



GREATER GRACE  
CHURCH

# BACK TO THE BASICS

## MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION

### The Church Covenant

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE COVENANT

The Church Covenant we recite is a public declaration of very powerful beliefs about our commitment to our relationship with God and the people of God. This covenant only becomes true when we allow it to live through us. It becomes a living covenant when it defines our intention, warrants our continuous attention, and determines our actions. The Church Covenant is a voluntary agreement between every member of the Church in response their salvation and church membership that states to their willingness to adhere to and living by a unified and biblical code of Christian conduct based upon their personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ and the fellowship with members of their local church promising to promote Christian unity toward one another, and a deeper commitment to God because of their salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

#### BIBLICAL COVENANTS

Covenants are an important feature of the Bible's teaching. Seven specific covenants are revealed in Scripture. These seven covenants fall into three categories—conditional, unconditional, and general. Conditional covenants are based on certain obligations and prerequisites; if the requirements are not fulfilled, the covenant is broken. Unconditional covenants are made with no strings attached and will be kept regardless of one party's fidelity or infidelity. General covenants are not specific to one group and can involve a wide range of people.

The conditional covenant mentioned in Scripture is the Mosaic Covenant; the blessings it extends are contingent upon Israel's adherence to the Law. The unconditional covenants mentioned in the Bible are the Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic Covenants; God promises to fulfill these regardless of other factors. The general covenants mentioned are the Adamic, Noahic, and New Covenants, which are global in scope. Each of these covenants is listed below in biblical order with a brief description:

1. **Adamic Covenant.** Found in Genesis 1:26-30 and 2:16-17, this covenant is general in nature. It included the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, pronounced a curse for sin, and spoke of a future provision for man's redemption (Genesis 3:15).
2. **Noahic Covenant.** This general covenant was made between God and Noah following the departure of Noah, his family, and the animals from the ark. Found in Genesis 9:11, "I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." This covenant included a sign of God's faithfulness to keep it—the rainbow.
3. **Abrahamic Covenant.** This unconditional covenant, first made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, promised God's blessing upon Abraham, to make his name great and to make his progeny into a great nation. The covenant also promised blessing to those who blessed Abraham and cursing to those who cursed him. Further, God vowed to bless the entire world through Abraham's seed. Circumcision was the sign that Abraham believed the covenant (Romans 4:11). The fulfillment of this

covenant is seen in the history of Abraham's descendants and in the creation of the nation of Israel. The worldwide blessing came through Jesus Christ, who was of Abraham's family line.

4. **Palestinian Covenant.** This unconditional covenant, found in Deuteronomy 30:1-10, noted God's promise to scatter Israel if they disobeyed God, then to restore them at a later time to their land. This covenant has been fulfilled twice, with the Babylonian Captivity and subsequent rebuilding of Jerusalem under Cyrus the Great; and with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, followed by the reinstatement of the nation of Israel in 1948.
5. **Mosaic Covenant.** This conditional covenant, found in Deuteronomy 11 and elsewhere, promised the Israelites a blessing for obedience and a curse for disobedience. Much of the Old Testament chronicles the fulfillment of this cycle of judgment for sin and later blessing when God's people repented and returned to God.
6. **Davidic Covenant.** This unconditional covenant, found in 2 Samuel 7:8-16, promised to bless David's family line and assured an everlasting kingdom. Jesus is from the family line of David (Luke 1:32-33) and, as the Son of David (Mark 10:47), is the fulfillment of this covenant.
7. **New Covenant.** This covenant, found in Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:40 promised that God would forgive sin and have a close, unbroken relationship with His people. The promise was first made to Israel and then extended to everyone who comes to Jesus Christ in faith (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:15)

While not all Bible scholars agree on every detail regarding these biblical covenants, it is clear that God has made certain promises. Some of His promises are to all people, and some are limited to Israel. All of God's promises are based on who He is and His plan for the world. Under the New Covenant, which Jesus sealed with His own blood, everyone is offered salvation by grace through faith. "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).

Covenant is only valid through death. Sacrifice was necessary because it symbolized the death of each party to the covenant. When one enters into covenant, one enters by death. As each party walked through between the pieces of the slain animal, he was effectively saying: "that is my death. That animal died as my representative. He died in my place. Now that I am in covenant, I have no more right to live". The necessity of death to make a covenant valid is emphasized in Hebrews 9:16-17.

It is impossible to be in covenant and remain alive. The death of the sacrificed animal is physical, but it symbolizes another form of death for the one who offers the sacrifice and passes through the pieces. The one who does this hereby renounces all right, from that moment onwards, to live for himself. As each party passes through the pieces of the sacrifice he says, in effect, "if need be, I will die for you. From now on, your interests take precedence over my own. What I own is no longer mine but yours. I no longer live for myself, I live for you".