

Fall Quarter 2017

Covenants with God

Signs of God's Covenants

September 3	The Rainbow	<i>Genesis 8:20-22; 9:8-17</i>
September 10	Circumcision	<i>Genesis 17:1-14</i>
September 17	Sabbath Observance	<i>Exodus 31:12-18</i>
September 24	A Spirit-Filled Heart	<i>Ezekiel 36:22-32</i>

Called into Covenant with God

October 1	God's Covenant with Abram	<i>Genesis 15:1-6, 17-21</i>
October 8	God's Covenant with Israel	<i>Exodus 19:16-25</i>
October 15	Obeying God's Law	<i>Exodus 20:18-26</i>
October 22	God's Covenant with David	<i>II Samuel 7:1-6, 8-10, 12-16</i>
October 29	God's Covenant with the Returned Exiles ..	<i>Nehemiah 9:32-38; 10:28-29</i>

An Everlasting Covenant

November 5	Faithful God, Unfaithful People ..	<i>Numbers 25:10-13; I Samuel 2:30-36</i>
November 12	Promise of a New Covenant	<i>Jeremiah 31:27-34</i>
November 19	Mediator of the New Covenant	<i>Hebrews 12:14-15, 18-29</i>
November 26	Remembering the Covenant	<i>I Corinthians 11:23-34</i>

To correctly understand and interpret the Bible, the student of the Scriptures must keep certain principles in mind. While some of these principles are the same whether one is reading the Bible or the daily newspaper, others are unique to the study of God's Word.

Among these principles is "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15), which includes an awareness of the various covenants God had made. Since the theme of this quarter is "Covenants with God," understanding what a covenant is and how God works through covenants is critical.

For most of us, the use of the word "covenant" rarely enters daily conversation, unless we happen to be talking about the Bible. Simply stated, a covenant is "an agreement between two or more parties outlining mutual rights and responsibilities" (Myers, ed., *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, Eerdmans). For us, the word "contract" probably best describes what the Bible calls a covenant, or, as it is sometimes rendered, "testament" (cf. Matt. 26:28; II Cor. 3:6, 14; Heb. 9:15-18).

When we use the terms "Old Testament" and "New Testament," we are speaking of the two major divisions of the Bible, representing the Scriptures of the old covenant and the new covenant. Many assume these are the only covenants mentioned in the Bible, but they are not.

Numerous covenants are spoken of in Scripture. Some apply to the entire world (Gen. 9:8-10); some apply to specific individuals or groups (II Sam. 7:12-16; II Chron. 13:5). This is particularly true during Old Testament history. To fail to realize that God has worked through various covenants during different dispensations can lead to confusion. Such misunderstanding can also result in trying to obey commands that do not apply to New Testament believers, such as various rituals (Col. 2:10-17) and dietary regulations (Mark 7:18-20; Acts 10:9-15).

Except for two lessons, all our studies this quarter come from the Old Testament, where the covenant principle permeates the narrative. Understanding how God worked through covenants is important in appreciating how Christ is "the mediator of a better covenant" (Heb. 8:6). He alone "obtained eternal redemption for us" (9:12) "through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (13:20).