

THE BIBLE'S MOST IMPORTANT THEME: TWO *COMMON* NOUNS, EXPLAINING A *UNIFIED* CONCEPT (PARTS 1-3)

- A. Some Significant Scriptural **PROPER** Nouns: Divine & Human—
1. God the Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Creator, I AM, *Paraclete*
 2. Adam & Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, Caesar Augustus, Caesar, Tiberius, Paul, Priscilla
 3. Jerusalem, Sea of Galilee, Mount of Transfiguration
- B. Some Significant Scriptural **COMMON** Nouns: Two [2] Categories—Concepts/Motifs
1. revelation, sin, repentance, forgiveness, sanctify (make holy), patience
 2. darkness/light; curse/blessing; old self/new self or old nature/new nature; give glory/commit blasphemy; slavery/freedom; shepherd/sheep

C. Scripture's Two [2] *Most Significant* COMMON Nouns:

_____ & _____

D. Lutheran Hymnology: *TLH* (*Covenant* 12 times; *Testament* 1 time)

#149 v. 4 (“Come to Calvary’s Holy Mountain”)

He that drinks shall live forever;
Tis a soul-renewing flood.
God is faithful; God will never
Break His **covenant** of blood,
Signed when our Redeemer died,
Sealed when He was glorified.

#370 v. 3 (“My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less”)

His oath, His **covenant**, and blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When every earthly prop gives way,
He then is all my Hope and Stay.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

#315 vv. 8, 9 (“I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table”)

By faith I call Thy holy Table
The **testament** of Thy deep love;
For, lo, thereby I now am able
To see how love Thy heart doth move.

What higher gift can we inherit?
It is faith's bond and solid base;
It is the strength of heart and spirit,
The **covenant** of hope and grace.

E. Scripture's Hebrew & Greek

1. "Covenant" = *berith* (Hebrew OT); means "**cut a covenant**" (thus, "signed in **blood**")
2. "Testament" = *diathēkē* (Greek NT)
3. In his German Bible, Luther used the German *Bund* in the OT for "*berith*" (covenant), **BUT** he used the Latin *testamentum* for *diathēkē* in his simple German translation.

WHY?

4. Luther correctly saw COVENANT as "**promise**" & TESTAMENT as "**fulfillment**"!

Thus, the two [2] parts of our Bibles: **Old Testament/New Testament!!!**

"He did the same with the cup after the supper. He said, 'This cup is the "new last will and testament" in My blood.'"—1 Corinthians 11:25a, b NT (See "testament" in KJV, AAT, NET.)

Compare Jeremiah 31:31:

"The time will come says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah." OT

- a. The Reformed branches of Christendom use "covenant" BOTH in the OT & NT, avoiding the word "testament"! (Compare NKJV, NIV, ESV, CSB, CJB.)
- b. Exception: J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament*
- c. As we shall see in our exegesis (interpretation/explanation) of Genesis 15, God's salvation "covenants" are **suzerainty**, NOT **parity**, covenants!!!
- d. Much of Reformed theology is dispensational/premillennial, believing in a rapture of believers into heaven some 1,000 years before Judgment Day. Traditional Lutherans do *not* believe that 1 Thessalonians 4:17 & Revelation 20:4 (last line) teach this.

(See end of this document to view the "7 dispensations" that theologies such as those taught at Dallas Theological Seminary and Moody Bible Institute espouse. To go into depth on this matter at this time goes beyond the scope of our present study. It is more for a study of Eschatology.)

F. Various "Covenants" of Scripture

1. The "**Edenic/Creation**" covenant (Genesis 2:13-17), *initial* "covenant" containing both a **blessing** (garden/Tree of Life) & a **curse** (Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil), calling for both *faith* & *obedience* (Gospel-given, plus Law-keeping expected).
The word "covenant" is not used.
2. The "**Adamic**" covenant (Genesis 3:15), giving certainty of forgiveness and expecting *faith* in God's promise of salvation.
The word "covenant" is not used, but surely this is the initial "**promise**" of the 1st & 2nd Comings of Savior Jesus. (**Compare Malachi 3:1; Romans 16:20.**)

3. The **“Noachian ark & rainbow” covenant**; *berith/covenant* is *first* used in Genesis 6:18 & 9:8-17, however, these covenant are not salvation/*spiritual* covenants, rather they are first of all secular **“promises”**!
4. The **“Abrahamic/Isaac/Jacob” covenant**. Surely this is Scripture’s **most significant** covenantal **“promise,”** both in an ORGANIZING & in a *spiritual/salvation* sense! Therefore, it dominates all following salvation “covenants”!
- The word “covenant” is not used when this **Abrahamic covenant** is **first** stated at Genesis 12:1-3. However, **GENESIS 15** expands on the Genesis 12 “promise” & in verse 18 the word **covenant** is **first** used in its fullest spiritual covenantal sense!!!
5. THE KEY Genesis 12:1-3 text: **To be explained thoroughly in Part 2!**

The Threefold Promise of (1) Land, (2) Seed, i.e. = Descendants/Descendant, and (3) Blessings / Curses

