

# **Covenant in Redemptive History (so far)**

The following outlines the progress of redemptive history as structured by the various lordship covenants in Scripture. Each covenant represents a watershed transition and a significant step forward in the progress of redemption. There is also progress between the covenants, setting the stage for the next covenantal development.

## **I. Covenant of Creation (or Covenant of Works)**

### **A. Purposes**

1. Defined the purposes and nature of mankind and the world.
2. Set forth the proper understanding of the relationship between man and God.
3. Established the role and destiny of mankind under God's lordship.
4. Established the kingdom of God.

### **B. Nature and Effect**

1. A gracious covenant
2. A punitive covenant

### **C. Sign: The Tree of Life**

## **II. Covenant of Grace**

### **A. Purposes**

1. To redeem man as mediator of God's rule.
2. To reestablish the Kingdom of God.

### **B. Progress**

#### **1. Adamic Covenant**

- Set forth in seed form the outcome, nature, recipients, and agent of redemption.
- Established two fundamental categories of human persons.
- Described the conflict of the history of redemption.
- Sign: clothing.

#### **2. Inter-covenantal Progress**

- Mankind exercises sinful dominion as a means of gaining independence from God and autonomy.

- Tyrannical dictatorships are established in pursuit and centralization of power.
- The earth becomes filled with violence.
- Sin is allowed to grow and metastasize.
- Sinful autonomy and the expression of sin is centralized in the establishment of cities.
- The full ugliness, misery, and destructiveness of unaddressed sin is manifested.
- The justice and necessity of judgment for sin is clarified and executed.

### 3. Noahic Covenant

- The earth, the stage on which redemption is to be played out, is preserved through promise.
- Human government is established to restrain evil so as to avert God's judgment until the Last Day.
- Sign: The rainbow.

### 4. Inter-covenantal Progress

- Three basic divisions of mankind are defined in Noah's prophecy.
- The continuing rebellion and sin of mankind is manifested at Babel.
- The foundation is laid for the announcement and initiation of the redemption of all mankind through the scattering of them and the establishment of nations and different languages, creating a situation in which the autonomous confidence of artificial unity and consolidation of power at Babel was broken, and mankind more disposed to reach out for God in dependence upon Him (Acts 17).

### 5. Abrahamic Covenant

- The promise of the gospel is clearly stated, relating it to the Kingdom of God in reference to the Cultural Mandate, involving *rule* (dominion) by *ordering* (stewardship over the Land, typologically representing the whole earth, Romans 4:13) and *filling* (propagation of seed/descendants, with Christ, *the Seed*, as the Head, Galatians 3:15-29).
- A discernible Covenant People of God is established for the first time, initially constituted as a *family*.
- Sign: Circumcision

### 6. Inter-covenantal Progress

- The history of the patriarchs in the Land and outside of it constitute an *orientation to the Promise*, involving numerous principles and aspects.

- Israel, the Covenant People, becomes a *nation* rather than a family, preparing for their constitution as a People or Nation in the next covenant.
- The migration of the Covenant family to Egypt creates the situation which both demonstrates God's faithfulness to the Promise (providing both a provisional Land—Goshen—and a numerous seed), and sets the stage for the context of the Mosaic Covenant in the redemption of Israel from bondage.

## 7. Mosaic Covenant

- The Law is given and codified (written down) as a comprehensive (i.e., involving *normative, existential, and situational* aspects), objective revelation of the will of God not only for Israel, but also for mankind in general.
- The symbolic, *existential* (“ceremonial”) aspects of the Law become the distinctive cultural markers of the Covenant People of God until the fulfillment of the Promise.
- The symbolic aspects of the Law become an incessant reminder of the obligation to obey the Law completely to be close to God, both *apart* from its provision of atonement (Romans 10:5, cited from Leviticus 18:5), and *through* that provision (Romans 10:6-10, citing Deuteronomy 30:12, 13).
- The Law thus becomes an indicator of the guilt of sin, the need of a Savior, and the provision of God in Christ.
- Sign: Sabbath observance.