

How Jesus Fulfilled "Covenant"

In our last study on the idea of "covenant"...

- ~ we discussed what a covenant is (primarily between a king and his subjects),
- ~ we discussed some covenant-language in order to spot related texts, and...
- ~ we discussed how the old temporary testament or covenant between God and Israel corresponded to all that. Now...

In this study and the following one, let's see how Jesus fulfilled the idea of "covenant" between humanity and God forever. Firstly...

Jesus is the link between the old and new covenants.

The New Testament opens with a reference to this: Matthew immediately established Jesus' relationship to the Old Testament.

His very first chapter contains the genealogy of Jesus, proving that He is the promised, eternal King of Yahweh, the son of king David, meaning that He is legally qualified to be King of Israel; an angel verified this to Mary, adding that He would sit on David's throne (Luke 1:32 & 69).

Actually, Matthew does more in his genealogy than just trace Jesus to King David: a closer look at the list of Jesus' ancestors reveals a special emphasis on the number "14."

Matthew wrote, *"So all the generations from Abraham to David [the first and last mediators of the covenant to Israel] are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon [which occurred because of the broken covenant] are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ [the Mediator of the New Covenant] there are fourteen generations"* (1:17).

The fact that Matthew called our attention to these 14-generation spans in the genealogical history of Jesus means that the number is somehow significant, particularly since he had to skip a few kings to make the numbers come out this way!

As we noted in our last study, the number "7" has great theological significance. And...

Since "14" is $7 + 7$, and since "7" is the number of covenant, then "14" logically dictates the presence of a double covenant, as in the case of Jacob who covenanted twice for his wives (Gen. 31:41). (Incidentally, these two women, each of whom cost Jacob "7" years of service, became the mothers of the covenant people, Israel.) Likewise...

The "14s" in Jesus' genealogy point to two covenants which are joined together at His birth.

The union of the two covenants in Jesus is the reason He called Himself the cornerstone rejected by the builders (Mat. 21:42, Mark 12:10, & Luke 20:17).

The background for the cornerstone imagery originates in the time of Zechariah when Zerubabel was commissioned to build a new temple on the site of the old temple which had been destroyed (Hag. 1:1-2); Zerubbabel was to take a stone from the ruins of the old temple and use it as a cornerstone in the new one (Zec. 4:7). So...

When Jesus said that He's the stone (Mat. 21:42-44) which was taken from the old temple and has been placed in the new temple as the cornerstone which holds the building together, He was saying that He's the connecting link between the old order and the new order.

Jesus fulfilled all prophecies and symbolism of the old covenant to become the foundation stone for the new one; there is, therefore, no inconsistency or disagreement between them. So believers of all nations are "living stones" in this new temple held together by Christ.

The number "14" in the genealogy of Jesus, then, symbolizes the two covenants, old and new, which came together, each finding its complement, in Jesus Christ. Speaking of this...

Jesus fulfilled all the Old Covenant types and shadows.

Jesus fulfilled the type and shadow of Elisha.

Not only did Elisha have as his forerunner Elijah in the Old Testament, but Jesus had as His forerunner Elijah or John the Baptist as well: as God said at the end of the Old Testament, "*I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the ... Lord*" (Mal. 4:5), a prophecy related directly to John the Baptist according to Luke 1:17. Besides that..

Elisha's ministry was greater than that of Elijah, since he received a double portion of the spirit that Elijah had (2 Kgs. 2:9 & 15); likewise, Jesus is greater than His Elijah, John the Baptist: John said he wasn't even worthy to loose/carry the sandals of Jesus (Mat. 3:11 & Luke 3:16).

As Elijah anointed Elisha to take his place (1 Kgs. 19:16), so John baptized Jesus (Mark 1:9), proclaiming that people should follow Him (John 1:35-37); then John decreased, and Jesus increased.

Elisha received a double portion of the spirit that Elijah had when Elijah's mantle fell on him (1 Kgs. 19:19), while Jesus received the Holy Spirit lighting on Him like a dove when John baptized Him (Mark 1:10); but Jesus had the Spirit in full, not in a limited measure as John (John 3:34).

When the disciples asked Jesus if they should call down fire from heaven on their enemies as Elijah did (2 Kgs. 1:9-16), Jesus said, "*You don't realize of what sort of spirit you are*" when you so speak (Luke 9:55-56); see, Jesus and His disciples weren't called to minister in the spirit of Elijah like the fiery and confrontational John the Baptist, but after the manner of Elisha who healed, raised the dead, and restored the penitent.

