

The covenant in the old testament theology religion essay



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A covenant is essentially an agreement between two people which involves promises but in the Old Testament, a covenant is an agreement between God and his people. In the Old Testament a covenant is much more than just a contract or simple agreement between two parties or people. The word covenant comes from a Hebrew word that means "to cut". The word "berith" in Hebrew also means covenant. (Bingham) Covenant are also offerings to God in one way or the other whether its for a blessing or a covenant of thanks, or for repentance of sin. Covenants are used in everyday lives a good example would Marriage. Marriage is a covenant where two people pledge to commit to each other and God in a holy union. Being a parent is also a covenant. Parents dedicate their lives to raising their child /children because it is part of their covenant with the future.

In the Old Testament, "covenant" provides additional and insightful information into the meaning of this important concept. In the Old Testament, there are many customs that have been labeled as a covenant. For example the strange custom of two people passing through the cut bodies of slain animals after making an agreement as seen in the Bible (Padfield, 2011) "And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof," (King James Bible Jer. 34: 18). In the Old Testament a ceremony such as this one in the book of Jeremiah has always accompanied the making of the covenant.

Another example of a covenant custom was seen at Mount Sinai. In Exodus, Moses sprinkled the blood of animals on the altar and upon the people who

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entered into covenant with God. “ And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, all that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.” (King James Bible Exo. 24: 4-8).

Another example of people entering into a covenant is when a meal was shared in an agreement. In the book of Genesis, Laban and Jacob entered into a covenant over a meal. “ Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.” (King James Bible Gen. 31: 54). A covenant can also be made between relatives as is seen in the first book of Samuel with Jonathan and David who entered into a covenant because of the love they had for each other upon entering into this agreement they were both adhered to certain responsibilities. “ Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.” (King James Bible 1Sam. 18: 3).

Most covenants can be found in the Old Testament. The five covenants that will be used in this paper are: God’s covenant with Noah, God’s covenant with Abraham, the Mosaic covenant, God’s covenant with David and the covenant of Christ also known as The New Covenant. Some of the first <https://assignbuster.com/the-covenant-in-the-old-testament-theology-religion-essay/>

covenants are found in the book of Genesis where Abraham and his children were all commanded to be circumcised as a sign of covenant between them and God. “ This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. “ And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.” (King James Bible Gen. 10-11)

In the book of Genesis a covenant was also made between God and Noah. In the story of Noah, he was chosen amongst all others because he and his descendents believed in God and lived their lives according to God’s word and will. When God instructed Noah to build an ark, he told him of his intention to destroy the world by a universal flood.

Being loyal and faithful to God, Noah began building the ark. Over the years it took Noah to build the ark, he never stopped preaching about God’s judgment and mercy to people warning them of their approaching doom that they faced if they did not repent and turn their lives over to God. After the flood, Noah was grateful to the Lord who had delivered him and his descendents from the flood. Noah’s covenant was when he built an altar to God and made a sacrifice which was accepted by God. “ And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done.”(King James Bible Gen. 8: 21) God assured Noah that he would never again destroy the world by flood. “ And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the

waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.” (King James Bible Gen. 9: 15)

In God’s covenant with Abraham, God promised to bless Abraham and his descendents and make them his own special people and in return for doing so Abraham was to remain faithful to God and to serve as a channel to which God’s blessing could flow to the rest of the world. (Bingham) The covenant of Abraham can be seen in the book of Genesis and includes three parts. The first part was that Abraham’s descendants would be a great number, His descendants would occupy the land of Canaan and thirdly, all nations through Abraham would be blessed. (Guzik, 2002) God spoke to Abraham and said “ Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (King James Bible Gen. 12: 1-3)

After hearing this request made by God, Abraham must have thought to himself this was an unbelievable promise especially since his wife Sarah was childless. Nonetheless, Abraham obeyed God without doubt or disbelief and did as he was asked to do by God. For the faith that Abraham has in God, God opened Sara’s womb and Isaac was born; he was the son of the promise, and would be the descendant through whom God would use to fulfill his covenant with Abraham. In the Mosaic covenant, a covenant was made between God and the people of Israel. The Ten Commandments is one of the foundations of the Mosaic covenant.

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In the book of Exodus, we see how the people of Israel committed to an agreement with God and agreed to abide by whatever God said. " And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD." (King James Bible Exo. 19: 8) In this covenant God gave to his people the laws of the land. Moses wrote the conditions of the covenant down and offered sacrifices to God and then sprinkled both the book and people with the blood to seal the covenant.

In God's covenant with David, a covenant was made in which David and his descendents were established as the royal heirs to the throne of the nation of Israel. (Padfield, 2011) In this covenant we learn of the coming of Jesus Christ and the promises God told David. God promises David that the reign of his dynasty will last forever. Each of these great promises was partially fulfilled in Solomon, David's son and successor to his throne. The first promise was that Solomon ruled on David's throne. The Second was that God's mercies never departed from Solomon, although he sinned and thirdly, Solomon built God a magnificent house. In the covenant with David the prophets foretold of a greater fulfillment of these promises. " Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute righteousness in the earth. . . . Now this is His name by which He will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness" (King James Bible Jer. 23: 5-6).

" For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. . . Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it . . . from that time forward, even forever. (King James <https://assignbuster.com/the-covenant-in-the-old-testament-theology-religion-essay/>

Bible Isa. 9: 6-7) “ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. (King James Bible Luke. 1: 31-33) God’s promises to David are completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus does reign, and will reign on David’s throne forever. (Guzik, 2002)

The last covenant is the Covenant of Christ or the New Covenant. The new covenant is the new agreement God has made with mankind which is based solely on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The main concept of the new covenant was originated with the promise of Jeremiah that God would accomplish for his people what the old covenant had failed to do which is seen in the book of Jeremiah. (Padfield, 2011) “ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (King James Bible Jer. 31: 31-34)

In this new covenant, God would write his law on human hearts. The new covenant is considered a better covenant as it was solely based on better promises and rests directly on the sacrifices and sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. (Padfield, 2011) The Epistle to the Hebrews gives the new covenant more attention than any other book in the New Testament. The Epistle quotes the entire passage from (Jeremiah 31: 31-34 and Hebrew 8: 8 - 12). In the Epistle, Jesus is referred to as “ the mediator of the new covenant.” (Padfield, 2011). The new covenant accomplished what the old covenant not, which was the will of sin and the cleansing of the mind.

In conclusion, each covenant gives us all insight into different definitions and meanings of the word covenant. In the five covenants used, it is easy to identify what kind of covenant was used and implemented. In looking at God’s covenant with Abraham, it is clear that Abraham is an example in the Old Testament, “ who makes us wise for salvation. The Old Testament is a good tool and reference that teaches Christians about salvation through faith in Christ. In the New Covenant, Christ cleanses the inner man. His death on the cross takes away the sins of the world. Covenants in marriage should be taught and carried on from our ancestors and in everyday life.

Covenants are man’s guide to knowledge of God’s love and the relationship he offers us through his son Jesus Christ. In reading both the Old and New Testament we all can learn from our ancestors mistakes they made with God and enrich our lives with hope as we all learn to become better Christians in living our lives according to God’s holy words.