

David Pawson – The Five Covenants of God (一)

June 10, 2018

- A. Intro: varieties of church life, decisions, operations
- B. One key word: Kingdom (OT: Kingdom of Israel; NT: Kingdom of God); Another key word: Covenant (unlocks the whole Bible)
- C. Q: How many covenants in the Bible and how many of them affect me?
- D. Some say one covenant (covenant of grace); some say two (Old and New); some say three, five, seven, etc. Also, how will they affect us?
- E. What is a covenant 約? It is a binding agreement between two parties, solemn, based on commitment. In our days, we do not usually use the word “covenant”. We often use the word “contract” – 合約. But there is a huge difference between these two words “covenant” and “contract”. We often want to have a “contract” with God (If you-God do this, I will do that.) but that is not what God intended.
- F. Contract 合約: two parties are on equal terms, i.e., bi-lateral. They can bargain/negotiate. E.g., a house owner has a contract with a builder. Both sides can try to maximize their own benefits. If one party fails, the other party is released from this contract (解約). Other examples include 和平條約, 藉著談判形成。
- G. Covenant: unilateral 單方面, 由強的一方來決定內容. Stronger party determines all contents of covenant. The weaker party can either accept or reject the covenant, they cannot change the terms or negotiate. If covenant is unconditional 無條件, then the stronger party must keep it, even if the weaker party did not follow the content. So, it is important to determine whether a covenant is unconditional or conditional.
- H. Marriage: God intended marriage to be a covenant, but modern society turns it more like a contract. Many modern-day marriages unfortunately ended up in break-up. An example of an English man and his relationship with his unfaithful wife and how he treats his marriage as a covenant.
- I. In fact, in most history and cultures, marriages were started with two parties not on the same footing. Husband is usually the stronger side and he proposes. Husband is the leader of their marriage.

- J. Another example: Will 遺囑, called a Testament (in UK), same meaning as Covenant. This word is the same as we used for the Bible. It is essentially one party deciding the contents. In letter of Hebrew, Jesus' covenant became effective when he died. Blood is associated with covenant in Scriptures.
- K. Point #1: Our God is a covenant-making God 立約的神. He bounds Himself voluntarily to human beings. It is amazing that God (the strong side) wants to establish a covenant with us (the weak side). He does not need to do this, but He wants to do this. He also "married" His children (covenant marriage). He even took the name of His bride, i.e., He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; He is the Holy One of Israel. When Israel forfeited the covenant with God, God instructed prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute (see the OT book of Hosea 何西阿). He wants us to be His heirs (will-testament), promising descendants and land.
- L. Point #2: Our God is a God who keeps His covenants. "I will. 我必" Reflects His will, His intentions. Example: I once listed "things all powerful God could not do", e.g., He cannot lie, etc. We did all these things that God cannot do, this shows how great is our God. Example: story of serving as 軍牧 and how to interact with people with different faith background. It is important we know what kind of God we believe in. God is righteous. He is right in all things he does (though this does not mean that all things we encounter are right). This helps us to have faith in all kinds of difficult situations. God will always do things right, even though we do not know or do not understand. He is reliable, He is faithful. We can trust Him and feel secure. God is not only a God who establishes covenants, but also keeps His covenants. Example: God has given a piece of land in middle east to Israel and He will keep this promise.
- M. Q1: how many covenants are there in the Bible? My answer is five. Q2: How many will affect Christians? My answer is four, because one of the five covenants is exclusively for Jewish people, not for Christians. When we are confused, we sometimes apply this covenant for Jewish people to Christians.
- N. Covenant with Noah in Genesis. The saddest verse in the whole Bible: "God regretted that He had made man. 耶和华就后悔造人在地上、心中忧伤 (創 6:6)" Violence and perverted sex. 耶和华见人在地上罪恶很大、终日所思想的尽都是恶 (6:5) 世界在神面前败坏 . 地上满了强暴。 神观看世界、见是败坏了 . 凡有血气的人、在地上都败坏了行为(6:11-12) The only thing in people's mind is continually evil. Angels were having sex with humans (women). Three types of creation: Animals, humans, angels. 神的儿子们看见人的女子美貌、就随意挑选、娶来为妻(6:2) God has forbidden sex between these different levels of creation. Both outside (violent, perverted sex, evil)

and inside (continually thinking about these). But God found one righteous man 義人: Noah and his family of 8. Noah and his family were saved. God made a covenant with them. God did not destroy us because He fulfills His promise. We are all sinners and evil. Why did God create human beings? God already had a Son, and He wants us to be His heirs as well, enjoying all He has provided for us. But we are not grateful. Personal examples on how to express our gratefulness to God.

- O. Noah covenant is unconditional. God promised that He will never do it again. He promised four seasons and will also provide enough food for all people in the world. 阳光和雨水，给义人和不义的人。How can we believe in God when there is so much injustice and famine? In fact, there is enough food in the world for everyone. The main reason for famine is because we do not share food. God used rainbow as the sign of this covenant. 虹必现在云彩中、我看见、就要记念我与地上各样有血肉的活物所立的永约 (9:16).
- P. Noah covenant is unconditional, but God expects us 1) to treat life as sacred 视生命为神圣的. 废除死刑会让人藐视生命，会带出堕胎，安乐死，等。2) to treat animals properly (放血). Though Noah himself and his family sinned afterwards, but God keeps His covenant.