



COVENANT: GOD PURSUES

Part 6 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | May 04, 2008

You are listening to Doctrine, a sermon series where Pastor Mark Driscoll covers the basic beliefs of Christianity. This series also serves as a prerequisite for membership at Mars Hill Church. For more audio and video content, visit MarsHillChurch.org.

Well, howdy, Mars Hill. If you are new, my name is Mark. I'm one of the pastors here at the church. We're in the middle of a 13-week called Doctrine, what Christians should believe, and in that we are studying the big ideas of the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Today we're dealing with the doctrine of covenant, that God pursues us for the purpose of relationship. I'll go ahead and pray, and we'll get to work. For those of you who are interested this series will serve as the prerequisite for our membership.

And just briefly want to tell you why we are teaching this series. We have grown a lot as a church numerically. We have spread across multiple campuses and services. We're able to see many people come to and be interested in Mars Hill, but we have a great concern for people not just attending church events but being worshipers and followers and disciples of Jesus. And our goal in this series, my goal, has been to lay out the big ideas of the Christian faith so that you would understand the Bible, Jesus, history, your life, our church. And in that you're gonna need to think with me. These are huge mega-themes and big concepts. I know it's not as interesting as if I talked about, oh, sex or dating. As soon as I talk about those things the attendance goes way up. As soon as I talk about God attendance goes way down, which should tell you something about the world in which we live. For those of you that are joining us in this series I want to say thank you. I hope it is a benefit to you.

And today I have really content that I've never taught. It's a brand new snapshot that we'll take today of the doctrine of covenant. What does that mean? Huge word that your Bible uses a lot. So I'll go ahead and pray and we'll get right to work.

Father God, it is my humble request that we would learn from your word today, that your Spirit would reveal your Son so that your word would change our life. God, as we look at this issue of covenant it is absolutely astonishing how good you are. And it is amazing how persistent you are, to not only be good, but do good. I pray, God, for those that I have the honor and privilege of teaching, that they would be blessed and that I would be able to serve them well by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

I'll start with this question. Who has betrayed you? To whom have you entrusted yourself, you loved, you served, you gave, you cared for them, and they absolutely betrayed you? Who has betrayed you most painfully? What did they say? What did they do? How did they breach that relationship with you? I want you to go there with me emotionally for a moment. Who comes to mind? The person you don't want to think about, the person that you don't want to remember the face of, the touch of, the voice of. Who has absolutely betrayed you? And how did you respond? What did you feel? What did you say? What did you do?

I want you to go there emotionally with me because as we deal with this doctrine of covenant I think what can so often happen is that we absolutely neglect to look at things from God's perspective. You and I, we've betrayed him. You know the story of Genesis; we've dealt with it many times. That God made the heavens and the earth, that he carefully prepared the earth for you and I to live on. That God made our first parents in his image and likeness, that God blessed them, that God spoke to them, that God honored them. That God gave them tremendous freedom – he cultivated a garden for them to live in. He said they could eat of any tree except one. They were naked without shame. He brought them together. He created marriage so they could be in love and have marital relations and intimacy and pleasure and joy.

And our first parents and every one of since absolutely, utterly, completely betrayed God. We disrespected him. We disregarded him. We disobeyed him. We dishonored him. And we all do. The betrayal that God has endured is worse than any betrayal that anyone will ever endure. Put yourself in the position of God. If you had done all of this good and then were betrayed, sinned against, how would you respond?

What is amazing is how God responds. Most of the time you and I, it's either fight or flight. We're gonna get revenge if we've been betrayed, or we're going to distance ourselves so that we can't be hurt again. God draws near to deal with sin, and he loves and enters into relationship. And the word that the Bible uses to describe how God responds to this unspeakable betrayal is covenant. It's not fight or flight, it's covenant. That's how God responds.

And so as we are dealing with covenant, I'll start with the first question. What is a covenant? If you just grab a concordance and look at your Bible, this word shows up often. This is a huge mega-theme of the Bible. There are covenants between human beings, business and the like. There are covenants between people and God. What we're talking about here is a covenant between God and us. I can't deal with the first two categories just for the sake of time.

Let me define covenant in this way. A covenant is a relationship with God on his terms. Because he is God he gets to define the terms of the relationship. Because he is Creator and we are created he gets to define the terms of the relationship.

And when the Bible speaks of God being in covenant with us, let me tell you some things it reveals about God. First, it shows that God is gracious. See, God owes us nothing. He could've just taken Adam and Eve, "You sinned. You die. You go to hell. The race is over. That's it." He could do the same with us. God is gracious. He owes us nothing. And he pursues us for the purpose of relationship.

Number two, it shows that God is sovereign. God initiated the covenant relationship, we respond. We didn't ask him to pursue us. We didn't ask him to love us. We didn't ask him to care for us. He, of his own accord, sovereignly initiated the covenant relationship.

