

Kingdom and Covenant in the New Testament

Study Guide

LESSON
THREE

THE NEW COVENANT



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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the study guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and study guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the study guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the study guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

II. Kingdom Administration (1:32)

Both "*berith*" (Hebrew) and "*diatheke*" (Greek) mean "covenant" or "a solemn agreement or pact."

In the Bible, there are covenants between:

- Peers
- Kings and their citizens
- Kings and other kings
- God with nations and people

Many scholars have compared biblical covenants with a group of ancient Near Eastern documents called "suzerain-vassal treaties."

In these treaties, suzerains, or great kings, administered their kingdoms through treaties with vassals, or lesser kings under their authority.

A. Covenant Representatives (6:16)

God administers his kingdom by making covenants through men whom he chose to represent his covenant people.

1. Old Testament (7:16)

Covenant representative in Old Testament times:

- Adam (Genesis 1-3; Hosea 6:7)
- Noah (Genesis 6:18, 9:9-17)
- Abraham (Genesis 15 and 17)
- Moses (Exodus 19-24)
- David (Psalms 89 and 132)

Covenants with Adam and Noah are “universal covenants” because these men represented all human beings as God’s covenant people.

Covenants with Abraham, Moses and David are “national covenants” because they represented Israel and the Gentiles adopted into Israel.

2. New Covenant (9:00)

Christ is the new covenant representative (Hebrews 9:15; Romans 8:34; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

New Testament theology is closely tied to the person and work of Christ ("Christocentric").

B. Appropriate Policies (10:56)

The policies of God's covenants were designed for specific issues that were important at different stages of biblical history.

1. Old Testament (11:52)

Policies relevant for particular stages of God's kingdom:

- Covenant of foundations:
 - God's covenant with Adam
 - Emphasized the goals of God's kingdom
 - Emphasized the role of human beings before and after the Fall

- Covenant of stability:
 - God's covenant with Noah
 - Focused on nature's stability as the secure environment where sinful humanity could serve God's kingdom purposes

- Covenant of Israel's election:
 - God's covenant with Abraham
 - Focused on the privileges and responsibilities of Israel as God's chosen people

- Covenant of law:
 - God's covenant with Moses
 - Focused on God's law as he unified the tribes of Israel into a nation

- Covenant of kingship:
 - God's covenant with David
 - Established Israel as a genuine kingdom
 - Emphasized how David's royal dynasty was to lead Israel in kingdom service

2. **New Covenant (13:39)**

Covenant of fulfillment:

- Comes in the last period of biblical history

- Established policies to reverse the failures of the past and fulfill God's kingdom purposes in Christ (Jeremiah 31:31).

God revealed the policies of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

God called Israel to move beyond outward association with his covenants and circumcise their hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4).

Jesus taught that the new covenant age would unfold over time in three stages:

- Inauguration — In Christ's first advent, he fulfilled many but not all expectations of the new covenant.
- Continuation — Period between Christ's first and second advents where Jesus fulfills more new covenant expectations through his church.
- Consummation — At Christ's second advent, every expectation of the new covenant will be fulfilled.

New Testament theology was devoted to explaining the policies of the new covenant as it unfolded in these three stages.

New Testament authors had to adjust expectations for life in the new covenant (Matthew 6:12; 1 John 1:9; 2 Corinthians 11:13; Galatians 2:4).

C. Organic Development (20:32)

Each Old Testament covenant had different covenant representatives and policies but there was organic unity despite these changes.

1. Old Testament (21:27)

The policies of the covenants continued in force throughout Old Testament history from Adam to David.

2. New Covenant (23:14)

The organic development of covenants that began in the Old Testament continued with the new covenant in Christ.

The new covenant is a renewed national covenant with the descendants of Abraham and the Gentiles adopted into his family.

The new covenant renewed, rebuilt, renovated or refreshed the policies that God had established in previous covenants.

Every dimension of New Testament theology incorporates and builds on the theology of the Old Testament.

