

# Vows and Covenants

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Just as a set up for this sermon, imagine that you are standing at a crossroads where you are and the very next words can change the course of history. In the Bible, vows and covenants are powerful tools of commitment. They bind individuals to their word with lasting consequences. These are not “pinky promises”, they aren’t just statements. These are pivotal decisions that dictate the lives of those who utter them and, as we’ll see in our examples, affect generations that follow.

Vows and covenants have been a part of the human experience from the beginning of time. From the Ancient Israelites, to modern day believers. These solemn promises have played a crucial role in dictating the relationships both between people and relationships with Yehovah. But what exactly are vows? What are covenants? What are the differences? Why do they matter? Who cares? In this sermon we will embark on a journey, through the pages of the Bible, to remind ourselves of the rich history and profound significance of these sacred commitments. We’ll trace the thread of covenants through the Old Testament, from the Abram covenant to the Mosaic covenant and ultimately to the New Covenant—the ultimate expression of God’s love and grace through Jesus Christ. Along the way, we’ll discover how these ancient practices continue to resonate with us today, offering timeless lessons about faith, obedience, and transformative power of keeping our word and the consequences of breaking a vow. Then we’ll delve of the concepts of covenants. We want to examine covenants—how these binding agreements between God and His people have shaped the course of history and defined our very future.

Vows and covenants in scripture serve as crucial turning points in biblical narratives. Whether it’s Jacob’s pledge—pledging his loyalty at Bethel—or the transformative New Covenant brought forth by Jesus. These commitments are central to the relationships and the dramatic stories within the Bible, influencing laws, wars and the very unfolding of Yehovah’s plans. By examining how these vows shape the lives of biblical figures, we’ll gain insights into their lasting importance and how understanding them enriches our own faith and our own decision-making processes.

We’ll begin with some of the most dramatic and “consequence filled” vows from the Old Testament to understand just how significantly a vow can alter one’s destiny. By the end of this sermon, hopefully we should have not only a deeper understanding of these biblical concepts, but also a renewed application and appreciation for the incredible weight and beauty of the promises that we make to God and each other, and the promises that He makes to us.

Vows in the Old Testament, like I said, are not “pinky promises”. They are not casual commitments. Vows were serious business back in the day. When someone made a

vow, they were essentially making a binding contract with God Himself. Those are pretty high stakes. Exactly what is a vow? In simple terms:

*A vow is a solemn promise to do something or refrain from doing something.*

It's like saying, "God if you do this for me, then this is what I promise to do." We'll look at several examples that make this point. Vows were often made in times of distress, danger, or deep desire. People would cry out to God in times of distress and danger. Making a vow was a way of sealing their request to God and showing their sincerity.

First up we have Jacob's famous vow at Bethel. You know the story, it's very common. Jacob and his mom pull some shenanigans to steal the birthright from Esau. Esau was pretty ticked off and swears that he's going to kill Jacob, so Jacob is on the run from his brother Esau. On the way to uncle Laban's house, Jacob has a dream where he sees a ladder reaching down from heaven with angels going up and down the ladder. God appears to him and promises to bless him and his descendants. So, when Jacob wakes up, he's blown away and makes a vow. That vow is famous in Genesis 28:20-21.

**Genesis 28:20** *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on,  
21) so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. (NKJV)*

That's a pretty big "if"- "then" statement. Now let's switch over to another story I know you're very familiar with. It's the story about the birth of Samuel. Hannah was one of two wives of Elkanah and Hannah was barren while Elkanah's other wife had many children and rubbed it in, making Hannah miserable. In one of their pilgrimages to the Tabernacle, Hannah made a vow to God. This is in 1 Samuel 1:11. She made a vow and if you remember, Eli thought she was drunk and she said "No, I'm not drunk I'm just full of sorrow."

