

# ***The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation***

## **Lesson 6: Introduction to Covenants**

(De-Hellenizing Mental Muck)

### **Introduction**

A key consideration about “faith” is *who* or *what* you put your faith in. Every person in Christendom wants to believe that the faith they hold is the true faith. But many also fear that if they question their faith or faith practices, then they’re doubting God Himself. And sadly, countless religious leaders use this fear to keep people from questioning *anything* about their creed or “faith” practices.

**From our Lord’s perspective, though, questioning to make sure the beliefs you hold are biblical *isn’t* doubting. Rather, questioning your “faith” is the first step to verifying the *truth and authenticity* of who or what you believe. All true faith begins with your loving trust in Jesus as Lord of your life!**

Please, prayerfully discuss with others close to you what you learn in these lessons. Don’t just reject something you read because it disagrees with what you have previously been taught. Investigate God’s Word as the Bereans whom Paul commended did to make sure what you read here is scriptural. Beginning with this lesson and several to follow, we’re going to be focusing on the *Covenant* our Father offers you through our Lord Jesus. There may be great changes to your faith walk *if* you embrace His Covenant!

There’s a profound point we need to make at the outset: The Covenant our Father offers through His Son Jesus is the inauguration of His kingdom on earth. As the prophesied KING, Jesus consistently declared through word and deed the nature of the *kingdom* He is establishing—the kingdom which has come *in Him*

and is manifested through His own in word and deed and spiritual power.

Those who understand this biblical reality readily welcome their Covenant responsibility to see His kingdom extended on earth. But regrettably a majority of Christians neither identify themselves as *servants* of the King nor do they see their “faith” beyond their own self-interests. Their “faith” is wrapped around the feel-good services they attend and the social activities they take part in with people with whom they’re comfortable. But keep in mind that the kingdom of our Lord and complacent “churchiness” have nothing in common.

***“This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28)***



We want to ask you two questions:

- To what was our Lord referring when He cites the “*blood of the Covenant,*” above?
- Do you grasp the severity of this warning?

***“How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the **blood of the covenant** that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:29).***

In the first part of this lesson we’ll discuss the *heart motivation* that’s essential

for you to embrace the Covenant our Father offers. If you've been part of self-satisfied "churchiness," then you're going to find it hard to recognize how little of the *heart and soul intensity* He requires is in you. All too many church attendees think that *knowing about* Jesus is the same as *knowing Him* and *being known by Him*. But there's a chasm of difference between these frames of reference!

1. It took the *blood sacrifice* of our Lord Jesus on the cross to inaugurate a new Covenant between His Father and humanity. As with every covenant there are *precise stipulations* required of all parties involved. And the stipulations you must agree with in order to even *enter* this Covenant with our Father are found in the *Older Testament* (the Hebrew Bible). This is why our Lord declares to *you* in this personalized paraphrase, "*If you trust in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within you.*" By this *I mean the Spirit*," received by those who trust Him as their Lord (see John 7:38,39).

The only Scripture at the time He spoke these words was the *Older Testament*. All too many denominations and sects consider the Hebrew Scripture to be irrelevant today. Yet if you nullify the importance of the Hebrew Scriptures, you'll never trust our Lord the way HE calls for you to do. Without that life-changing trust in Christ, you won't belong to Him since His Spirit isn't in you: "*And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ*" (Romans 8:9). You can play "being Christian," but that does not make you His. How vital is this point? It determines where you end up for eternity.

- **Why would our Lord base a trust-based relationship in Him on the Older Testament?**
- **Do you know the passages in the Hebrew Scriptures that detail what's required of you to trust Him the way He calls for?**

- **Did our Lord's first followers—people who were familiar with the instructions, commands, and prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures—receive a different Gospel than you did?**

- **Do you trust Lord Jesus enough to question in whom and/or in what you've placed your own faith?**

2. Embracing our Father's new Covenant starts you on a *life pilgrimage* as His child because you're indwelt by His Spirit. Child-like trust in your Lord is an essential identifier of those who belong to Him (Matthew 18:3). The Spirit's presence in you will continue to transform you into ever-increasing Christ-likeness as you humbly yield to His grace at work in you; "*streams of living water will flow from within you.*" This is the assurance He offers *you* through the new Covenant: "*And you, who with unveiled face reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, Who is the Spirit*" (2Corinthians 3:18, paraphrase).

