

How Jesus Embodies the Covenant

In our first discussion on covenant, we talked about the seven primary things that make up a covenant. In our last discussion, we talked about how Jesus was the link between the old and new covenant, fulfilling all the types, shadows, and prophecies of the Old Covenant; now, in this discussion, let's talk primarily about how Jesus embodies the New Covenant that He brought into power.

Throughout the New Testament there are references to Jesus as He fulfilled the various elements of the covenant process; in fact, a verse that says it all is found in Hebrews 7:22 where Paul wrote that "*Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant,*" meaning that He Himself is the guarantee of the promise of the covenant which is eternal life for those who keep their part of the covenant. More specifically...

Exactly how is it that Jesus is the guarantee of the new covenant of salvation by grace? He does this by being the covenant Himself (cf. **Isa. 42:6 & 49:8**)—by being the very embodiment of the covenant, which He is by fulfilling all the aspects of a covenant. And what are those again? There are seven...

1. The Introduction: This was when the parties involved were identified, usually the king and the subjects.
2. The Granting of Land: This was when a king assigned territory to his subjects.
3. The Stipulations: This was when the king laid down the conditions which must be met by the subjects.
4. The Sanctions: This was when the king declared the blessings which would follow the keeping of the covenant and the cursings which would follow the breaking of the covenant.
5. The Witnessed Oath: This was when the king and/or his subjects swore loyalty to the terms of the covenant in the presence of witnesses who heard the terms *and* enforced its sanctions.
6. The Sign: This was when a mark was provided to verify the existence of the covenant.
7. The Documentation: This was when a permanent record of the agreement was provided.

We also talked about how that there was usually a covenant sacrifice, a covenant meal, a clothing exchange, and even a naming of the subjects by the king, such as when God renamed many of the leaders of Israel. So...

Let's see how Jesus fulfilled/embodies each element of the covenant process.

Jesus is the King and/or Lord of the covenant.

Paul, using a Jewish idiom in First Timothy 6:15, said that Jesus "*is the blessed and only Potentate [ruler], the King of kings and Lord of lords,*" not meaning that He's King of all kings and Lord of all lords (though that's true), but rather that He's the kingliest of kings and the lordliest of lords.

Not only is He is the King and Lord—the first party of the covenant, but since the New Covenant is a covenant of *salvation by grace*...

Jesus had to also be the Servant of the covenant.

By being the subject of the covenant, He, by His perfect covenant-keeping, is also the second party of the covenant; in other words, He in essence took and/or takes our place.

In Philippians 2:5-8 Paul wrote that though Jesus was "*in the form of God,*" He for our sakes by coming in our likeness, took "*the form of a servant*"—He took **our** form! Also, because He "knew" God perfectly as a covenant-Servant and became our "righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30)...

Jesus was granted the role of Captain in the kingdom of God, an indirect part of the covenant.

In Hebrews 2:10 Paul said that God made Jesus the "Captain" of our salvation, a word that refers to "a leader who goes ahead of his men, blazing the trail for them." Likewise...

Later in Hebrews 6:20, Paul used the term "Forerunner" to refer to Jesus' place in this great kingdom. Now, getting back to Jesus as Lord, instead of Servant...

Jesus, as the King, grants Himself to us as our territory. What does that mean? Well, as we all know...

The New Testament speaks often about our being "*in Christ*" where all blessings are found (Eph. 1:3), and one of those blessings is that Jesus, by being our Forerunner, has procured our "rest": Jesus Himself said, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ... rest for your souls,*" that is (Mat. 11:28-29). So...

To be "*in Christ*" means that Jesus is my city or place of refuge; Paul said it to Christians this way: "*You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ... [that is] to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant*" (Heb. 12:22-24). Related to this idea...

Jesus said to His disciples, "*I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom*" (Luke 22:29-30), which leads into our next two points.

Jesus was/is the sacrifice of the covenant.

John made it pretty clear that Jesus' crucifixion occurred the very hour the Passover lamb was being killed in Jerusalem (19:14). And...

Paul wrote that He's "*our Passover [who] was sacrificed for us*" (1 Cor. 5:7). In fact...

Jesus is even the covenant meal.