Number three, it shows that he is the Lord. That means that he establishes the terms of the covenant. That's why it says repeatedly in the Old Testament, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you." That's what God says. "I establish my covenant with you. I'm the Lord. I define the terms of the relationship."

Number four, it reveals that God is holy. The literal language oftentimes used in the Old Testament is a cutting of a covenant. To show the covenant, people entering into a covenant would sometimes take an animal, sacrifice it, split it in two, separate the animal – there would be blood everywhere. And the person entering into the covenant would walk between the two halves of the animals showing, "If I do not fulfill my vows and obligations to this covenant, I am accepting the same fate as this animal. I should be put to death. I should be put to death."

It also shows that God is loving, that he blesses us even though we don't deserve it. And he loves us even though we don't deserve it. And he wants our hearts and our lives and our minds to change.

~~He shows that God is just~~ He shows that God is just the covenant. And he has conditions in the covenant – we'll see those in a moment. And in that he is saying, "This is right. This is wrong. I will discipline you if you sin. I will also, though, continue to pursue you so that you can learn to be obedient."

Number seven, it shows that God has said – this is one of the most beautiful words in the Old Testament. There's one word you should meditate on this week, if you want to do a word study or investigate it. The Old Testament word hesed. It's a beautiful word. When the Bible speaks of our covenant relationship with God it often uses this word hesed. And hesed, it incorporates love and grace and mercy and patience and kindness and affection and loyalty and devotion, dependability, intimacy, concern, compassion, understanding, empathy, affection – all of that's hassed. And so God is in covenant relationship with us, and the Bible says that he does so in a way that is hesed.

And again, God is doing this to his enemies. God is doing this for those of us who have, through sin, betrayed him. God is responding to us in a way that I'm assuming none of us have responded to our worst enemies.

And I think one of the best ways to see the covenant is to see it with God as a Father. It says repeatedly in the Bible, "I will be your God, and you will be my people." That's very fatherly language. The best way that I know of to understand covenant is in relation – for me personally – with my wife and my children. Those are covenant relationships. With my children, for example, it doesn't matter what they do, they're my kids. It doesn't matter what they do, I still love them. It doesn't mean I approve of sin, that if they grow up to be, you know, rebellious people that I will affirm that or overlook that. I will be honest about that and I will deal with that, but it means that I am devoted to them. That I love them. That I will pursue them. That I want to be connected to them. That I will not give up on them. That in many ways, covenant shows that God is a Father, and that people who are in covenant relationship with God are part of his family – the Bible actually uses that language.

And in showing this, the Bible does so through this idea of a covenant. And we'll look at God's covenant through the Old Testament beginning with Adam in Genesis 1 and 2. And as you're turning there – and I would encourage you if you've got a Bible to go there – I want you to see that one covenant and another covenant and another covenant are not completely separated covenants. As we walk through the covenants in the Old Testament now I want you to see how one builds on the next, that the one is still binding and then there are additional benefits and blessings and obligations that are added to the covenant. Some call it the drama of redemption. If you look at the story of the Bible, that there are key figures, people who step out onto the stage of history – Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus – we'll get to all of them. They come out to be invisible covenant with God, setting a pattern and a prototype as representatives of people who also can be in covenant relationship with God. And one after the next, we see through a very long period of history, God's hesed covenant faithfulness to undeserving sinners.

We'll start with the first, and that is what is the Adamic covenant. I'll say that there is a debate as to whether or not Adam was in a covenant with God. Hosea 6:7 says that we all, through sin, have broken our covenant with God as Adam did. I would infer from that that he was in covenant. Whether or not you quibble on this point, I don't want to. What I would say is however you look at it, Adam was in relationship with God. That God loved Adam, blessed Adam, had a relationship with Adam, and if you'd go with me to Genesis 1 you'll see this covenant that Adam had with God, this very special relationship.

It's interesting. We live in a day when so many people talk about community, community, community. Community's great. Really, the Bible word for community is covenant, which is more than just, "I know you," or, "We have a friendship," but, "We are bound one to another in a very deep and enduring way."

Genesis 1:27: here is the covenant that Adam had with God. "So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him male and female" – he created them, we dealt with that. "God blessed them" – see, that God is a blessing God – "and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. Subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, over every living thing that moves on the earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit, you shall have them for

food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so. God saw everything he had made and behold, it was very good. There was evening, and there was morning: the sixth day.” Now we’re getting ready for Sabbath day.

One last thing: chapter 2, verse 16 and 17 in Genesis. “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You shall not eat it, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’” That’s what God says.

Every covenant, as I understand it, has six aspects that are consistent. The first is there’s a mediator, a head, okay? In the Adamic covenant, who’s the mediator, the head that represents humanity? Well, it’s Adam. He’s standing there in our place as our father and our mediator and our representative.

Secondly, there are blessings. How did God bless Adam? Well, it says he blessed him, gave him life, gave him the earth, gave him a garden, gave him food to eat, gave him a wife to enjoy, gave him marriage as a human covenant for him to enter into. That God blessed them – absolutely.