- **Indwelt by His Spirit, you're venturing on a life pilgrimage of becoming ever more like your Lord Jesus. Can you and those who know you well in the faith attest before our Lord that you are truly becoming more like Him in love, in character, and in obedient trust? Do they see the kind of humility, love, personal sacrifice, and compassion which He personified growing as His Spirit works in you?**

**Our Father Makes Covenants**  
*If you don't understand His covenants,  
you can't understand the Gospel*

The Jews who first followed Jesus were well-steeped in the significance of biblical *covenants*, a concept few Christians today fully grasp. Yet the Bible cites the word *covenant* a whopping 293 times! The God Who makes covenants estab-

lished them with His people through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. Covenants were actually “cut”—in other words, an animal was cut in two and the participants walked through the blood. This signified that if those involved broke the covenant, they deserved to have their own blood shed. You can see by the life and death connection involved with covenants that this is serious business.

The word “**covenant**” can mean “*to come into union with*”, much like the covenant of marriage. The covenant our Father offers *in Christ* invites you to *live in union with Him*. You’re certainly the weaker partner of that union. But out of love for you to be part of His Son’s collective bride, He offers you this opportunity to die to self-rule and be joined into the Lordship of Jesus in your life. Union implies oneness, and this oneness entails an ongoing pilgrimage united with His Spirit and serving *a very special purpose*. You’re His **child and ambassador** on earth until the time of your salvation when your name is read aloud before the host of heaven (Revelation 3:5).

The intimate quality of your relationship with your Father requires you to live as His **child/ambassador** to a lost world, appealing to them to be reconciled to God even as you increasingly become more like His Son, Jesus. This is the central point of your Covenant union with Him.

We mentioned the strong link between our Father’s Covenant and the covenant of marriage. These are the two most important covenants humanity can receive from Him. Our Father closely examines our heart motives before entering into a Covenant with us. That’s why He promised to “circumcise the hearts” of the children of Israel and their descendants (Deuteronomy 30:6) even after having commanded them to circumcise

their *own* hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16). It’s that *heart change* which prepares the way to love Him heart and soul.

The Covenant with our Father and the marriage covenant parallel one another. That’s why Paul uses marriage as an analogy for the followers of Jesus in Corinth: to present them “*to **one husband, to Christ...as a pure virgin***” (see 2Corinthians 11:2). Every person to whom our Father reveals His Son is called to come into covenant union with Him through the Spirit. And every person who enters into the covenant of marriage comes into union with each other. Nothing should ever compete with either covenant in devotion and faithfulness.

Anchor for yourself that embracing our Father’s Covenant is similar to entering into marriage and *staying married*:

**Our Father purposes that the covenant of marriage to be the *physical* representation of the *spiritual* Covenant He offers us through Jesus—and *covenant* implies an intimate union of two parties becoming as one.**

God refers to Himself in a “marital” context with His people as the “Husband” of Israel: “*For your Maker is your **husband**—the Lord Almighty is His name —the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth*” (Isaiah 54:5).

Similarly, the followers of Jesus are His collective bride, and He awaits her at the wedding banquet: “*Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the **wedding** of the Lamb has come, and **His bride** has made herself ready*” (Revelation 19:7).

As you go through these lessons, remind yourself that the *Covenant that leads to your salvation and the marriage covenant are intricately linked*. Like marriage, our relationship with our Father through the Spirit of Christ in us is evidenced by *deep devotion in our hearts* and our *responsive*

*obedience* to Him. Isn't this the way our Lord Jesus lived on earth?

- **If you're married now, or were married, why did you want to marry that person?**
- **If you're divorced, what changed so that you broke your covenant of marriage?**

Our Father has *chosen you in love* so that your daily life will reflect *union with Him* as you keep pressing into Him. It's out of this intimate love-based union, the union our Lord Jesus has with His Father, that your heart's desire matches His: to *live as your Lord's child and ambassador to the lost*.

