

# Two characteristics that are common to most covenants.

✓ Generally, they are agreed upon by *both* parties. However:

- An unconditional covenant does not necessarily require an agreement by the party that is not making the commitment.
- Some human covenants may be *reluctantly* agreed to such as a covenant (or treaty) that involves the "terms of surrender," after losing a war.

✓ In Scripture, they are often confirmed or sealed by an oath and a sacrifice.

 It's like saying: "If I break this covenant, may my fate be like that of this animal that was killed."

We live in a day in which many people don't take promises and agreements very seriously. In reality, our words should *always* be truthful and reliable, even *without* making a promise or covenant!

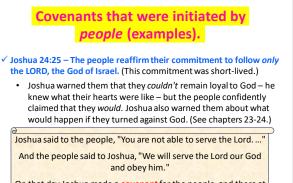
### God-people covenants: Typical characteristics.

### ✓ Those initiated by God.

- Some of these covenants are eternal; at least one is temporary.
- Most are unconditional (God says he will do something); at least one is conditional (what God does will depend on what the people do).
- God will never fail to keep his promise. He won't break his covenants with people. (If they are broken, it's done by the people, not by God.)

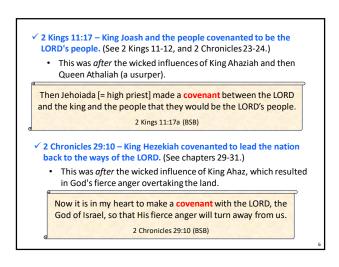
### ✓ Those initiated by people.

- These are generally a recommitment to obey God's covenant. (In the O. T., it was the covenant introduced by Moses.)
- Repentance was a part of it... and this influenced their conduct.



On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws.

Joshua 24:19a, 24-25 (NIV)

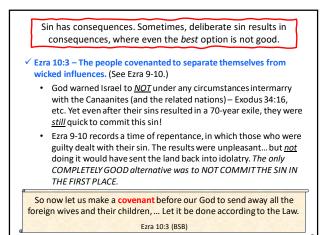


- ✓ 2 Kings 23:3/2 Chronicles 34:31 King Josiah and the people covenanted to follow God and to get rid of all false gods. (See 2 Kings 23; 2 Chronicles 34:1-35:19.)
  - This was after King Manasseh, who's wicked influence was so bad, that Josiah's reforms could only delay the coming judgment.

The king stood by the pillar and renewed the **covenant** in the presence of the Lord—to follow the Lord and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the **covenant** written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the **covenant**.

2 Kings 23:3 (NIV)

The Kings/Chronicles situations involved people recommitting themselves to following the God of Israel (after a period of extreme apostasy), under the guidance of a godly king. Read the contexts to see how they lived-out their commitments.



✓ ★ We can learn a lot from these covenants that were initiated by <u>people</u>.

### ✓ From the 2 Kings / 2 Chronicles passages:

• If we have wandered away from following Jesus, it is *good* to renew our commitment to follow him!

### ✓ From the Joshua passage:

- Their subsequent history (the end of Joshua and the book of Judges), is a warning that it is *easy* to slip into a sinful way of life.
- There is also a lesson about being self-confident, thinking that we (on our own) can be faithful to God. If we are not relying on God for the power to follow him, we will fail just like Israel did.

MORE

### ✓ From the Ezra passage:

 This should be a lesson about paying attention to God's instructions and warnings. Sin can have far-reaching consequences that hurt many people. Sometimes there may be no good solution for "undoing" it.

### ✓ We could also add Jeremiah 34:8-22 (from last week) :

- In this passage, the people covenanted with the king to release their Jewish slaves (in obedience to God) ... and then they changed their minds and re-enslaved them. Because of this, God promised them a horrible judgment.
- This should be a warning to us: Take your promises seriously... because <u>God</u> takes them seriously!
- When we admit the truth about our sin, and we repent ... but then go back to the sin, we are in a worse situation than we were before. (We just went from bad to worse, or from evil to more evil.)

## Covenants that were initiated by God.

### ✓ We plan to look at these in future weeks.

 There are several that have a significant impact on how we should live. We need to understand the issues involved!

### ✓ Some of these covenants are:

- Covenant with Noah.
- Covenant(s) with <u>Abraham</u>. (Promises were made by God at different times. Some view them as *separate* covenants; others as different aspects of *one* covenant.)
- Covenant with <u>Moses</u> (made for the nation Israel), also called "the Law."
- Covenant with *David*.
- The <u>New</u> Covenant.

### "Maybe/maybe-not" covenants.

### ✓ What?!?! Maybe/maybe not???

- There are a small number of situations that resemble covenants (at least in some respects). People debate over whether or not they are covenants, but nothing in the passages says that they are.
- Sometimes people reach their views because their "theological systems" <u>need</u> them to be (or not be) covenants. But if our views require it to be a certain way, when <u>God</u> doesn't make it an issue, then maybe we need to revise our views, at least a little!
- We have chosen to keep with what God says in the Scriptures; and *not* get into this debate. If it was *really* that important, God would have said it (instead of leaving us to guess about it)!
- It's OK to have opinions on such matters. But it would be best to remember that they are nothing more than opinions. Otherwise, we are in danger of letting our opinions "reinterpret" these and other passages in Scripture. (This applies to other issues as well.)