**1 Samuel 1:11** *Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head." (NKJV)*

As you know the story, God heard her prayer, God answered her prayer and she gave birth to Samuel who became one of Israel's greatest prophets. But not all vows ended happily ever after. The story that got me off on the subject of vows was the story of Jephthah. This guy made a very rash vow, promising to sacrifice the first thing that came out of his house, which turned out to be his daughter. He promises if God would give him victory in this battle. What's interesting about the story, I think a couple of things. First of all, Jephthah tries to negotiate with the enemy. He rehearses the whole history with Israel up to that time, showing that he had a working knowledge of the

Bible—of scripture—he knew all the stories and all about Exodus. He was explaining this and how they came out, to his potential enemy. I'm looking at this vow he made and the question that comes up is:

*“Did he really slice his daughter’s throat and burn her?”*

I can't answer that. There are a couple of anomalies that you can notice.

First of all, burnt offerings were not supposed to be made by individuals, they were only made by priests. I can't imagine him taking his daughter to a priest and saying, slice her throat. Another thing was, what the daughter was mourning was her virginity. Which is an odd thing. Let me go off with my friends and mourn my virginity. So, I don't know. Let's turn over and look at this in Judges 11 and we'll start reading in verse 29.

**Judges 11:29** *Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced toward the people of Ammon.*

*30) And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, “If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands,*

*31) then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”*

*32) So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the LORD delivered them into his hands.*

*33) And he defeated them from Aroer as far as Minnith—twenty cities—and to Abel Keramim, with a very great slaughter. Thus the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.*

*34) When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing; and she was his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter.*

*35) And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, “Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it.”*

*36) So she said to him, “My father, if you have given your word to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon.”*

*37) Then she said to her father, “Let this thing be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I may go and wander on the mountains and bewail my virginity, my friends and I.”*

*38) So he said, “Go.” And he sent her away for two months; and she went with her friends, and bewailed her virginity on the mountains.*

*39) And it was so at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. She knew no man. And it became a custom in Israel*

*40) that the daughters of Israel went four days each year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite. (NKJV)*

Whatever was the outcome of Jephthah's daughter, it wasn't good. It wasn't what was intended. It shows the seriousness of vows. God obviously doesn't want human sacrifice, but we know that that's exactly how he tested Abram. Would he be willing to sacrifice Isaac. It was stopped, but the point here is not to focus on what happened to Jephthah's daughter, the point is to focus on the importance and seriousness of vows. That when we make a commitment, we better think about it and know what the consequences are and be ready to fulfill that vow.

Then there are the Nazarite vows, which were special vows of dedication to God. We know that Samson was a famous judge and warrior with incredible speed and strength. He defied the armies of the Philistines and he was just one man. He was a Nazarite from birth, set aside for God's service. Samson's long, uncut hair was a sign of the Nazarite vow. The Nazarite vow was the source of his strength. When that Nazarite vow was broken, not by his own consent, not because he was looking for a haircut, he was tricked. He disclosed the secret and then that was taken advantage of and his hair was cut. He lost his strength and ultimately, he lost his life. You read that in Judges 16.

So, what can we learn from these Old Testament vows? First and foremost, vows are not to be taken lightly. Vows have consequences. They are solemn promises made before God and breaking them has some serious consequences. Vows also revealed the depth of human desire and the lengths people will go to secure favor and blessing from God. They remind us of the importance of keeping our word, of living with integrity before God and others. Let's go to 2 Samuel 21 and read about another vow.

**2 Samuel 21:1** *Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, "It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites."*

*2) So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; the children of Israel had sworn protection to them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah.*

*3) Therefore David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? And with what shall I make atonement, that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?"*

*4) And the Gibeonites said to him, "We will have no silver or gold from Saul or from his house, nor shall you kill any man in Israel for us." So he said, "Whatever you say, I will do for you."*

*5) Then they answered the king, "As for the man who consumed us and plotted against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the territories of Israel,*

*6) let seven men of his descendants be delivered to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD chose." And the king said, "I will give them.*

*7) But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.*

*8) So the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite;*

*9) and he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the hill before the LORD. So they fell, all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest. (NKJV)*

So, this would be the days of Unleavened Bread-ish. To atone for this breach, David agrees to the Gibeonites request and handed over Saul's male descendants to be killed. The lesson of this tragic story underscores the enduring nature of national vows. At the time Saul did this, Joshua had been long dead. But the vow was still in place, even though Joshua was long gone. These examples from the Old Testament not only highlight the importance of vows in the lives of individuals, but also provide lessons for us on the power of words, the power of commitments, the promises that are made, the promises that we make, the commitments that we make in our relationship with Yehovah. Each story carries a message that deepens the gravity in understanding of commitments made in faith and their stories encourage us to consider the lasting impact that comes from our words.