Conditions – what was the condition? “Don’t eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” And what’s the consequence? “If you do, you will die.” That’s spiritual death immediately – separation from God – physical death inevitably – cessation of life.

What was the sign of the covenant? It was the Sabbath, that he was to work for six days and he was to rest on the Sabbath, following the creation pattern of God.

What is the metaphor here for covenant community? Marriage. He marries Eve. Marriage here is the metaphor for God’s covenant community. It’s the way that the man and the woman are in relationship together.

And what is the promise? Well, ultimately they sin in Genesis 3. They violate the covenant. They betray God in every way. They did so by believing the lies of a serpent, Satan, and the promise is made in Genesis 3:15 that Jesus would come as the dragon slayer. So the sixth thing is that there’s a promise of Jesus.

God made a covenant. They violated the conditions of the covenant. They sinned. They disobeyed. They betrayed. And then the promise is that Jesus is coming one day as the dragon slayer, that Satan would hurt him but Jesus would crush Satan. That’s the Adamic covenant.

The Bible keeps moving along. Here’s what we’re gonna do. We’re gonna go through the whole Old Testament. Not every verse – we may skip a word or two. But I want you to see – now, imagine at this point you are God. Do you bless anyone? Do you pursue anyone? Do you love anyone? Do you try again? God does. God is good. He keeps loving. He keeps pursuing. He keeps caring.

Leads us to the next point. What is the Noahic covenant? So go to Genesis 6. Genesis 6:5-9. You say, well, Adam and Eve sinned and they betrayed and rebelled. God blessed them and pursued them for covenant relationship. They had children who had children who had children. Generations ensue from this family. How do people respond to God? Do they say, “That’s wonderful. He’s amazing. We sure love him”?

Here’s how they respond. Chapter 6, verse 5: “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” This is more betrayal, isn’t it? “And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.” God’s in a relationship of pain. God’s in a relationship where he continually is betrayed.

“So the Lord said, ‘I will blot out man, whom I have created, from the face of the land – man and animals, creeping things and birds of the heaven – for I am sorry that I have made them.’” God says, “I’m going to flood the earth. I’m gonna kill everyone and everything. We’re gonna start over.”

Verse 8 is very important. “But Noah found” – what – “in the eyes of the Lord”? Found favor. That’s the Hebrew word for grace, unmerited love, affection and devotion. It goes on to say, verse 9, “These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.” Almost every single Bible teacher I’ve ever heard butchers the Noahic covenant. Every single time I’ve read this story out of the kids Bible to my kids – they’ve got many kids Bibles, and just so you know, they’re all marked up ‘cause each of them has errors. All right, so I take white out and go through the kids Bibles and we make adjustments. And one of the things I always check is the story of Noah, because the story of Noah is always told, “God entered into covenant relationship with Noah because Noah was a good man. He loved the Lord. He walked with the Lord. He was a righteous man. God spared Noah and his family from the flood because he’s a good guy, and everybody else was a bad guy. And the moral of the story is be a good guy. Be holy. Obey God. Walk with him, and then you don’t need to drown.”

Is that how the story is told? It says that Noah was righteous man, that he walked with God, but what does it say before that? That he was saved by grace. That he found favor or grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was not a great guy. Noah was a sinner just like everyone else, just like you and just like me. And God looked at the earth and said, “Everyone is only doing evil all the time. Everyone’s betrayed me. No one deserves love. I’ll love this guy.” You say, “Why?” Not because Noah’s good, but because God is. Not because Noah deserves it, but because he found favor or grace in the eyes of God. This is a picture of election. God looks at the earth and says, “No one deserves anything. I’ll be good to this person even though they don’t deserve it.”

The point here is that we enter into covenant relationship with God by finding favor or grace in his eyes. If you’re a Christian there should be no point for boasting. We’re no better than anyone, we’ve just found favor – grace. That’s all.

The flood then comes. Everyone dies on the earth except for Noah and his family. Go forward to chapter 9, beginning in verse 8. After the flood subsides, everyone has died. Remember Noah built a big ark, he and his family? It took a long time. There had not been a flood to that point. He’s in the middle of a desert making a boat. He looks nuts.

The flood subsides. He, his family, the animals they took with them survive. Chapter 9, verse 8: “Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, ‘Behold, I establish my’” – what? Covenant, there’s our word – “‘with you, with your offspring’” – your kids, your family, your descendants – “‘after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant’” – there’s our word again – “‘with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.’” That’s the covenant. “God said, “‘This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you for all future generations. I have set my bow’” – or my rainbow – “‘in the cloud and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow is seen the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.’”

“When the rainbow is in the clouds I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”

“God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all the flesh that is on the earth.’” The Noahic covenant: again, there’s six aspects. Who’s the mediator of this covenant? Who stands between God and humanity as the representative or the head? It’s Noah. He’s the man that God has shown favor to.