¹The LORD said to Abram, “Leave your land, your relatives, and your father’s home, and go to a **land** I will show you. ²I will make you a **great nation**. I will **bless** you and give you a great name, and you will be a **blessing**. ³I will **bless** those who **bless** you, and **curse** anyone who **curses** you, and in you all the people in the world will be **blessed**.”
—Genesis 12:1-3

The Genesis 15:1-21 *elaboration* of Genesis 12:1-3: **To be interpreted in Part 2!**

¹After this the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision. “Do not be afraid, Abram,” He said. “I am your Shield. Your **reward** is very great.”
²“Lord GOD,” Abram asked, “what will You give me? I am leaving no children, and Eliezer of Damascus will be **heir** of my household. ³You have given me no children,” Abram added, “so a member of my household will be my **heir**.”
⁴“He will not be your **heir**,” the LORD told him, “but your own child will be your **heir**.” ⁵Then He took him outside. “Now look at the sky,” He said, “and count the stars if you can.” Then He told him, “That is how many **descendants** you will have.”
⁶Abram **believed** the LORD, and so the LORD counted it to him as righteousness (**cp. Romans 4:3, 9**).
⁷“I am the LORD,” He told him, “who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this **land** to be your own.”
⁸“Lord GOD,” he asked, “how can I be sure I will take possession of it?”
⁹“Bring Me a **three-year-old cow**,” He told him, “a **three-year-old** she-goat, a **three-year-old** ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”
¹⁰He brought all of these to Him. Then he cut each animal into halves and laid each half against the other; but he did not cut the birds in pieces. ¹¹The birds of prey came down on the meat of the animals, but Abram drove them away.

¹²As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep. A great darkness came over him and terrified him.

¹³“You should know,” God told Abram, “your **descendants** will be strangers in a land not their own, where they will be slaves and be mistreated four hundred years. ¹⁴But I will punish the people they will serve, and after that they will leave and take much **property** with them. ¹⁵You yourself will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age. ¹⁶The fourth generation will come back here—not till then will the sin of the Amorites have run its course.”

¹⁷After the sun had gone down and it was very dark, there was a **smoking fire-pot** (think: Sacrifice) and a **flaming torch** (think: Light) that passed between those pieces.

¹⁸On that day the LORD **cut a covenant** with Abram. “To your **descendants**,” He said, “I will give this **land** from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates: ¹⁹the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

6. The **KEY** Genesis 12:1-3 “Covenantal Prophecy in *Picture Form*”
(**See accompanying attachment at end of outline sheets.**)

- a. Its portrayal ORGANIZES the OT, as well as the NT. **Examples!!!**
- b. It pictures both the hope of salvation and the reality of hell.
- c. But remember this picture only represents the “**promise**”—**Christ** is the **FULFILLMENT!!!**

7. The “**Mosaic Law**” covenant, certainly with the **Ten Commandments** as its **center-piece**. In this “narrow” sense, this is definitely a LAW covenant, certainly not a Gospel covenant. **To be dealt with in Part 3!**

Yet, in a “wider” sense, this Mosaic covenant was given to the children of Israel after they had *miraculously* been delivered from Egyptian slavery in so many different ways—Gospel ways (e.g., shedding of blood painted on the entrances of their homes). This **Mosaic covenant** was a call to the “obedience of sanctification,” predicated on God’s *previous* Gospel goodness.

Besides, the ceremonial laws laid down by God through Moses demanded the killing of lambs that pointed forward to **Jesus, the Lamb of God** who would be slain for sin. We could call that a “Gospel command.”

Also note that Jesus said in John 5:46, “Moses wrote about Me.” That is **Gospel**, not **Law**! Thus in the “widest” sense, one could say that the Mosaic Covenant was both Law & Gospel if very carefully explained. This observation must obviously be handled with greatest of care as we “rightly divide/teach the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

But let me be quick to add that Jeremiah 31:32 and Paul in Galatians 3:17 speak of the **Mosaic Law** in the “narrow” sense, that **Law** coming “430 years after” the **Genesis 12 covenant** given to Abraham. **In Part 3 we shall discuss Paul’s crucial argumentation in Galatians 3.**

8. The **“Exilic” covenant**. The most quoted “covenant” text—as being fulfilled—in the NT!!! **To be thoroughly explained in Part 3!**

The Promise of a New Covenant

³¹ The time will come says the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with Israel and Judah. ³² It will not be like the **covenant** I made with their fathers when I took them by their hand to lead them out of Egypt—My **covenant** that they broke although I was their master, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the **covenant** I will make with Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My *law* within them and write it on their hearts, and so I will be their God, and they will be My people. ³⁴ And no more will anyone have to teach his neighbor or his brother, and say, “Know the LORD,” because they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them says the LORD, because **I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.**

9. The **“New” covenant**. Galatians 3:15-18 brings everything together when it speaks of the covenant **“promise”** being FULFILLED in terms of a **“last will & testament”**! **To be thoroughly explained in Part 3!**