Notice some other similarities between Jesus and Elisha.

1. Both of them cleansed lepers (2 Kgs. 5:9-14 & Mat. 8:2-4).
2. Elisha made an axe-head float on water (2 Kgs. 6:1-7), while Jesus walked on water (Mat. 14:25).
3. Each of the two raised a dead child (2 Kgs. 4:32-36 & Mat. 9:23-25).
4. Both Jesus and Elisha multiplied barley loaves to feed crowds with both having leftovers (2 Kgs. 4:42-44 & Mat. 14:15-21). And...
5. After Elisha had been dead and buried for some time, a dead person was cast into his grave, upon which this man came back to life (2 Kgs. 13:21). Likewise, when Jesus died, many people came to life, appearing in the city (Mat. 27:50-53), then three days later Jesus Himself was raised from the grave.

Jesus also fulfilled the type and shadow of Adam.

Just as the first Adam was tested in Eden, Jesus, as "*the last Adam*" (1 Cor. 15:22 & 45-49) was tempted by Satan with the kingdoms of the world, but unlike "the first Adam" Jesus refused to grasp for the power and authority Satan offered Him; in other words, He remained faithful to the terms of the covenant: God was God, and He, the Son of Man, remained in the role of Servant.

Jesus' entire mission on Earth depended on that test of loyalty at the outset of His ministry; His victory over the temptation to rebel against God demonstrated that He was worthy of His covenantal relationship with Him, a demonstration that would result in salvation for the remnant of believing Israelites and then to the rest of humanity.

Without a sinless representative who kept the covenant on their behalf, humanity would be lost forever—we couldn't keep such a covenant, as Israel proved over and over; Peter even said of the old covenant that it was "*a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear*" (Acts 15:10). So...

Someone had to appear who was capable of keeping man's side of the covenant, One who was completely upright, One who could guarantee that the relationship between God and His people wouldn't be disrupted through acts of disobedience.

Jesus, tempted in every way as we are "*yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15), became our representative, establishing a covenant with the Father on our behalf.

Jesus also fulfilled the type and shadow of Moses.

In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus began taking on the role of Moses, the mediator of the covenant with Israel; John wrote that Jesus was Moses' counterpart or the Mediator of the New Covenant, bringing grace and truth to Israel just as Moses brought the law (John 1:17).

Like Moses, Jesus ascended a mountain and delivered to His disciples the covenant text; although this passage of Scripture is often called "The Sermon on the Mount," a more accurate title would probably be "Stipulations of the New Covenant."

There are no stone tablets this time because the New Covenant regulations were to be written on the hearts of God's servants (Jer. 31:33 & Heb. 8:10). But...

There's no doubt that these are covenant regulations; Jesus Himself defined them as the commandments of the kingdom in 5:17-20.

His preaching began with a listing of the blessings of the New Covenant which we today call "The Beatitudes."

Those who keep the covenant by recognizing their servanthood (v. 3), who mourn over covenant violations (v. 4), who follow the Lord's orders (v. 5), who hunger and thirst after righteousness, fulfilling covenant stipulations (v. 6), who show covenant love (v. 7), who love God with all their hearts and make no other alliances (v. 8), who maintain the peace—the covenant relationship with both the Lord and His people, their brethren (v. 9), and who are faithful to the covenant Lord in spite of persecution (vv. 10-12)—these people would inherit the kingdom of Heaven. Incidentally...

At another early occasion of preaching some of this same sermon, Luke records Jesus listing "woes" or curses following the blessings (Luke 6:24-26). Coincidence?

A key statement in Jesus' lecture that day is found in 5:17-18 where He said, "*Don't think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I didn't come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled.*"

Jesus was saying that He came to fulfill the Law, and once He accomplished that then heaven and earth would pass away—at which point the New Covenant would be initiated and established. So...

The stipulations given in Matthew 5—7 verify that nothing short of total commitment would or will satisfy this covenant's requirements.

There's to be no allegiances except to the Lord (6:24).

Establishment of the kingdom of God was to be the primary goal of its citizens (6:10).

All in this kingdom are to be treated as if they were siblings (5:42-48 & 7:7-12).

There are blessings to follow obedience: the Lord has a reward for those who do good deeds in secret and pray in private (6:1-6). And...