How does God bless him? Well, he gives him children and he makes a promise, “I’ll never flood the earth again.” There will not be a global flood that kills everyone. There may be occasional natural or God-ordained disasters but there will not be a global flood where everyone will die.

Well, what is the condition of the covenant? Well, God tells him, “No murder. Respect human life.” That God’s people are to honor the sanctity of human life.

What is the sign of the covenant? Let me say this about the sign of the covenant. The sign of the covenant is internal and external. What’s the internal sign of the covenant? How do we know that Noah is in covenant relationship with God? Well, internally he has faith. He trusts God. Say, “How do you know?” He built a boat in the desert. That’s a guy who trusts God. He built a huge boat. It took him many years, cost him tons of money. And everybody mocked him. This would be like walking into the middle of Saudi Arabia and saying, “I’m going to build a huge boat.” Say, “Why?” “It’s going to rain.” That’s a guy with a lot of faith. He trusts God. God said, “It’s gonna rain a lot. You better build a boat.” So he trusted God. His internal sign is faith. That’s the sign that God sees.

What’s the external sign of the covenant? The rainbow. The rainbow comes out after it has stopped raining, and the sun shines through and reflects. It’s God’s way of saying, “When you see a rainbow be reminded I’m not going to destroy the earth.” No matter how bad it’s raining – we live in Seattle, we appreciate this – it will eventually stop. Okay, that’s the sign of the covenant.

How about this one? What is the covenant community? Well, it’s Noah and his family. They’re the only ones who are alive.

And what is the promise of the coming of Jesus? Well, the promise is that just as Noah and his family found favor and grace in the eyes of the Lord and that they were saved from judgment and death, that Jesus will give us favor and grace in the eyes of the Lord and that he will save us from judgment and death.

The Adamic covenant is built on by the Noahic covenant, leads to the next aspect of the covenant. What is the Abrahamic covenant? Genesis 12 – just keep going. We’ll read a lot of verses.

Genesis 12. First thing we learned about Noah, he wasn’t a great guy. We see it later where one of the first things he does after the flood, gets drunk, passes out naked in his tent like a hillbilly on vacation, right? (Laughter) He’s not the best guy. He’s a sinner saved by grace. Abraham, likewise, is not a great guy. In Genesis and in Acts – I can’t put it all together for you, you’ll have to trust me or listen to the series I did on Genesis. He is from a region that was godless. His dad was godless. He doesn’t worship the God of the Bible initially. He’s from the same region where they came together to build the Tower of Babel, to build a godless society that functioned without God. He’s from those people, same area – godless man, Abram.

Okay, how many of you have been told Abraham was a Jewish guy? He wasn’t initially. He was a gentile. He was just a regular old pagan, worshipping false gods, sinning. That’s how he started.

Until Genesis 12 – here’s what happens. “Now the Lord said to Abram” – shows up to talk to him. Again, God pursuing for covenant relationship – “‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land I will show you, and I will make you a great nation.’” A great nation out of a barren old man with an elderly barren wife, the two of whom have never conceived and are way beyond childbearing years. “Leave everything you know. Go somewhere I’ll show you. Trust me; you’re gonna have a baby and that baby is going to lead to a nation.” “‘I will bless you, make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’” “‘You’re a nobody. I’m gonna make you a somebody. You are going to be the head of a new family that’ll be a blessing to the nations of the earth.’”

Go forward to chapter 17. We’ll read some more. Here is Abraham and the covenant of circumcision. “When Abram was 99 years old” – he’s not a likely candidate to be making babies and founding nations – “the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless, that I might make my covenant’” – there’s our word – “‘between me and you and may multiply you greatly.’” Give you kids and grandkids and great-grandkids. “Then Abram fell on his face and God said to him, ‘Behold, my covenant is with you and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall you be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham’” – which means father of a multitude – “‘for I have made you the

father of a multitude. I will make you exceedingly fruitful. I will make you into nations and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring” – or seed – ““after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan” – that’s the nation of Israel – ““for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.””

“And God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and your offspring after you. Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant.””

Go forward; last one. Chapter 22. God does bless him, does give him a son named Isaac. Abraham and Sarah have a boy named Isaac. His name means “laughter,” ‘cause when they were told, “You’re gonna make babies,” they laughed. And God always gets the last laugh, so Isaac is the punchline. His name means “laughter.” They love Isaac. He’s their only son. Through him is to come the nation and the blessing to the nations of the earth. And then God tells him to sacrifice his only son.

Verse 15, chapter 22 of Genesis. “And the angel” – that’s probably Jesus. An angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is a messenger, the angel is usually Jesus showing up before his birth. “The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time down from heaven and said, ‘By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you. I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gates of his enemies, and then your offspring shall the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.””