III. Dynamics of Interaction (29:55)

God determined how the dynamics of his covenants would come to fruition.

God's interactions with his people are often beyond human comprehension, but his ways are always good and wise (Deuteronomy 29:29, Isaiah 55:8-9, Job, Ecclesiastes).

A. Divine Benevolence (32:09)**1. Old Testament (33:30)**

God's benevolence both initiated and sustained the relationships established by his covenants.

God showed kindness to each covenant representative and to the people they represented:

- Adam in the covenant of foundations

- Noah in the covenant of stability

- Abraham in the covenant of Israel's election

- Moses in the covenant of law

- David in the covenant of kingship

2. **New Covenant (37:15)**

The New Testament displays God's benevolence toward Christ (Matthew 3:16-17, 12:18, 28:18; Luke 3:22; Acts 2:31-33; Romans 8:11).

The New Testament focuses on union with Christ.

The believer's union with Christ is two-fold:

- "In Christ": The people of the new covenant are identified with Christ in God's heavenly court (Ephesians 1:13).
- "Christ in us": Christ is present and at work within believers through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:10-11).

The New Testament teaches that, prior to Christ's return, God shows common grace to all people in the visible church.

B. Tests of Loyalty (43:11)

God tested the loyalty of his people in *every* biblical covenant, including the new covenant.

1. Old Testament (46:35)

God tested the loyalty of his covenant people in his testing of his covenant representatives (Genesis 22:12; Deuteronomy 8:2).

- Adam

- Noah

- Abraham

- Moses

- David

2. New Covenant (49:16)

As the new covenant representative, Jesus passed every test of loyalty that God required of him (Hebrews 4:15; Philippians 2:8).

Jesus provided permanent atonement and eternal forgiveness to all who believe in him (Matthew 8:17; Acts 8:32-33; Romans 6:10; 1 Peter 2:22-25).

Tests of loyalty are still in effect for the church, the people of the new covenant.

- “In Christ”: True believers are judged to have passed the test because Christ passed the test on our behalf (1 Timothy 3:16; Romans 4:23-25).

- “Christ in us”: Christ’s Spirit works within believers to make them holy.

God tests us to move us forward in sanctification (James 1:2-3).

The church consists of false and true believers and God’s tests of loyalty reveal whether or not we have saving faith (1 John 2:19).

C. Consequences (58:21)

1. Old Testament (58:54)

God issued both blessings and curses in the Old Testament covenants:

- Foundations:
 - God cursed Adam with suffering and death due to his disobedience.
 - God promised victory over the serpent.

- Stability:
 - Noah received blessings for his faithful service.
 - Noah faced curses after the flood.

- Israel's election:

Abraham received the consequences of blessings and curses as God's covenant representative.

- Law:

Moses' law spelled out many specific blessings and curses that would come to God's covenant people.

- Kingship:

David received the consequences of blessings and curses as he was faithful and unfaithful.

2. **New Covenant (1:01:36)**

Christ, the representative of the new covenant experienced both God's curses and God's blessings (Galatians 3:13).

Jesus didn't come under God's curses because of his personal sins (Isaiah 53:1-12; Philippians 2:8-9).

Jesus' resurrection and ascension were the just reward for his perfect obedience to God.

The consequences of the new covenant also impact the church, the people of the new covenant:

- "In Christ": Every eternal blessing of God has already been assigned to true believers through Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

- "Christ in us": Jesus works in true believers so they experience the consequences of obedience and disobedience in their daily lives.

Hardships and curses false believers endure in life are foretastes of eternal curses they will receive when Christ returns (Luke 12:45-46; Romans 2:4-5).

The blessings true believers experience in life are foretastes of eternal blessings at the consummation (Hebrews 12:1-11; Revelation 21:6-8).

When Christ returns, true believers will receive their eternal inheritance in the glorious new creation.

IV. Conclusion (1:08:51)

3. How did policies organically develop throughout the covenants in the Old and New Testaments?

4. Explain how God displayed his kindness to each covenant representative in the covenants of the Old and New Testaments.