In John chapter 6 Jesus spoke of how that there's no life in those who don't eat His flesh and drink His blood. Why was this? Because, as they literally ate the sacrificed lamb under the Old Covenant, now we're to figuratively assimilate and incorporate Jesus, our Lamb, into our lives.

This is likely why Jesus used the figure of speech called a metaphor when He established His supper; in other words, instead of saying for example, "This bread *represents* My body," He said, "This bread *IS* my body." See...

If Jesus had merely used the word "represents," then He wouldn't have as clearly brought to the minds of His Jewish disciples the idea that He Himself *IS* the covenant, the sacrifice of the covenant, and the covenant meal that we're to assimilate into our daily lives, which leads into our next point.

Jesus is or embodies the stipulations of the covenant.

When referring to Jesus on the white horse in Revelation 19:13, John said that "*His name is called The Word of God,*" and in John chapter 1 He's simply said to be "*The Word,*" the Word who put on flesh (1:1 & 14), as talked about a moment ago in reference to Philippians chapter 2. So...

If Jesus is in us, as He is supposed to be, then who He is and what He stands for is upon our hearts, expressing itself in our lives; in somewhat of a rebuking manner, Paul asked the Christians at Corinth, "*Don't you know that Christ is in you*" (2 Cor. 13:5)? The whole idea of people seeing Christ in us implies that Jesus Himself embodies the stipulations of the covenant—stipulations which include the blessings and cursings. In other words...

Jesus also is or fulfills the sanctions of the covenant. Since Jesus is the link between the two covenants (as we talked about in our last study), and since He lived under the Old Covenant and inaugurated the New Covenant, we can actually look at how He is, i.e. fulfills, the sanctions of both covenants.

Jesus specifically fulfilled the sanctions of the Old Covenant for the Israelites who accepted Him.

He became the curse for them, removing it from them for all time; Paul wrote, "*Christ has redeemed us [the Jews] from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us*" (Gal. 3:13), and "*He has made us alive together with him, having forgiven [us] all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us [i.e. the covenant curses], which was contrary to us [the Jews]. He has taken it [the Law with its curses] out of the way, having nailed it to the cross*" (Col. 2:13-14).

He also became their blessings in the sense we discussed at length already under the point about the idea that He Himself is the territory, the rest, the city of refuge, etc. However...

Jesus further is or fulfills the sanctions (the blessings and cursings) of the New Covenant in that He'll bless us with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), or He will curse us when we meet Him to be judged (Heb. 9:27). Next...

Jesus is the oath and the witnesses to the oath of the covenant.

As mentioned in our introduction, Hebrews 7:22 says that Jesus is the surety, the pledge, the guarantee, or the oath (if you will) of the New Covenant. Besides that...

Jesus, in a sense, was two witnesses in One.

In John 8:13 people said that Jesus bore witness of Himself, and Jesus affirmed it in the next verse, saying, "*Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true*"; and John called Him "*the faithful witness*" in Revelation 1:5. So that's one! Then...

In John 8:18 Jesus said, "*I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.*" But how? According to John 10:38 & 14:11, Jesus said that the miracles He performed by the power of the Father were in Him as a witness (cf. John 5:36). That's two!

It's also interesting to note that John began his Gospel account speaking of Jesus as "*the light*" (1:4-9). Why is this interesting? Because...

The idea of Jesus being "*the light of the world*" in John 8:12 is in the context of Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees about His being His own witness (vv. 13-18). Why is that? Well...

Jesus was His own light, not needing the sun and moon (the lights of our heaven and earth) to light things up; in Revelation 21:23, when speaking about the city of God, John wrote of there being no need for these lights because Jesus is its light. Incidentally...

This fits what Jesus said in the context of the passing of the old and the coming in of the new when He said that "*heaven and earth [the old covenant witnesses] will pass away, but My words shall not pass away*" (Mat. 24:35). Moving on...

Jesus is also the sign of the covenant.

When Jesus was a baby, Simeon said of Him, "*This child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against*" (Luke 2:34). More specifically perhaps,...

Jesus' crucifixion/resurrection are the sign of the covenant, for when Jesus was asked for a "sign," He pointed to these two things that would occur to Him (John 2:18); and what's believed by many to be the two primary "ordinances" of the church—baptism and the Lord's supper—are reminders of those very things (Rom. 6:3-11 & Mat. 26:26-28). Speaking of baptism...