Each of these vows, whether they are made by individuals or collectively, not only shape the spiritual landscape of the time but also set precedence for future interactions between God and His people. Once again we are reminded that all of these stories are recorded for our benefit; for us to learn from. They highlight the sacredness of promises made to God and the ripple effects that commitments can have across generations and across nations. By studying these Old Testament vows, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the power of our own words. All of the collection of narratives in the Old Testament that we read over and over again and every time we read them, pull more meaning out of them. They should govern our approach to commitments. Especially those that are made with God or made in the name of God or made regarding God.

If you're like me, I have never paid much attention to vows because I thought that Matthew 5:33 just did away with swearing, did away with vowing. Let's look at Matthew 5:33 and maybe get a different slant on this scripture.

**Matthew 5:33** *Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'*

*34) But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne;*  
*35) nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.*

*36) Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.*

*37) But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. (NKJV)*

That makes it pretty clear that we are not to swear, we are just to let our yes be yes and no be no and just tell the truth and everything will be fine. The challenge though is that this contradicts a lot of teaching in the Old Testament about what Yehovah teaches us about vows. Let's go to Exodus 3:15. We will look at a couple of scriptures and tie them together to help clarify this.

**Exodus 3:15** *Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations."* (NKJV)

That word *memorial* can also mean "mention". *This is my mention to all generations.* Now we're going to tie that in to Deuteronomy 6:13. God wants us to mention His name; to use it and it's a memorial to all generations.

**Deuteronomy 6:13** *You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.* (NKJV)

That seems like a contradiction, doesn't it? Don't swear under any circumstances and let your "yes" be "yes" and "no" be "no". But here, Yehovah is saying to swear—take vows in His name. This kind of gets untangled when you look at the Hebrew version of Matthew. It inserts a magic word that completely changes the meaning. Matthew 5:33 in Hebrew, which you probably don't have and can't turn to. You can follow along.

**Matthew 5:33** *You have further heard what was said by the ancients, you shall not swear falsely in my name. But you must pay your vow to Yehovah.*  
34) *But I say to you, you should not swear by anything falsely.* (NKJV)

The magic, inserted word, is *falsely*.

34) *continued*) ... *not by heaven* [which is the throne of God]  
35) *nor by earth* [which is His footstool] *not by Jerusalem* [which is His city]  
36) *nor by your head because you cannot make one hair white or black.*  
37) *Let your yes be yes and your no, no. Anything added to this is evil.* (NKJV)

Yeshua was not saying not to swear, He was saying not to swear *falsely*. Why would He be saying that? The Pharisees thought since Leviticus 19:12 says not to swear falsely in the name of Yehovah, they had determined that it was okay to swear falsely in any other situation. You could cross your fingers behind your back, do king's X, and it didn't matter. This strange doctrine, taken from Leviticus 19:12, taken in an overly literal sense, made deception okay as long as you were very tricky with your language. Let's go look at Matthew 23 which is congruent with everything Yehovah says about vows in the Old Testament if you insert the magic word, *falsely*.

**Matthew 23:16** *Woe to you, blind guides, who say, Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'*

17) *Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?*

18) *And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.'*

19) *Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?*

20) *Therefore, he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it.*

21) *He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it.*

22) *And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. (NKJV)*

He's not just saying don't take vows, He's saying you are committed to your vows regardless of what name you do it in.

Now that we have a handle on vows, we're going to take a step back and look at the bigger picture of covenants. If vows are like pinky promises on steroids, then covenants are like the ultimate, unbreakable pact. These are literal contracts between Yehovah and His people that form the backbone of the biblical story. At its core, a covenant is a binding agreement between two parties. It's a formal relationship that comes with obligations, consequences, and in the Bible, we see God making covenants with people like Abraham, through Moses, as well as the entire nation of Israel. These covenants are not just legal contracts. They are expressions of God's love, His faithfulness and desire to have a relationship with His people.