Application Questions

1. Christ is the new covenant representative of the church. How does this covenant arrangement help you better understand New Testament theology?
2. How do you deal with your failures in light of God's kingdom purposes in Christ?
3. How have your personal failures deepened your appreciation of Christ's work?
4. How are you loving God deeply in your present circumstances?
5. God promised to intervene and write his law on our hearts. What are some specific ways you have experienced this promise in your life?
6. How can you spread a passion for God so that others will want to be in covenant with him?
7. God tests the loyalty of his people. How have the temporary hardships and discipline of God been sanctifying influences on you?
8. What are some specific ways you can fulfill your covenant obligations to God eagerly and joyfully in your present circumstances?
9. As true believers, we will receive our eternal inheritance in the glorious new creation. How can you use this promise to motivate yourself and others to persevere?
10. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

Abraham – Old Testament patriarch, son of Terah, father of the nation of Israel with whom God made a covenant in Genesis 15 and 17 promising innumerable descendants and a special land

Adam – The first man; husband of Eve; man with whom God made the covenant of foundations in which humanity was to fill and subdue the earth

berit/berith – Hebrew term (transliteration) most commonly translated "covenant"

Christocentric – Centered on the person and work of Christ

Common grace – God's benevolence shown to all people

Consummation – Third and final stage of inaugurated eschatology when Christ will return and fulfill God's ultimate purpose for all of history

Continuation – Second or middle stage of inaugurated eschatology; the period of the kingdom of God after Christ's first advent but before the final victory

Covenant – A binding legal agreement made either between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

Covenant of foundations – God's covenant with Adam that emphasized the goals of God's kingdom and the role of human beings in his kingdom

Covenant of fulfillment – God's covenant with his people in Christ that was designed to reverse the failures of the past and fulfill God's kingdom purposes; also called the "new covenant"

Covenant of Israel's election – God's covenant with Abraham that assured the privileges and responsibilities of Israel as God's chosen people; sometimes called the covenant of promise

Covenant of kingship – God's covenant with David that established Israel as a kingdom and emphasized that David's royal dynasty would endure and his descendant would sit on the throne and reign forever

Covenant of law – God's covenant with Moses that set God's law before the tribes of Israel as a unified nation

Covenant of stability – God's covenant with Noah that assured nature's stability

David – Second Old Testament king of Israel who received the promise that his descendant would sit on the throne and reign forever

diatheke – Greek term (transliteration) for "covenant"

Inauguration – First stage in inaugurated eschatology; refers to Christ's first coming and the ministries of his apostles and prophets

Justification – Theological term meaning that God declares a believer righteous by grace through faith; Paul and James both used this term, but sometimes in different ways

Moses – Old Testament prophet and deliverer who led the Israelites out of Egypt; man with whom God made a national "covenant of law" and who administered the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant to the Israelites; also appeared with Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration

National covenant(s) – A covenant made with an individual who represented the nation of Israel (e.g., Abraham, Moses, and David)

New covenant – The covenant of fulfillment in Christ; first mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31

Noah – Man who, under God's direction, built an ark and survived the Flood; individual with whom God made a universal covenant that promised the enduring stability of nature

Sanctification – The act of making people and things holy

Saving grace – The blessings of salvation applied to true believers by the Holy Spirit

Septuagint – Greek translation of the Old Testament

Sola Fide – Latin phrase meaning "faith alone"; the belief that justification is by faith alone and not by works; one of the basic principles of the Reformation

Suzerain – A powerful emperor or king that ruled over smaller nations; the more powerful party of a covenant, the one to whom it was necessary to submit

Suzerain-vassal treaty – A covenant arrangement made between a conquering emperor and a lesser ruler

Universal covenant(s) – Covenant made with an individual who represented all of mankind (e.g., Adam and Noah)

Vassal – A king or nation that must submit to a more powerful emperor or king (suzerain)