



For a long time... (though NOT *unending* time):

- "May the king live 'forever'"! Nehemiah 2:3. (Everyone knows he will eventually die!)
- The wicked are "always" (= "forever/eternal") carefree and gaining wealth – Psalm 73:12.
- Instructions for the person who *desires* to be someone's slave*
 "for life" (= "forever/eternal") Exodus 21:6.

Eternal in duration, forever (as we tend to understand it):

- The future resurrection some people will awake to "everlasting" life; others to shame and "everlasting" contempt – Daniel 12:2.
- God's love endures "forever" Psalm 118:1.
- God's righteous laws are "eternal" Psalm 119:160.
- God will be associated with Jerusalem "forever" 2 Chronicles 33:4.

* (In the Bible, some types of slavery were almost like becoming a family member.)

Both past and future (in one sentence)?

• Praise the Lord "from everlasting to everlasting"! – Psalm 106:48.

In some situations, "forever" may be dependent on how the people respond; there may be *requirements*, in order for it to be fulfilled.

- God promised that Eli's family would minister as priests "forever"; but because of their sin, God later said they would be "cut short" ... and judged "forever" – 1 Samuel 2:30 and 3:13.
- God told Moses that the people (Israel) needed to have hearts that wanted to fear God and obey him... so that it would go well with them and with their children "forever" – Deuteronomy 5:29. (They went astray, and things did not go well with them.)

Note about Psalm 23:6 ("I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.") This is actually a phrase that means "length of days." We who are saved will certainly be with God forever. But it's possible that David was mainly thinking about being with God throughout the remainder of his life – not denying the eternal perspective, but not focusing on it, either.

Which covenants are "forever"?

Covenants that are NOT designated as "forever":

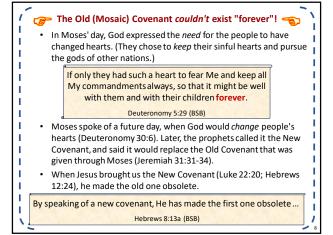
 The "maybe/maybe-not" covenants. We are referring to various events or activities that some people claim are "covenants," even though the Bible doesn't say they are.

This includes: **D** God's plan of redemption (which was planned before the creation of the world); **D** the "creation mandate" (instructions and examples given to Adam); and **D** the judgment (and promise of hope) that occurred when humans fell into sin.

The Mosaic Covenant – also called the Law of Moses. Today, we call it the Old Covenant.

Even in the days of Moses, God alluded to a future covenant. By the time of the prophets, he was announcing to Israel that the *new* was going to replace the *old*.

(We plan to look at both of these covenants in the future.)



Covenants that ARE designated as "forever":

· Some initial considerations.

- The covenant and the sign (reminder) of the covenant might both be described as "eternal."
- ✓ Some of the "eternal" covenants came with obligations that the people needed to obey. Those who didn't obey might *forfeit* their participation in the covenant; but it wouldn't cause the covenant itself to be cancelled.

• How "forever" are these covenants (considering the meaning of the Hebrew word translated as "forever")?

- ✓ Most of the covenants described as "forever" are recognized as being permanent.
- There are a few covenants described as "forever" that many people believe have come to an end, or were fulfilled when the New Covenant was put into effect. However, not everyone agrees on this.

The Noahic Covenant.

 This covenant was made with the entire human race – and even with the animals and the earth!

"I now establish my covenant ..."

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant ... a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

Genesis 9:9a, 12-16 (NIV)

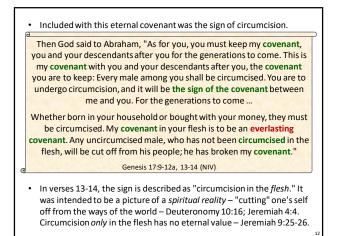
The Abrahamic Covenant.

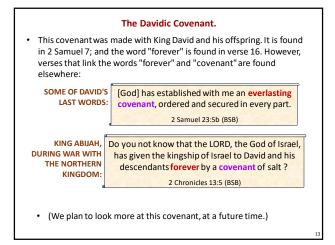
- This covenant was made with Abraham and his offspring. Ultimately, it
 proved to be much greater than we might have originally thought,
 because it expanded to include Gentiles (not just Jews) and the entire
 world (not just the land of Canaan).
- This covenant exists alongside some of the other covenants.
- Participation in this covenant is dependent on a person's willingness to trust and obey God (= following in the footsteps of Abraham).

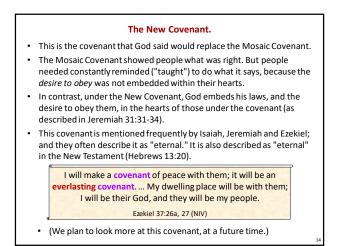
"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ... I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant ... The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession ..."

... I will establish my covenant with [Isaac] as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

Genesis 17:4, 7a, 8a, 19b (NIV)







Covenants Related to the Worship of God.

- How "forever" are they (considering the meaning of the Hebrew word translated as "forever")?
 - This group of covenants are related to the Levitical priesthood and some of the activities related to Israel's worship of God. (We might call them "religious activities.")
 - These covenants are described as being "forever"; but their connection with the Mosaic Covenant (which was temporary) has led some people to believe that they have come to an end, or were fulfilled, when the New Covenant was put into effect. These people would remind us that the *Hebrew* word for "forever" or "eternal" *doesn't* always mean "having no endpoint." (We have seen examples that illustrate this.)
 - ✓ However, not everyone agrees with this conclusion. They agree that the Hebrew word can be used in such a way, but they don't believe it is used that way in these passages.
- (We will have to look at this issue next time.)



God has promised us so much! We've only seen part of it; but what we've seen is *wonderful*!

Let us REJOICE in God's promises!

A key theme in Scripture is that *God can be trusted*. When he makes a promise, we *know* he will keep it.

Let us LIVE by God's promises!

Trust God and obey him. Our willingness to do this is the way we know that we *are* "children of the promise"!

Credits

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