Let's start with the granddaddy of biblical covenants. It's probably supposed to be Noah's but we're going to start with the Abrahamic Covenant. In Genesis 12 God makes some incredible promises to Abraham.

**Genesis 12:2** *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.*

3) *I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* (NKJV)

That's a pretty good deal, but the Abrahamic Covenant wasn't just a one-way street. As a sign of the covenant, God commanded Abraham and his male servants to be circumcised. The physical mark was a visible reminder of the covenant relationship and the obligations that came with it.

So how do covenants differ from vows? For one thing, covenants are initiated by Yehovah while vows are usually made by people. Covenants are far more comprehensive, involving a whole set of promises and obligations rather than a single specific promise. While vows are often conditional—if you do this, I'll do that—covenants are based on God's unconditional love and faithfulness. Perhaps the most

significant difference is the scope and impact of covenants. While vows are personal promises, covenants have the power to shape the destiny of entire nations and generations in the future. The Abrahamic Covenant for example sets in motion the story of God's chosen people and ultimately leads to the coming Messiah.

What is referred to as the Old Covenant, established at Mount Sinai through Moses, begins the covenant relationship of Israel as a nation. I'm going to skip reading Exodus 24:3-8 but that is a rehearsal of the Old Covenant. How is that Old Covenant ratified? It's ratified with the sprinkling of blood. I want you to just imagine for yourself—you enter into an agreement and then somebody takes a paint brush, dips it into a bucket of blood and sprinkles you. That sounds pretty gruesome right? But this act of sprinkling blood is what symbolized the covenant's seriousness and the people becoming pure before God. Establishing a foundation for sacrificial practices under the law.

So, covenants are bilateral, involving commitments from both Yehovah and the people, unlike vows which are usually unilateral, promises made by individuals. The Old Covenant was not just about individual obedience but also reflected the national identity and spiritual mission of Israel. The Old Covenant required Israelite's compliance with God's laws as a condition for receiving His blessings, creating a reciprocal relationship based on adherence to Yehovah's statutes. Unlike vows, which might be made spontaneously without witnesses by individuals, covenants are formally established by rituals, ceremonies and mutual agreement.

Understanding the nature and intricacies of biblical covenants, especially to the detailed unfolding of the Old Covenant, provides a backdrop for appreciating how the contracts shaped the spiritual and communal lives of God's people. Before we move further, I want to pause and make sure that we understand the context and significance of these Old Testament covenants. They reveal a God who is faithful, loving, and committed to His people even when they stumble and fall over and over again. They show us that God's promises are sure and that He always keeps His end of the bargain.

Now it's time to get to the heart of the matter, which is the New Covenant. This is where all those Old Testament vows and covenants have been leading us. It's the game changer. Let's set the stage. The Old Covenant with its laws and sacrifices could only go so far in dealing with the promise of sin. It's like putting a band aid on a gushing wound. It might help a little but it doesn't deal with the problem. But Yehovah, in His infinite wisdom and love, had a plan. He promised a New Covenant—one that would transform hearts and minds and offer a permanent solution to the sin problem. So, the prophet Jeremiah got a sneak peek at this new covenant and wrote about it in Jeremiah 31:31.

**Jeremiah 31:31** *"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—  
32) not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.*



33) *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

34) *No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD, for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'* (NKJV)

This new covenant wouldn't just be external, like the old. It would be internal, transforming people from the inside out. The best part is that our sins are forgiven. They are wiped out and remembered no more. But how would this new covenant that Jeremiah talked about come about? Jesus Christ, the Son of God came as the mediator of the New Covenant. At His last Passover, Jesus took the cup and He said, this cup is a new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you. That's in Luke 22:20. Jesus was pointing to His own sacrificial death on the cross as the means by which the new covenant would be established. The Old Testament sacrifices were like a shadow of things to come. They pointed forward to the ultimate sacrifice—*Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.*