Jesus is also the clothing of the covenant.

Paul said, "*As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Gal. 3:27). In fact...

The idea of being clothed in white robes as found in Revelation 3:5 has to do with those who have put on Christ and therefore His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) since the clothing of our *own* righteousness is as filthy rags in God's sight (Isa. 64:6). Incidentally...

The fact that the Gentile soldiers procured Jesus' clothing at His crucifixion is believed to not only fulfill a prophecy (Psa. 22:18), but to also indicate the Gentiles' part in the kingdom of Christ. Next...

Jesus, as King, has named His people after Himself.

In fulfillment of Isaiah 62:2, Christ's disciples were called "*Christians*" (Acts 11:26).

Just as God named His people after Himself under the Old Covenant—Isra-EL (from Elohim), so Jesus did the same under the New Covenant; this was done in order to establish ownership.

Speaking of Jesus Christ in Ephesians 3:15, Paul said, "*from [or after] whom the whole family ... is named.*" Lastly...

Jesus—in us—is also the documentation of the covenant: Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth saying, "*You are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God*" (2 Cor. 3:3). So...

To put everything in a nutshell, all of this is why there simply can be no covenant with the Father that doesn't involve the Son: as Jesus put it, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" Well...

Let's finish up these studies on covenant by looking at Jesus' crucifixion in relation to the end of the old covenant and the beginning of the new.

There's a puzzling and obscure statement in Mark's Gospel account about which I'd like to make some comments to set the stage here: when Jesus was arrested in the garden, Mark said that "*a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked*" (14:51-52).

As mentioned a moment ago with reference to Jesus' clothing being taken by the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit doesn't just say something for no reason—there's some significance that we, as non-Jews living 2,000 from Jesus' and on the other side of the world, don't often understand. So...

To the Old Testament again..., when prophesying judgment on Israel, Amos wrote this about the plight of the soldiers: "*He shall not stand who handles the bow, the swift of foot shall not escape, nor shall he who rides a horse deliver himself. The most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day*" (2:15-16). See...

Soldiers were often called "*young men*" (cf. Gen. 14:24, 2 Sam. 2:14, & even in Mark 14:51b), which relates to Mark's "*young man*" to the soldiers in the prophecy of Amos. (Incidentally, the only other time Mark used this term was in 16:5 when referring to an angel, a soldier in God's heavenly army.) So it now seems to me, especially in this Mark 14 context, that...

The Holy Spirit was establishing that the "day" prophesied in Amos was in fact the day that had come in which God's judgment would fall.

The crucifixion of His Son brought God's judgment on the nation that refused to accept Him. Is it just coincidence that the Spirit went on to quote Jesus' prophecy about the soon coming judgment of God in verse 62? I very much doubt it. Anyway, about the crucifixion...

There are several dramatic events that occurred as Jesus died: the sun was darkened, the earth quaked, graves opened, and the temple veil was torn.

The sun, as we've said previously, was a witness to the old covenant; so when that witness went dark, it was a sign that the old covenant was legally dying in God's sight.

The quaking of the earth was a sign of God's covenant-judgment falling on the nation.

Saints rising from their graves and walking around was a sign of the soon-to-occur resurrection of Jesus Himself and that His resurrection would extend to His followers. And...

The temple veil was torn from top to bottom because it was the King of the Old Covenant—Yahweh Himself—who was tearing it down.

In the time of Moses, the ark of the testimony resided behind the veil in the temple—the footstool of God's throne where His presence rested among His people on Earth.

The ark contained the tablets of the covenant, but it had long since disappeared from the most holy place (Jer. 3:16), which had sadly been empty for centuries.

When the veil was split, the emptiness of that inner chamber was evident for all to see—God's presence no longer resided there (Eze. 10:18 & 11:23). So...

Without question, the Gospel writers intended to emphasize that Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies which relate to the coming of the Messiah or the anointed Servant of the New Covenant.

[Most of this information is derived from J. E. Leonard's [I Will Be Their God: Understanding the Covenant](http://laudemont.org/lp_books.htm), Laudemont Press, Chicago, 1992. See http://laudemont.org/lp_books.htm. Tony Denton, 6/06.]