of His people. This type of covenant is characterized by God saying: "*I will...*" The unconditional covenants are the **Adamic**, **Noahic**, **Abrahamic**, **Palestinian**, **Davidic**, and **New** Covenants.

The Eight Major Covenants of God

1. **The Edenic Covenant: PERFECTION** (God's *conditional promise* to provide every need in a perfect environment in the Garden of Eden as long as mankind meets the condition of not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 1:18-30; 2:15-17).

Humanity started in innocence in a perfect environment in the Garden of Eden. God promised to provide for every need. There was only one simple prohibition, "*You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.*" (Genesis 2:16-17 NLT). Man's existence in Eden was perfection—no crime, sickness, death, etc. The man was to care for the Garden, govern over it, be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:15). However, Adam and Eve willfully chose to disobey God and eat from the tree. Humanity was introduced to sin, a separation was created between God and man, and humanity became susceptible to death (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:2-3). The man fell through disobedience and the Edenic covenant was broken. Since the time of the fall every human is born with a fallen sinful nature and eventually experiences death. [This disproves the popular idea that environment can cause people to behave morally right].

The Edenic covenant is one of two covenants that is conditional. God's fulfillment of His promise depended upon man's obedience to the one restriction. Man disobeyed and the covenant was dissolved.

2. **The Adamic Covenant: the CURSE & REDEMPTION** (God's *unconditional promise* to punish sin and redeem humanity from the sinful state. Genesis 3:14-19).

The Adamic covenant is unconditional. God initiated this covenant because of the sin of Adam and Eve. Sin has consequences. God's justice & righteousness demands that sin be punished. God pronounced a curse as punishment for the fall (which is introduced here and expanded in greater detail through other parts of the Bible), and God also promised a provision of salvation (which is also introduced here and expanded throughout the Bible).

The curse on Satan, the woman, and the man:

- **Satan**—the serpent would crawl on its belly [perhaps as a visual to Satan of his future condemnation] (3:14-15).
- **The woman**—pain in childbearing and her husband will "rule" over her (3:16).
- **The man**—instead of the ease he would have experienced in the garden, now man will painfully work hard for his livelihood and survival and eventually die (3:17-19).

One commentary explains: "No matter how hard people try to do away with male dominion, agonizing labor, painful childbearing, and death, these evils will continue because sin is present. They are fruits of sin." *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p.33.

Redemption promised through a future Savior (3:15).

The Hebrew text for Genesis 3:15 literally says the woman's "*seed*" (The NIV uses the word "offspring" but footnotes "seed" at the bottom of the page). The Old Testament always designates "seed" to a man, not a woman. This change of usage in referring to the woman's seed implies the virgin birth of the coming redeemer who will save humanity from the curse of sin.

Also notice in the last part of verse 15 the use of the singular masculine pronoun "*he*" and "*his*" in the phrase "*his heel.*" The "*he*" is a reference to the coming Messiah who would

save the world from their sins. The Messiah would “strike” (NLT) the head of Satan by defeating him at Calvary’s cross. On the other hand, Satan would strike the Messiah’s heel by the suffering and execution of the cross. However, since the verse says that Satan will only “strike” the Messiah’s “heel,” it is not permanent. The Messiah will recover from his wound. This is a foreshadowing of Christ’s resurrection.

Banished from the Garden

To prevent fallen humanity from eating from the tree of life and live eternally as sinful, God banished the man and woman from the Garden of Eden (3:22-24). Humanity is to have the opportunity to experience redemption, live limited life-spans on earth, and be able to live forever in a sinless and perfect heaven. In short, God provided a plan for all who accept His salvation to be restored to a perfect state in heaven that was originally planned for the Garden of Eden. God is restoring Eden in heaven.

God is **faithful to His promises**. He has provided forgiveness, salvation, and redemption through the death and shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. Everyone who **repents** of his or her sins, **receives** Christ as Savior and Lord, and **trusts** in Christ alone—will be redeemed. They will spend eternity in the perfect environment of heaven. *Have you received God’s forgiveness and salvation provided freely through Jesus Christ?*

3. The Noachic Covenant: the Preservation of HUMANITY (God’s unconditional promise to preserve the existence of humanity by never again destroying the earth with water & establishing basic rules for human government. Genesis 8:20-9:17).