When Jesus died on the cross, He took upon Himself the punishment for our sins. When He rose from the dead, he conquered sin and death once and for all. This is what makes the New Covenant so superior to the old one. It's not based on our ability to keep the law or offer perfect sacrifices. It's based on the finished work of Christ. Through faith in Him, we become participants in the New Covenant. We receive forgiveness of sins; we receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the promise of eternal life. But the New Covenant isn't just about individual salvation or saving ourselves. It's about a new way of relating to God, relating to Yehovah and relating to one another. The New Covenant creates a new community—the church, the ecclesia—made up of all of those who God is calling and who choose to enter into the New Covenant. It breaks down barriers between Jew and Gentile, male and female, slaves and free. It unites us in a common identity as the children of God and members of His family. The transformation from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant isn't just a change in contracts. It's a profound shift in the spiritual dynamics between God and humanity. The Old Covenant, with the backdrop of the Mount Sinai—lightning, thunder, loud noise, scary situation—that was designed to make a lasting impression. It was comprehensive, dictating every aspect of daily and religious life, through laws that were carved in stone.

Yet for all its rigor, it just highlighted human frailty. People repeatedly failed to uphold their end of the agreement and the constant need for sacrifices underscored humanities ongoing struggle with sin. Reading the stories, the narratives, of the Old Testament is kind of like riding a roller coaster—it's up and down.

The Gospels narrate the life of Christ. It's a tapestry of teaching. It paints a picture of miracles and moments that pointed relentlessly to this new promise. On Passover, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus broke bread, poured wine and declared them as His

body and blood—the seal of the New Covenant. His subsequent crucifixion and His resurrection were not just pivotal, historical events, but the enactment of the promises that were made. A single, perfect sacrifice, replacing the endless offerings of sacrifices under the Old Covenant.

This covenant introduced a direct line to Yehovah through His Spirit, which guides, convicts, comforts and makes a relationship with Yehovah a deeply personal experience. Believers are now temples of the Holy Spirit and this internal dwelling transforms them from the inside out, shaping desires, inspiring actions and deepening faith. The New Covenant, sealed by Christ's sacrifice, marks a revolutionary change in how believers relate to God. It fulfills prophetic visions of a more successful relationship with Yehovah where the law becomes a living part of the believer, guiding and growing within them. It's a promise of eternal forgiveness and an everpresent God, making the spiritual journey one of continuous transformation and deepening connection.

That's the glory of the New Covenant. It was the fulfillment of all those Old Testament promises and the inauguration of a new era in God's plan of redemption. As we continue to explore what it means to live under the New Covenant, keep in mind it's all about Jesus Christ. He's the center, the foundation, the mediator, and the goal of it all. We should never lose sight of the wonder and the beauty of what He has done for us through the New Covenant. Entering into the New Covenant is the most important decision that we will ever make in our lives and is not something to be taken lightly.

First and foremost, entering the New Covenant begins with responding to God's call. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws them—John 6:44. This underscores that entry into the New Covenant begins with a calling from God the Father. It is Yehovah who initiates the process; opening individual's minds to understand truths previously hidden from them. But responding to God's call isn't just a matter of saying a prayer or signing on the dotted line. It involves counting the cost. Jesus Himself warned that following Him would require taking up our cross daily and being willing to lay down our lives for His sake. Luke 14 is where in baptismal counseling, we go and read a couple of examples of what it means to count the cost. Know what you are getting into and count the cost.

Central to entering the New Covenant is accepting the death of Jesus Christ as our atoning sacrifice, as our Passover. This acceptance is pivotal, as it acknowledges Christ's role as the mediator of the New Covenant. In Hebrews 9:15.

**Hebrews 9:15** *And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.* (NKJV)

So, baptism is the outward expression of our faith and commitment, symbolizing “the death of the old life of sin and the rebirth into a new life in Christ.” Romans 6:4.

**Romans 6:4** *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (NKJV)*

Baptism is a public declaration of our faith in Christ and our identification with Him in His death, in His burial, and in His resurrection. Following baptism, is the laying on of hands which allows us to receive the Holy Spirit. That seals our entry into the New Covenant. Acts 19:5.

**Acts 19:5** *When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

*6) And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (NKJV)*

This is a powerful ritual and even though when we're baptized and hands are laid on us, we may not feel that or speak in tongues, we still have to realize we are receiving the Spirit of God. That's the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. That's the same Spirit that did all those miracles in the Old Testament. That's the same Spirit that is dwelling in us and is transforming us from the inside out. It's a big deal. So the Holy Spirit is crucial. It guides us and enables us to live according to God's laws now written on our hearts. Without that Spirit we would be no better than the Ancient Israelites. Hebrews 8:10 is quoting from Jeremiah's prophecy.