Here’s what happened. God said, “Abraham, I’m gonna give you a boy.” Abraham said, “God, I trust you.” Hebrews 11 says he was a man of faith. They had a baby boy. He grew up to be a young man, Isaac, that they loved. God said, “Take your son. Go slaughter him.” This is child sacrifice. This is – this is a sin. Abraham says to God, “I will obey you. I will take my son Isaac, my only son, my firstborn son and I will slaughter him to you.” The Bible says in the New Testament that he had such great faith that he knew that even if Isaac died God would resurrect him from death.

What happens is Isaac is young and healthy and strong, just like Jesus was. He’s the beloved only son, as Jesus was. He’s the firstborn son, as Jesus was. He carries the wood for his own slaughter on his back, as Jesus did. They go to a place that’s not far from where Jesus was ultimately crucified. Isaac willingly, like Jesus, lays down his life at the hand of his father. And just as his dad, Abraham, has the knife in his hand and is ready to slaughter his son, God speaks from heaven and says, “You’ve trusted me. No need to slaughter your son. One day it will be provided.” Jesus is coming and he will fulfill this anticipating, expectation, foreshadowing of the son who carries his own wood to his place of slaughter to die in love.

God then spoke to him in Genesis 22 and says, “Because you’ve done this, I know that you trust me. And because you’ve done this, I’m going to fulfill my covenant vow to bless you.” Now the promise was made that through Abraham would come a blessing.

Let me wrap this up briefly. Six aspects of this covenant: Who’s the mediator? Who’s between humanity and God? Well, it’s Abraham.

What is the blessing? Well, he gets his son. He gets land. He gets to be the father of a multitude. There’s a lot of blessings for Abraham.

What are the conditions? “Well, you’re supposed to obey me.” He showed that in the willingness to sacrifice his son.

What is the internal sign? Well, it’s faith. He trusted the Lord.

What is the external sign of the covenant for Abraham? What is it? Circumcision of the male son on the eighth day, that all God’s men were to be circumcised.

What is the covenant community? Well, it’s the family and it’s also the nation that would come from the family.

And what’s the promise of Jesus? The promise was made to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant, “Through your seed, your offspring, will come a blessing to all the nations of the earth.” You go to Galatians 3, here’s what Paul says. The Bible says seed – singular, meaning one man, not seeds, meaning plural, many people – because through Abraham would come one man who would be the blessings to the nations of the earth. Who’s that? Jesus. Jesus. That’s why if you read the genealogies of Jesus in the New Testament, like in Matthew 1, it talks about the fact that he is a descendant of Abraham in fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. That he – see, and too many people read Genesis and they say, “That’s about the Jewish people. The Jewish people are the blessing to the nations of the earth.” The Jewish people are loved of God. The Jewish people are blessed by God. The Jewish people have been a blessing to the nations of the earth. But the ultimate blessing is not all of the people who descend from Abraham, but that man, Jesus Christ, who is the singular seed, the offspring, the descendant, the blessing from Abraham to all the nations of the earth.

We’ve covered the Adamic, the Noahic, the Abrahamic covenant. Go to the next book of your Bible: Exodus. We’re gonna look at another man named Moses. That leads us to the next question: What is the Mosaic covenant? You’ll see from one generation to the next over the course of many years, God keeps pursuing. God keeps loving. God keeps blessing. God keeps speaking.

Exodus 3:4-10, therein – actually we’ll just do – yeah, we’ll do 3:4-10. Let’s do Chapter 3, start in verse 1. I’ll set up the context. “Now Moses” – great

guy? No. He's a murderer. He's a murderer, saved by grace. "Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord" – that's probably Jesus. He's a messenger. Angel means messenger. "The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.' When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see God, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses! Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham'" – all the way back to the Abrahamic covenant – "'the God of Isaac'" – the promised offspring – "'and of Jacob'" – the nation who would descend from Abraham in fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

"Then the Lord said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt.'" They're slaves at this point. God's people are mistreated. This is many years later. Abraham's family went in as a people of 66. Now they're a nation of a few million some 400 years later. "'I know their sufferings. I have come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians'" – those who are enslaving them – "'and to bring them up out of the land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me. I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.'" –

Go over to chapter 6. We'll read one more section and then we'll go to chapter 19. Chapter 6, verses 7 and 8. "I will take you to be my people" – that's covenant language – "and I will be your God. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham" – back to the covenant – "to Isaac and to Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession."

And then chapter 19 of Exodus, if you can go there we'll read two more verses. Here is Israel at Mt. Sinai, where they receive the Ten Commandments from God. They were enslaved. At his point, God crushed Pharaoh, liberated them, parted the Red Sea. They're free. Now they're at Mt. Sinai. God is going to give them the Ten Commandments. Verse 5, chapter 19: "Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my" – what's the word? It's our word – "covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all the peoples. For all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you shall speak to the people of Israel."

What's the Mosaic covenant? Who's the mediator? Moses. He stands as the representative and head between God and the people. God's going to deal with the people, his covenant community. He does so through Moses. That's who he keeps meeting with, speaking to Moses.