Can you hear Paul's heart cry here?

*"All this is from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God"* (2Corinthians 5:18-20).

- **This passage conveys an urgent assignment: "He has committed to us the message of reconciliation." What is the 'message of reconciliation' our Father wants you to proclaim?**
- **If you don't know what that message is, on what basis do you claim to be reconciled with Him? And how can you then be His ambassador?**
- **So ask yourself this. If you're not an ambassador of Jesus, can you and do you even have a relationship with Him?**

### To Live *In Union* Requires Trust

*The sacrifice of Jesus inaugurated a new Covenant, but the Gospel—the full meaning of the Covenant Good News—is found in the Hebrew Bible, the Older Testament.*

The very first book of the Older Testament announces the Good News of this Covenant being proclaimed to the patriarch Abraham (see Genesis 22:18; 26:4). The same parameter of *obedient trust and faithfulness* that this man lived by foretold the promise of redemption for Gentiles as well, who through *obedient trust and faithfulness*, would be included in our Father's plan:

*[Abraham] trusted in God and was faithful to Him, and that was credited to his account as righteousness. Be assured, then, that it is those who live by trusting and being faithful who are really children of Abraham. Also the Hebrew Scriptures, foreseeing that God would consider the Gentiles righteous when they live by trusting and being faithful, told the Good News to Abraham in advance by saying, "In connection with you, all the Gentiles will be blessed." So then, those who rely on trusting and being faithful are blessed along with Abraham, who trusted and was faithful* (Galatians 3:6-9, JNT).

These Gospel of the Covenant lessons are part of our Father's "**Hebraic Restoration.**" He intends that His children live with the same depth of trust which the Hebrew, Abraham, enacted through his obedience to his Lord. Can you see *how essential trust is* from our Lord's perspective in John 7:38,39? "*Whoever trusts in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this I mean the Spirit, whom those who trust in Me will receive*" (paraphrase).

### Establishing A Covenant

*It Must Be Ratified And Consummated*

Keep in mind that our Father is always the **Initiator** of any covenant between Himself and His people. HE is the One

**Older Testament examples of the intentional trust  
our Father requires of those who embrace His New Covenant.**



Abraham



David



Daniel



Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego

Who sets it into motion. Each covenant comprises three distinct criteria:

1. Our Father's *stipulations*, His requirements for you to accept His covenant.
2. His promises of *blessing* for your obedience.
3. His *judgment* for breaking the covenant.

[Read Deuteronomy, chapter 28, to deepen your understanding that alongside God's promise of blessing stands His judgment for refusal to obey. According to the Bible there are always serious consequences for breaking His covenants.]

Every covenant requires *both* ratification *and* consummation to confirm that the stipulations of the covenant have been accepted by both parties. *Ratifying* a covenant makes it officially valid. In the wedding ceremony a couple *ratifies* the intent of the marriage as they pledge from their hearts such vows as, "*For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.*" That's why these are called wedding vows. The couple is promising that their covenant union will be *permanent*.

It's the *pure heart motive* that's crucial in order for a biblical covenant to come into existence. Consider Jonathan's motive when he established a covenant with David: "*And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself*" (1

Samuel 18:3). Isn't this the purity of devotion required of a prospective husband? "*In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself*" (Ephesians 5:28).

Although ratified at the ceremony, the covenant of marriage is not *consummated* until the couple shares their first intercourse. The ceremony ratifies the couple's intent to enter into the covenant of marriage, but *consummation* is the essential part that seals the covenant. The *seal* is the sign that the covenant has been consummated.

A *seal of confirmation* applies to all the covenants our Father has offered humanity:

<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Sign of Sealed Consummation</u>
Noah	rainbow in the sky
Abraham	circumcision
Moses	sprinkling of blood
Jesus	receiving the indwelling Holy Spirit
Marriage	breaking the hymen in physical union

- **If you consider yourself "saved," what was it that you were asked to agree with for that to occur? In other words, what Biblical stipulations were you told that you must embrace to become born again in Christ?**
- **What evidence attests that you're truly indwelt by the Holy Spirit? What display of His power has anyone seen in you?**