**Hebrews 8:10** *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (NKJV)*

It's an internal guide that helps us fulfill the law through love and genuine, inward transformation. The New Covenant also calls us into a community where we support, encourage, and edify one another in our walk with God. Hebrews 10:24 makes this point.

**Hebrews 10:24** *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,*

*25) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (NKJV)*

This fellowship is vital for growth and perseverance in the faith. Entering into the New Covenant means surrendering our life to God's will and committing ourselves to His purpose. Repentance means turning away from our sin and self-centeredness and turning towards God. It means acknowledging our need for forgiveness and our inability to save ourselves. We're in a hopeless situation without God, without the New Covenant, without His Spirit. Faith means trusting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ alone for our salvation. It means believing that His death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins and His resurrection secures our eternal life. The New Covenant, established

through Jesus Christ, represents a profound transformation, securing our future. It's a transformation in the relationship between God and His people.

The New Covenant is a gracious invitation from God to enter into a personal and transformative relationship with Him, mediated through Jesus Christ. It required a thoughtful and committed response from those who are called. This covenant is not merely a set of new rules but a complete renewal of the heart and mind, leading to a life lived in close relationship with God, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, and fellowship with other believers. As we continue to walk in the New Covenant, we discover that it's not just a onetime decision. It's every day, every minute.

The journey into the New Covenant is marked by deliberate steps:

- Recognizing one's need for grace.
- Understanding the depth of Christ's sacrifice, publicly declaring this faith through baptism.
- Receiving the Holy Spirit to empower a life in holiness and community.

This process outlines not just the initial steps into the covenant, but the pathway for a lifelong journey of faith and obedience. Ensuring that our relationship is continually deepened and enriched. Living under the New Covenant is an incredible privilege when you look at the tiny, tiny percentage of people in the world who are called and understand. It is an incredible privilege. But it also comes with responsibilities. As New Covenant people, we are called to live lives of obedience to God's commands. It's not a matter of earning salvation. That's impossible. But it is a matter of living our salvation, by expressing our love and gratitude to God through our actions. At the heart of the New Covenant is the law of Christ, the law of love. As we know Jesus summed up the whole Old Testament law in two commands. What were they? Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. If we are living the law of love, then we are fulfilling the very heart of the New Covenant.

Obedience isn't just about what we do; it's not actions. It is a part of actions, but it's us being transformed, it's who we are. Under the New Covenant, we are being transformed into what? Into the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit is at work within us, shaping our character, renewing our minds and empowering us to live lives that reflect the beauty and holiness of God. It's not just about rules and responsibilities, it also comes with blessings.

So, what do we get out of the deal? We get forgiveness of sins and a clear conscience before God and eternal life—the hope of the resurrection. The indwelling presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. Adoption into God's family as His beloved family. We get access to God's throne of grace through prayer. We get the support and encouragement of the brethren—the covenant community. We get the joy of participating in God's mission in the world. We get the assurance of God's love, God's protection, and provision. He takes care of us. These blessings are not earned by our obedience, they are freely given through the grace of God.

The major takeaways here is that Old Testament vows, such as those made from Jacob fleeing from Esau, from Joshua to the Gibeonites, Hannah and Jephtha—they illustrate the profound consequences of making solemn promises to God or in His name. These stories teach us about the weight of our words and the importance of considering our vows carefully. As Christ taught us, it's not a matter of whether you vow in God's name, it's a matter of telling the truth all the time, under all circumstances. Unlike vows, which are often personal and unilateral, covenants like the Old Covenant established at Sinai involved mutual commitments before God and His people. These agreements come with blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience, underscoring the seriousness of Yehovah's laws. The shift to the New Covenant marks a significant theological development. It fulfills prophecies, first of all, and extends God's promises beyond the boundaries of Israel to all of humanity—to all the Father calls. Emphasizing faith, emphasizing salvation through faith in Christ and inward transformation in believers.