What is the blessing? Well, they're in slavery, and God comes, crushes the Pharaoh, delivers them, parts the Red Sea, allows them to be free – free to what? Free to worship him. That's the blessing. Slaves get freed.

What is the condition of the covenant? Well, God gives his law. Through Moses we get the first five books of the Old Testament. It's called the Pentateuch, means "book in five parts," and in it there are more than 600 laws. So God gives them laws and they are in covenant with God and they're supposed to obey him like children are supposed to obey their dad. He does so for their well-being.

What is the internal sign of the covenant? Well, it's faith – trusting God. Leaving Egypt, obeying the law, trusting God's provision and leading.

What's the external sign of the covenant? In Exodus it's something called a Passover, where God sent a succession of plagues and judgments and curses on Egypt because they refused to let God's people be released from bondage and slavery. The last one was the curse on the firstborn, where God said, "Any household that does not worship me will have the firstborn male son in the home put to death." The only way to avoid that is to sacrifice an animal, to take the blood, and to paint it over the doorpost of the home so that when God would come to judge and bring death, if he saw that they had faith and that they had made sacrifice – all pointing to Jesus, who would shed his blood in our place for our sins. I think it's 1 Corinthians 5, says that Christ our Passover Lamb has been slain. John the Baptizer sees Jesus and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." All of that is connected to Passover, that is God saw the blood, death in place of sin, repentance demonstrated. He would pass over that house, and no one in that house would die. All the other homes, the firstborn son died.

This leads all the way up to the new covenant with Jesus, and communion where he's celebrating the Last Supper, which is Passover. That's the sign – the external sign that we belong to God and we're his covenant people.

Well, how does it speak of the covenant community? Well, it's a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, all belonging to God to serve him and do ministry.

And lastly, what is the promise of Jesus? Well, the Passover shows that Jesus is coming to die in our place for our sins, to cover us by his blood that the wrath, judgment, and death of God would literally pass over us. That he is the one who liberates us from Satan, sin, and death – our Pharaohs. That he is the one who provides for us a new way of life as worshipers. And though we have broken all of God's good laws, we are lawbreakers, Jesus came – Matthew 5:17-18 – he says, "Not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it." And he was perfectly obedient to the law.

So all of this foreshadows the coming of Jesus during the Mosaic covenant – leads to the next aspect of the covenant, which is the Davidic covenant.

What is the Davidic covenant? Well, go to 2 Samuel 7. In this you will not hear the word covenant; it is used, however, in Psalm 89:3. It says that David was in covenant with God. But here is the covenant relationship that David had with God. 2 Samuel 7, okay?

2 Samuel 7:8: "Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of Hosts'" – that's the God who rules over all the angels

and demons – “I took you from the pasture” – now David, was he a big deal? Shepherd boy, right? Puny runt kid brother. Nobody special. You keep seeing this theme. God picks for covenant people who are sinners and nobodies – not a big deal ‘cause it’s by grace. “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people of Israel.” Nice upgrade. Shepherd to king – that’s a great deal right there. That’s grace. Grace is always cuts to the front of the line. “And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down after your fathers” – when you die, he is saying – “I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.” Talking about a little boy who’s a shepherd becoming a king with a kingdom. “He shall build a house for my name” – that’s the Temple – “and I will establish the throne of his kingdom” – for how long? – “forever.

He’ll be a king. From his line will come kings. Ultimately is coming the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus, who will rule on that throne forever. “I will be to him a father” – he’s talking about Solomon here – “and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity or sin I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men. But my steadfast love” – right, hassed – “my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul” – bad king – “whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure” – for how long? – “forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’ In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.” It’s a prophecy.

“Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, ‘Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?’” God, why do you treat me so good? What’s the answer? “I’m in covenant with you.” “And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord God. You have spoken also of your servant’s house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind.”

The Davidic covenant: Who’s the mediator? Who’s the head? Who comes as our representative between us and God? David.

What’s the blessing? They’ll have a king to protect them and defend them and bless them and look after them and care for them. And a kingdom that they get to be a part of, a kingdom that will endure forever.

What are the conditions? Well, the condition is if you sin, there are consequences – that’s what he says about Solomon. “If he commits iniquity, I will discipline him though I will remain steadfast in my love. I will still love and bless him, but there will be consequences.” Some of you know this in your life. You may be a Christian – God’s steadfast love never ceases – but if you sin there are consequences. You get disciplined.

What is the sign internally? Well, David trusted God. Again, it’s faith.

What’s the external sign? Well, it’s the temple, that they trusted God’s presence with them and obeyed him by building the temple he would command through Solomon. David couldn’t build it because of his sin. He committed adultery and murder with Bathsheba. He slept with her and then murdered her husband Uriah the Hittite. The point is there’s consequence for sin, so he can’t build the temple. His son Solomon builds the temple which is the most holy place on earth. It’s where God’s presence dwells with his people, foreshadowing Jesus, who would come, John 1 says, to tabernacle, to be with us. The other sign externally of the covenant is the throne – that there would be a king who would rule over his people.