¹⁵ “My fellow Christians, let me use an example from daily life. Once a **“last will and testament”** is ratified, even if it is only a human will, no one sets it aside or adds to it. ¹⁶ Now the promises were spoken *in reference to* Abraham and *in reference to* his **Descendant**. He does not say: “in descendants,” as referring to many, but as **referring to one**: “in your **Descendant**,” **who is Christ**. ¹⁷ What I am saying is this: The **Law**, which came 430 years after God’s confirmation of the **covenant** [**“last will and testament”**] made with Abraham, does not make this **covenant** null and void, and so cancel its **promise**. ¹⁸ For if we receive the **inheritance** by the **Law**, we do not receive it by a **promise**; *but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.*”

10. The writer of the Book of Hebrews powerfully weighs in on the terms, meaning, and function of the OT “**covenant**” & the NT “**last will and testament**”! Nothing short of AWESOME!!! **Your homework to read and study:**

a. 8:6

b. 8:8-10

c. 9:13-21

d. 10:29

e. 12:24

f. 13:20, 21

G. A Recap for **Part 3!**

JOHN 3:16—“**The Gospel in a Nutshell**”

¹⁶For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.

The “**New Covenant**” (the *new berith* – Hebrew) =
a “**New Last Will and Testament**” (a *new diatheke* – Greek)

The Five Steps of a “**Last Will and Testament**”:

(1) *Testator*

(2) *Heir*

(3) *Means of Effectuation*

(4) *Condition*

(5) *Inheritance*

¹⁶For God [(1) *the “Testator”*] loved the world [(2) *the “Heir”*] so much that He gave .into death. [(3) *the “Means of Effectuation”*] His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him [(4) *the “Condition” (Faith)*] would not perish but have everlasting life [(5) *the “Inheritance”*].

THUS, JESUS—ON THE DAY THAT HE WAS GOING TO DIE—INSTITUTED THE

“NEW LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT”
(IN THE FORM OF THE LORD’S SUPPER)
IN
FULFILLMENT
OF THE
“OLD TESTAMENT COVENANT”
PROMISE!
Thus, think:
“Covenantal Testament”

THE UNBRELLAS OF SCRIPTURAL THEOLOGY

PROPER NOUNS

TRINITY VS. SATAN

Father, Son, Holy Spirit VS. Serpent/Devil/Satan

(Compare Genesis 1:1-3; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19 with Revelation 12:9.)

JESUS

Prophet, Priest, King

JESUS

Defense Attorney

VS.

SATAN

Prosecuting Attorney

(See Zechariah 3:1—courtroom/"justification")

COMMON NOUNS

GOD'S OVERALL PLAN OF SALVATION

covenant — testament

± The "foundational" verses of the entire Bible: Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21 ±

promise
heir

fulfillment
inheritance

repentance

Godly sorrow—faith

consequences of

faith

non-faith

blessings

curse

image of GOD & man

holy / sinful

light

darkness

understanding

foolishness

life's emotions

joys & sorrows

two great doctrines of Scripture

gospel & law

heaven vs. hell

at peace vs. suffering

revelation ...

human reason

understanding ...
spiritual knowledge ...

ignorance
worldly folly

Dispensations

At the core of dispensationalism is the concept that God has acted **in different ways** in dealing with his chosen people throughout human history. These periods are referred to as dispensations.

The number of dispensations vary typically from three to eight. The typical seven-dispensation scheme is as follows:

- **Innocence** — [Adam](#) under probation prior to [the Fall of Man](#). Ends with expulsion from the [Garden of Eden](#) in [Genesis 3](#). Some refer to this period as the Adamic period or the dispensation of the Adamic covenant or Adamic law.
- **Conscience** — From the Fall to the [Great Flood](#). Ends with the worldwide deluge.
- **Human or Civil Government** — After the Great Flood, humanity is responsible to enact the [death penalty](#), and as such, is the authority to govern. Ends with the dispersion at the [Tower of Babel](#). Some use the term [Noahide law](#) in reference to this period of dispensation.
- **Promise or Patriarchal Rule** — From [Abraham](#) to [Moses](#). Ends with the refusal to enter Canaan and the 40 years of unbelief in the wilderness. Some use the terms [Abrahamic law](#) or [Abrahamic covenant](#) in reference to this period of dispensation.
- **Law** — From [Moses](#) to the [crucifixion](#) of [Jesus Christ](#). Ends with the scattering of Israel in AD 70. Some use the term [Mosaic law](#) in reference to this period of dispensation.
- **Grace** — From the cross to the [rapture of the church](#) seen by some groups as being present in [1 Thessalonians](#) and the [Book of Revelation](#). The [rapture](#) is followed by [wrath of God](#) constituting the [Great Tribulation](#). Some use the term *Age of Grace* or *the Church Age* for this dispensation.
- **Millennial Kingdom** — A [1000 year](#) reign of Christ [on earth](#) ([Revelation 20:1–6](#)), centered in [Jerusalem](#), ending with God's judgment on the final rebellion.

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THE COVENANT

Land, Seed, Blessings



By Carlton J. Varner



HOLY BIBLE