The New Covenant, accessible through Jehovah's calling, followed by the believer's response, which includes repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit. It is not just about external adherence to laws but involves a profound internal change, enabling us to fulfill God's law through a heart and a mind that is transformed by God's very Spirit living in us.

Our journey through scriptural narrative of vows and covenants provides not only historical insights, but also practical guidance for us. As modern members of the ecclesia, understanding these biblical concepts helps us appreciate the depth of our relationship with God and the responsibilities that come with it. By recognizing the continuity and the evolution of God's promises, we can better understand our place in the story and live out our commitments with integrity and faithfulness.

As we reflect on everything, we have rehearsed by going through this journey, we should really be filled with gratitude. We should be grateful for the incredible gift of the New Covenant. We really should be inspired when we look at what has been done for us and we should really be inspired to live our commitments with passion, with integrity, with joy. We should be eager to be lights to the world, models of Yehovah's way of life so that those who Yehovah may be calling can notice and be curious about why we are so different. Most importantly brethren, we have discovered the wonder and beauty of the New Covenant—the ultimate expression of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ. Through the New Covenant we have been invited into a relationship with God Who transforms us from the inside out. It does something that we could not do for ourselves. It empowers us to live lives of love and obedience and secures our eternal destiny in Christ.

This exploration gives me, gives you, an opportunity to reflect. Reflect on our commitments to God. Reflect and be inspired by the examples that God has given us, of faithfulness and the transformation that we see in the people that God is working with. As we move forward, we want to hold fast to the promises of God, embracing the

covenant. He will not break His covenant. He has established it with us, through His grace and mercy. In so doing, we continue the legacy of faith that has been passed down through generation after generation, living out the profound truths of God's unfailing love and justice. At the core of the New Covenant, it is a personal relationship with God.

Through Jesus Christ, our Passover, we become children of God. Soon to be born into His very family. That means we have direct access to God through prayer. We don't need a human mediator; we don't need a complex system of sacrifices. We can boldly approach the throne of grace, knowing that we are welcome and we are loved by our heavenly Father. Just like our children can approach us. We have God's Spirit dwelling within us. Think about that. The Spirit that raised Christ from the dead, the Spirit that did all these miracles. That's dwelling inside us—we are the temple for God's Holy Spirit. His Spirit right now is teaching us, it's guiding us, and it's transforming us from the inside out.

One of the key ways that we enter into the New Covenant and begin the road to transformation—the beginning of it—is baptism. Do you remember back when you were baptized? I remember my baptism. It was in a little pool that was only about 4 feet high and it was green with algae. The bottom was slick, but we all remember our baptism. That's what kicked this thing off. When we were baptized, we were making a public declaration. It was like we were enlisting in God's army and the church. We were putting on the uniform and saying, I'm all in. When we made the commitment. We all made that with counseling; with consideration. There's no way that we really knew what we were getting into. We didn't have a clue, but we were making that commitment to get started going down the road. Through that, we have the ecclesia—we have each other. The ecclesia isn't just a social club, it's not just a weekly gathering, whether it's on zoom or a video or live. It's more than that. We're bound together by our shared faith and our commitment to Yehovah and to each other. It's where we find support, accountability, and encouragement. Paul emphasized this over and over again—this is not a solo trip. We use our spiritual gifts to build up one another and advance the mission of God in the world. We bear one another's burdens, we celebrate each other's joys, we spur one another to love and to good deeds. We keep the Holy Days together, we keep Passover together, we wash each other's feet. We're tight—this is an important part of the New Covenant, of the ecclesia. It's being there for each other. We partake of the bread and the cup. We affirm our unity as God's people. By living under the New Covenant, it's not just about what happens on the Sabbath, it's about a whole new way of engaging with the world around us. As New Covenant converts, we are called to be salt and light.

I'm going to read Matthew 5:13.

**Matthew 5:13** *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*

*14) "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

*15) Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*

*16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (NKJV)*

Brethren, we are ambassadors of reconciliation—setting an example. Salt is what preserves; light is what exposes truth. That means that our lives should be marked by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control, gentleness—the fruits of the Spirit. It means we should be people of integrity and compassion.