What is the covenant community? Well, it’s a kingdom. God’s people here are seen as a kingdom.

And what’s the picture of Jesus? King of Kings – that there would be a kingdom established, but Jesus ultimately would establish a never-ending, eternal Kingdom. This kingdom would rule over part of the earth. Jesus’ Kingdom would rule over all of creation. He’s the Lord of Hosts. And this King David, and his son Solomon, and the kings who would follow in their line and wake would rule for a season. But Jesus would rule forever and ever. And he is the King of Kings, ruling over all kings.

Fast-forward as well, then – Jeremiah 31. Last aspect of the covenant. What is the new covenant? What is the new covenant? This is unbelievable. Again, we betrayed God. He pursued Adam. He pursued Abraham. He pursued Noah. He pursued Moses. He pursued David. And they were representing people that he wanted to be in loving covenant community with – was in loving community with.

And then it speaks of a new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-33. “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new” – what? – “covenant” – there’s our word – “with the house of Israel and the house of Judah” – that’s northern and southern kingdom, that’s everybody who’s part of God’s people – “not like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt” – that’s the Mosaic covenant, right, when the Red Sea was parted – “my covenant that they broke” – God’s people disobeyed him, wandered grumbling in the wilderness for 40 years, didn’t get to enter into the land of promise. The next generation with Joshua and Caleb gets to occupy the promised land – “my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband” – back to the covenant sign of Abraham, it’s marriage – “declares the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them, I will write it on their hearts. I will” – covenant promise – “be their God, and they shall be my” – what? – “people.”

God says, “I’ve been really great, loving, patient, steadfast. I’ve entered into covenant with people who continue to sin against me, betray me, and violate me. But I will be their God, and I will love them, and I will bless them, and I will be good to them. And I will do this in spite of them.” That’s the new covenant. And the new covenant is the fulfillment of all of the previous covenant, and it’s an expansion.

Last section of Scripture I will read – go to Matthew 26. You’ll notice we’ve just covered most of your Bible. And I want to pull out this wonderful

thread of covenant has led love all the way through. Matthew 26, we'll start in verse 26. "Now as they were eating" – what are they eating, Jesus and his disciples? The Passover meal, the sign of the Mosaic covenant – "Jesus took bread, and after blessing it" – right, same thing God does in the opening pages of Genesis, he starts blessing – "he broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.'" This breaks with thousands of years of Jewish tradition. Every year at Passover the head of the family, representing the fact that he's the mediator to that home of God's covenant with his people, would have certain words to say taken directly out of Exodus. Here Jesus breaks from tradition and says, "This is my body." What he's saying is, "The covenant is now fulfilled in me. The blood that was shed at Passover will not be shed by me. We eat this meal in preparation of my death in your place for your sins."

"He took the cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink it, all of you, for this is my blood'" – gonna die in your place for your sins so you can be in covenant with God. "'This is my blood of the'" – what? "'covenant, which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins.'" God became a man to die in the place of sinners like you and me. He did this, though we betrayed him. He did this to save us. He did this to forgive and love us. He did this so we might be in covenant with him. "'Which is poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink of this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you in my Father's kingdom.'" Well, that's the Davidic covenant – a king.

Who's the mediator of the new covenant? Jesus Christ. He's the head, representative. He goes in place of us all.

What is the blessing of the new covenant? Well, there are many: salvation, forgiveness of sin, indwelling power of God the Holy Spirit, reconciled relationship to God, imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, eternal life in heaven, transformed life on earth – the blessings are almost too many to note.

What are the conditions of the new covenant? Well, repentance of sin and faith and trust in Jesus.

What is the sign of the covenant? Well, internally it's faith: "I love Jesus. I belong to Jesus. I trust Jesus. I know that Jesus died on the cross in my place for my sins. My covenant with God is only made possible through Jesus." What's the external sign of the covenant? It's baptism and communion. Baptism – dead, buried, raised in newness or life, identified with the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus. Communion – here Jesus at the Passover meal sets up what we call the Lord's Table or communion. At Mars Hill you are not supposed to partake of communion unless you're in covenant with God – you're a Christian. It is the visible way externally we go forward and show, "I am in covenant with God through Jesus Christ. His body was broken, his blood was shed in my place for my sins so that I could be a member of God's new covenant people." You should never partake unless you are a Christian in covenant with God who is repentant of their sins. Otherwise Paul says we bring judgment on ourselves. It's a very serious thing.