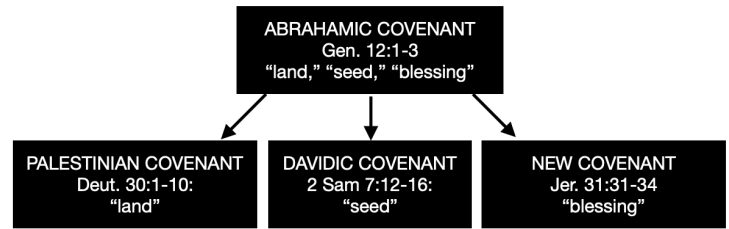
The Noachic covenant is unconditional. Because of the wickedness of society in Noah’s day, God decided to judge & destroy the earth and start all over again through Noah’s descendants (Gen. 6:5-9). God told Noah to build an Ark which saved him and his family and two of each animal from God’s judgment (The Ark is an illustration of Christ who provided salvation from God’s judgment on sin). After the floodwaters dried up, God made a covenant with Noah (Gen 8:20-9:17). The actual term “covenant” is used for the first time in Genesis 6:18; 9:8, 11-17.

The covenant preserved the existence of humanity in the following details:

- God would never again destroy the earth through a flood (9:8-17 especially v.11; 8:21-22). The rainbow was placed in the sky as a “sign” of this promise (9:12-17).
- Noah was given the same command that was given to Adam, “*Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth*” (Gen. 9:1, 7. Compare to Adam in 1:28).
- Mankind no longer needed to be vegetarians (cf. 1:29; 2:9, 16) but could eat cooked meat (9:2-4).
- Capital punishment was established—death is required for murder. “*If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands.* [government] (NLT, v.6). Human behavior is accountable to one another through a form of government (9:5-6). This would help assure the preservation of human life.

4. The Abrahamic Covenant: God’s Blessing on ISRAEL & the WORLD (God’s unconditional promise to Abraham to make him into a great nation that will bless the whole world—Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18-21).

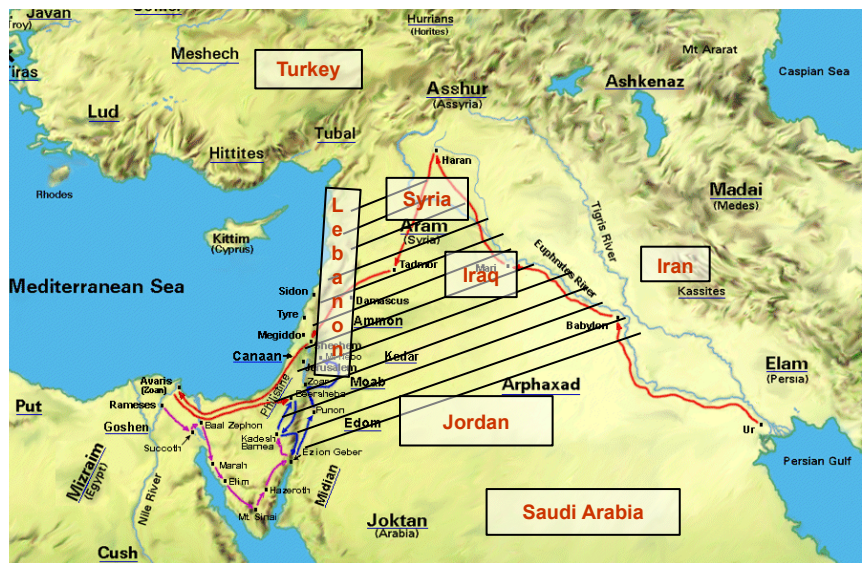
The Abrahamic covenant is unconditional. Author Tim LaHaye writes: “The Abrahamic Covenant is the mother of all redemptive covenants. Every blessing experienced by the redeemed, both within Israel and the church, flows from this covenant.”



The sign of Israel pledging to keep this covenant is circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14).

God promised Abraham three things:

- **Descendants**—Abraham’s descendants will be numerous and become a great nation—the nation of Israel (Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 18:18).
- **Land**—God promised Abraham that his descendants would possess the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River (Gen. 15:18), also called “Canaan” (Gen. 17:8). This promise has prophetic significance because the full territory promised to Abraham has never been possessed by Israel [Gen. 15:18-21], but will be fully fulfilled during the Millennium—Isaiah 60:21; Ezekiel 34:11-16.



- **Blessing**—Abraham would be blessed by God (Gen. 12:2), and all peoples on earth would be blessed through Abraham (Gen. 12:2-3; 22:18; 26:4). The ultimate blessing through Abraham was Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Savior of the world (Matt. 1:1).

Conclusion

God can be trusted because He is faithful to His promises.

God made unconditional promises to humanity and to Israel that have not yet been completely fulfilled. These promises will be fully and literally fulfilled in the end times. We need to learn to trust God for our present life situations as well as trust Him with the future. *Have you learned to claim God’s promises and trust in His faithfulness?*