### ✓ Here is the *first* of these "maybe/maybe not" covenants:

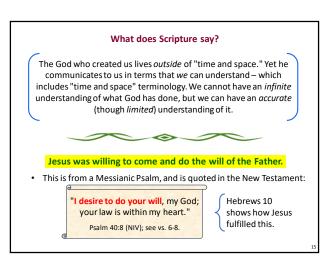
There are three that people often mention. We plan to look at the others at a different time.

### > The [Covenant of] Redemption. <

- Scripture tells us that, before the creation of the world, God planned to save us – to "redeem" us from our sins. He paid our penalty. This plan involved Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.
- This plan included *all* the things that would have to take place, in order for it to happen – including the Father's will, Jesus' death and resurrection, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the circumstances of our lives that would lead us to salvation!
- The "fact" of this redemptive plan is not the issue, since Scripture does mention these things. The question is whether or not we call it a "covenant."

### Responding to the "covenant" issue.

- Many of the arguments used to promote the "covenant" idea are based on something like:
- "[This verse or action] *seems to suggest* [that it is a covenant]."
- Viewing this as a covenant is less popular than it used to be. There may be both good and bad reasons for this.
  - ✓ Some people strongly disagree with this method of reasoning.
     [= Perhaps a good reason.]
  - ✓ Others are opposed, because it doesn't fit their views. [= This could be good or bad, depending on what their views are. (There is much false teaching in the church today.)]
- Regardless of our opinion on this "covenant" issue, let us rejoice and praise God for what Scripture *clearly* says!\*
- \* (...and change our views, if they don't agree with what Scripture says.)

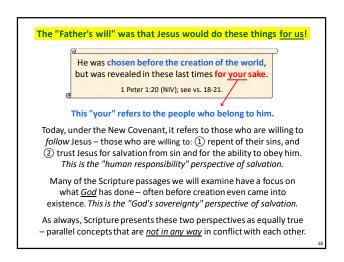


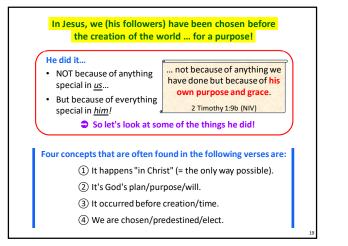
# What was "the will of the Father" that Jesus was willing to do? The Father planned that Jesus would suffer humiliation and death, in order to save many – Isaiah 53. (Afterwards, he would return to life, a reference to his resurrection – v. 11.) Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, ... After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; ... Isaiah 53:10a, 11a (NIV) Romans 3:23-26 – Jesus became a "sacrifice of atonement" for us. John 17:1-5 – Jesus anticipated the ending of his humility, and his return to glory – sharing with the Father the same glory they originally shared.

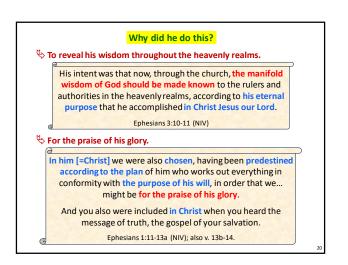
The Father planned that Jesus would rule over the nations, as both king and priest – Psalm 110.
 The LORD extends Your mighty scepter from Zion: "Rule in the midst of Your enemies."
 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind: "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."

 Psa 110:2, 4 (BSB)

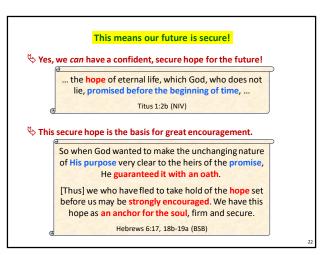
 This is also mentioned in Zechariah 6:12-13. (This passage was only partly fulfilled when the second temple was built.)
 John 17:1-5 – Jesus recognized that he has been given authority over all people (v. 2), and that some will be given eternal life.
 The book of Hebrews describes Jesus as our great high priest.
 Other passages describe Jesus as also being the prophet-Deuteronomy 18:15, 18; Acts 3:22-23; Luke 24:19; John 5:46; Mark 6:4.



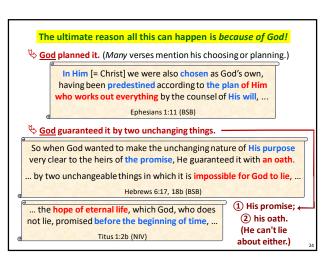










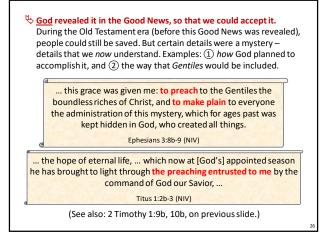


# God poured out his grace (undeserved kindness) on us. [God] has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ... 2 Timothy 1:9 (NIV)

God accomplished it through Christ's sacrifice. (Many verses mention his sacrifice and what it accomplished.)

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ... [Christ Jesus] ... who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

2 Timothy 1:9b, 10b (NIV)



# **OUR MISSION...**

In redemption, God offers us so much...

★ Cling to it! Live by it! ★

Think about it! What we are experiencing now and in the future began before creation even existed!

It's wonderful, whether or not we call it a "covenant"!

## An important consideration:

### What God offers is available only on his terms.

Have you taken up his offer?

God offers you an opportunity to have a part in this glorious adventure that began before time and space existed! Are you willing to *repent* of your sin, and *trust* Jesus to save you, and *rely* on God's power so that you can obey him?

Did you at one time *begin* in this direction, but then get overtaken by the world?

Follow the examples of the Old Testament Jews – those who "rededicated" their lives to following God. (You will have to rely on God's power to make the change genuine and permanent.)

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