What is the covenant community? Let me explain this. This utterly, radically transforms the way we see relationships. First, it transforms the way we see marriage. Do you know that marriage is a covenant? It says this twice in the Old Testament, that marriage is a covenant. Here's what this means for my wife Gracie and I as an example. Does God ever abandon his people? Does God ever betray his people? Does God ever commit spiritual adultery on his people? No. And the Bible says that as men we are to be the head of our home. That means that we are to be the covenant head and representative. That means that we are to love God, and we are to mirror, reflect God's love to our wife as well as to our children. This means in marriage I will never divorce my wife. This means I don't have a contract with her, where she has her terms, I have my terms. If one of us should break the terms then the agreement is null and void. When we got married we talked very deeply about covenant; that is, "I will forgive you. You will forgive me. We will love one another. We will pursue one another. We will remain in this covenant 'til death should separate us."

I am not saying that there are no conditions for divorce in the Bible. I'm not saying that divorce is always a sin – not saying that at all, okay? I don't want to be a legalist and I don't want to make anybody feel guilty if they have biblical grounds. But what I am saying is this, that Christians are to approach marriage as a covenantal union, not a contractual convenience.

I married Grace when I was in college, 21 years of age. I will give my whole life to her. I will give my whole life to her. I will love her. I will pursue her. I will defend her. I will honor her. I will do good to her. And when I sin, I will repent to her in Jesus. Why? Because we're in a covenant. And how God treats me is how I'm supposed to treat her. And as we as God's people, the bride, the church, respond to Jesus, so wives are to respond to their husband: with respect and love and trust and fidelity and devotion and faithfulness. That marriage is covenant – I'm telling you, apart from Christianity this isn't even a concept. Covenant.

Secondly, this transforms our view of parenting. Do you know that I'm in a covenant relationship with my five children? No matter what they do, I'm their dad. And even when they grow up, if they should wander, you know what I need to do? Pursue them. It doesn't mean that I accept their sin. I need to deal with it as God deals with my sin. But it means that my children are always my children, and my love to them is not conditional. It is not, "If you are good kids your Daddy will love you." It is, "I will be your Dad and you'll be my kids," just like God says, "I will be your God and you'll be my people." I asked my kids this recently. I take them – the kids that are school age, I take them to breakfast one day a week. We hang out, we play games, we visit – it's just a little connecting time with Dad, little early morning date with Dad. And I asked them, I said, "What would you have to do for me not to love you anymore?" The kids said, "You will always love us. There's nothing we can do that you won't love us." See, I was just checking as I was meditating on this. "Do you understand we're in a covenant? I'm your Daddy. I'm here forever, no matter what, always gonna try and do good to you." That's covenant.

This also affects our view of church membership. The church for us is a covenantal community. That's why we have church membership. That's why the elders and leaders make a covenant with the members, and the members make a covenant with us, and we actually have you sign a covenant – very serious. And that is, "I covenant to love Jesus, to do good for this church financially, prayerfully, serving. I promise to do covenant good for the whole community, not just me. I don't come just to take – to take goods and services and doctrines and information. I come to be part of a covenant people. I come to live out my covenant obligations to God and one another. And I'm willing to sign on the dotted line and say I am willing to be part of a

covenant people.”

I’ll say two things in closing. First, God’s covenant with us is a reflection of his goodness, not our greatness. When you hear this, don’t say, “I must be really something special for God to go to all this trouble.” No. It doesn’t reflect our greatness. It reflects God’s goodness – from Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to Jesus. God loves. God pursues. God forgives. God embraces. God is faithful to the faithless. God is good to the evil. God is dependable to those who wander and stray.

Secondly, the proper response is repentance of sin and faith in Jesus. “God, all of my sin, my betrayal – it’s treasonous. And Jesus, I trust you to take away my sin, to make me a new person, to give me a covenant relationship with God, and to connect me to his covenant people.” I would ask, “Do you know Jesus? Do you love Jesus? Do you belong to Jesus? Have you confessed your sins to Jesus? Are you in covenant with Jesus?”

~~Jesus is about Adam with things judgment on him, retained all that, and lost.~~

whole new world. Jesus is a better Abraham, who is the blessed seed of Abraham, who is the blessing to the nations of the earth. Jesus is a better Moses, who has conquered our Pharaoh of Satan, liberated us to worship him, and fulfilled the law in our place. And lastly, Jesus is a better David. He is seated on a throne, ruling as the King of Kings, and coming again to establish his eternal kingdom.

I’m gonna pray. You’re gonna respond, and that will include communion, which is outward showing of inward faith – covenant sign internally – do you love Jesus? Covenant sign externally – do you repent of sin as demonstrated in communion?

Father God, I pray for my friends. I thank you that, God, you are a loving, amazing Father. You have pursued the most rebellious, stiff-necked, hard-hearted, self-righteous, unfaithful kids, and we are numbered among them. We are – we are betrayers like Adam. We are undeserving sinners like Noah, who have found grace. We’re godless idolaters like Abraham. We’re murderers, at least in our hearts, like Moses. We’re physical and spiritual adulterers like David. And God, you’ve invited us into covenant relationship – unbelievable. And Jesus, we thank you, for you are the one who is the fulfillment of all the covenants, and expands them into the new covenant so that you would be our God and we would be your people. We thank you for this. Amen.