I have before me a legal contract. It's a sample, a mock template of a New Covenant contract between you and Yehovah. I'm going to read this, but when naming the parties to the contract, I'll substitute your name with the individual so that you can insert your own name there.

### **Contract of the New Covenant.**

The parties: This covenant is hereby entered into, by, in between the first party, Yehovah Almighty God. Address:

Omnipresent. The second party (individual): The called believer, the faithful.

Address: Individual's location.

This New Covenant shall take effect for individual upon completion of the following.

1. Being called by God the Father to understand and accept the terms of the New Covenant (John 6:44).
2. Repentance of Sin and acceptance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice as payment for those sins.
3. Baptism by full emersion in water, as an outward sign of inward faith and cleansing from sin.
4. Receiving the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands.

Purpose of the contract: The purpose of this covenant is to establish an eternal relationship between Yehovah and individual based on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

This covenant supersedes the Old Covenant and provides the means for salvation. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit and eternal life for those who adhere to it's terms.

#### *Terms and Conditions:*

1. Belief in faith. Individuals shall believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, trusting in His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. (John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10).
2. Repentance and baptism. Individuals shall repent of their sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).
3. Obedience to God's laws. Individuals shall strive to obey all of God's laws, commandments and statutes. Including, but not limited to, the Ten

Commandments (Exodus 21) and shall observe the annual Holy Days as outlined in Leviticus 23.

4. Receiving the Holy Spirit. Individuals shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands after baptism (Acts 8:14-17, 19:5-6).
5. Acceptance of Jesus Christ as High Priest. Individuals shall accept Jesus Christ as the eternal High Priest and mediator of the New Covenant. (Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 7:24-25).
6. Observance of Passover. Individuals shall observe the Passover annually as a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. Partaking of the symbols of bread and wine as instructed by Jesus and taught by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

#### *Promises and Benefits:*

1. Forgiveness of sins. Yehovah shall forgive individual of his/her sins upon repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38).
2. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Yehovah shall grant the individual the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to guide, comfort, and empower them (John 14, 16-17, 26).
3. Eternal life. Yehovah shall grant individual eternal life in His Kingdom upon the return of Christ, provided they remain faithful to the terms of the covenant. (John 3:16; Romans 6:23).
4. Direct access to God. Yehovah shall provide individual with direct access to His Presence through prayer and supplication (Hebrews 4:16).

#### *Breach and Consequences*

Definition of breach: A breach of this covenant shall occur is an individual willfully and unrepentantly violates any of the terms and conditions set forth therein.

Consequence of breach: Upon breach of this covenant, individual shall be subject to the following consequences.

- A. Loss of fellowship with Yehovah and removal of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).
- B. Corrective discipline from Yehovah designed to bring about repentance and restoration (Hebrews 12:5-11).

If individual remains unrepentant, they shall face eternal destruction in the lake of fire at the final judgement. (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:15).

#### *Restoration and Reinstatement:*

- A. If individual repents and seeks to be restored after a breach, they must confess their sins and seek forgiveness. (1 John 1:9).
- B. Renew their commitment to the terms and conditions of this covenant.
- C. Seek guidance and support for spiritual restoration.



*Duration and Jurisdiction:*

This covenant is everlasting and shall remain in effect for individual throughout their physical life and into eternity. The terms and conditions of this covenant are governed by the divine laws and principles set forth in Holy Bible.

*Attestation and Ratification:*

Yehovah has ratified this New Covenant through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross.

*Individual:*

Attest to the acceptance of the terms and conditions of this covenant by their faith, their repentance, their baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit.

*Signed and sealed by the Holy Spirit on this date. (Insert the date of your baptism).*

This is the contract brethren that we are so, so grateful for. As we come to the time of Pentecost, the time of the ratification of covenants, then we can think about that. Starting with the vows and the covenants of the Old Testament and then moving through into covenants. God didn't create covenants for His benefit. They are created for our benefit. We can see the covenants that He made with Abraham and did He keep those covenants? Yeah. With the Old Covenant, did He keep His part of the bargain? Yeah—and went way beyond what He agreed to do. So, it's through that, that we know He will keep His part of the New Covenant. We are banking our lives on it.