He will meet every need of His loyal servants (6:8 & 25-34).

Jesus ended this sermon with a warning: not all those who say "Lord, Lord" are under the covenant umbrella, but only those who exhibit submission to its stipulations; Jesus told them that a day would come when He would say to the unfaithful, "*I never knew you*" (7:21-23).

Another link between Jesus and Moses is the event called "the transfiguration" (Mat. 17:1-13).

Jesus took Peter, James, and John, His inner circle of disciples, up on another mount where He began to pray.

As Jesus communed with His Father, His face changed and His clothing became such a brilliant white that it flashed like lightning; this, of course, is reminiscent of Moses' descent from Mt. Sinai where he had spoken with God and received the stone tablets of the covenant.

At that time his face shined so brightly that he had to cover it with a veil so the people of Israel could stand to look at him (Exo. 34:29-35).

As the disciples looked on amazed, Moses, the first prophet of the covenant, and Elijah, who prefigured John the Baptist—the last prophet of that covenant, appeared with Jesus.

After conversing briefly with Him, the two old covenant prophets disappear, and only Jesus could be seen; so, symbolically, the old has been eclipsed by the new. One more...

Jesus also fulfilled the type and shadow of the Prosecutor Prophet. Remember...

In our last study when discussing God's lawsuit against Israel for breaking the covenant, we talked about how God used the prophets as His prosecutors; now, Jesus, being prophet as well as priest and king, became God's Prosecutor for the final lawsuit against Israel (John 5:22-27).

In Matthew chapter 23 on the Mt. of Olives, Jesus didn't speak of blessings as He did in His first Mountain Sermon in Matthew chapters 5—7; this time He was functioning as God's prosecuting prophet—cursing Israel (with 7 "woes," nonetheless) for its *covenant violations*.

The disciples understood the judgment that Jesus had pronounced upon Jerusalem that day as a curse; and because they had heard Him say that the curse would occur in their very lifetime (vv. 35-36), they came to Him privately and asked Him how long it would be before this disaster transpired (Mat. 24:3).

Jesus answered them with an outline of the form God's judgment would take: the temple would be destroyed; famines, pestilences, and earthquakes would strike the nation; deceivers would come; wars would rage; brothers would betray one another; Jesus' followers would be persecuted and killed; iniquity would increase; Jerusalem would be surrounded by Gentile armies; there would be great tribulation; and the sun, moon, and stars would fall.

He then restated, "*Assuredly I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away*" (Mat. 24:34f). (So He His began ministry w/ blessings, ended it with cursings.) Lastly...

Jesus fulfilled all 300+ Old Covenant prophecies of the coming Messiah.

Since this has been proven on numerous occasions, we'll not spend any time on it here except to remind us of the impossibility that anyone could do this who wasn't God Himself.

Back in the late 50's, a professor named Peter W. Stoner, M.S. (chairman of the departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College until 1953, then chairman of the Science Division at Westmont College until 1957) wrote a book called *Science Speaks*, in which he demonstrated our point here as we conclude our thoughts.

After referring to only 8 out of over 300 (some say 324) prophecies about the coming Messiah, he asked, "What is the chance that any man might have lived from the day of these prophecies down to the present time and have fulfilled all of the eight prophecies?" After referring back to some previous mathematical groundwork, he then answered the question like this: "the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} " (p. 106). Keep in mind that this was in 1958, not 2012; if it had been 2012, the number would've been even greater! Anyway, he went on to illustrate this for us.

"Suppose that we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him to pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom [i.e., without the help of a supreme being]" (p. 107). He went on to say...

"Whoever heard of an investment that had only one chance in 10^{17} of failure? The business world has no conception of such an investment. Yet we are offered this investment by God. By the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Savior, we know, from only eight prophecies which lack only 1 chance in 10^{17} of being an absolute proof, that that investment will yield the wonderful dividend of eternal life with Christ" (p. 108). Well...

We're not finished with our covenant studies and Christ's part in them yet, but we have proven that Jesus isn't only the link between the old and new covenants, but that He also fulfilled all the types, shadows, and prophecies of that covenant, legally qualifying Him to be our eternal King.

[Most of this information is derived from J. E. Leonard's I Will Be Their God: Understanding the Covenant, Laudemont Press, Chicago, 1992. See http://laudemont.org/lp_books.htm. Tony Denton, 6/06.]