

HOW MANY COVENANTS?

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Someone asks about the covenants. How many covenants were there? Different people count different ways. Some count as if God covenanted with Adam. There is no mention of such in

COVENANT

Hebrew בְּרִית <i>bərīt</i> (feminine noun), 284 occurrences in OT. Greek διαθήκη <i>diathēkē</i> (feminine noun), 33 occurrences in NT.

Genesis, but there might be here (Hosea 6:7): “And they like Adam [כְּאַדָּם] have transgressed the covenant...” And then the covenant was

made not just with Abraham but also with Isaac and Jacob (Lev 26:42): “Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.” Nevertheless I have put seven covenants in the sidebar, including only those that are called a covenant in the texts. The covenant of the rainbow is thusly called eight times; the covenant of the parts once; and the covenant of circumcision 12 times—perhaps hinting at twelve tribes to come.

We might also note that the covenant of the parts was the covenant of the land (Gen 15:18), “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates...” The covenant of circumcision was the covenant of a people (Gen 17:19), “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him.” And in the covenant at Horeb God took a wife (Jer 3:14), “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you...” At the covenant of the rainbow God assured the seed of Adam that it would survive (Isaiah 54:9), “For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.”

SEVEN COVENANTS

Covenant of the Rainbow בְּרִית הַקְּשֶׁת <i>bərīt haqqēšet</i> Genesis 6:18; 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17
Covenant of the Parts בְּרִית בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים <i>bərīt bēn habbətārīm</i> Genesis 15:18
Covenant of Circumcision בְּרִית הַמִּילָה <i>bərīt hammīlā^h</i> Genesis 17:2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13 (2 times), 14, 19 (2 times), 21
Covenant of the Sabbath בְּרִית הַשַּׁבָּת <i>bərīt haššabbāt</i> Exodus 16; 31:12-17; Lev 24:8
The Covenant in Horeb בְּרִית בְּהַרְבַּ <i>bərīt baḤōrēb</i> Exodus 19-24; Leviticus 26:44-45; Deuteronomy 5:2, 3; Jeremiah 31:32
Covenant of priesthood בְּרִית הַכֹּהֲנָה <i>bərīt hakkəhunnā^h</i> Numbers 25:10-13; Jeremiah 33:21
Covenant of David בְּרִית דָּוִד <i>bərīt Dāwid</i> Jeremiah 33:21; Psalm 89:3; 2Chronicles 13:5; 21:7

I count Exodus 31:16 as a separate covenant: “Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, *for* a perpetual covenant.” Perhaps better would be to count the Sabbath as the sign of the Sinai covenant. The sign (אוֹת *’ōt*) of the covenant of Noah was the rainbow (Gen 9:12, 13, 17); the sign of the covenant of Abraham was circumcision (Gen 17:11); and the sign of the covenant at Horeb was the Sabbath (Gen 31:17), “It *is* a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

Christians have a problem with the new covenant of Jeremiah 31. Trinitarians and Binitarians think that God died in Jesus to the Sinai covenant and was thereby freed to marry the Church. Aside from the Christology, this is completely unbiblical. Jesus is not the husband of the new covenant. Just as Moses was the mediator at Sinai, so Jesus is to be mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). He is not the husband!

But Christians will enter into a marriage covenant with Christ (Rev 19:7): “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” That wife is the heavenly city “twelve thousand furlongs” squared in Revelation 21.

How do we know?

It says so—verses 9-10: “And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God...”

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

<p>Revelation 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.</p>
<p>Revelation 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, <i>which is</i> new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and <i>I will write upon him</i> my new name.</p>

Evidently not all the saints are citizens of that city—for it seems solely the reward of the assembly at Philadelphia of whom it says (Rev 3:12), “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out...” Of the assembly of the 4th millennium it says (Rev 2:26-28), “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.” Think Matthew 2 and Rev 22:16.

All this, if we will think about it, accords with Paul’s *midrash* on Adam and Eve in Ephesians 5:

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.
 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:
 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Paul likens Christ—not to God—but to Adam (Rom 5:14; 1Cor 15:22, 45-49). And here the bride of Christ is likened to Eve who was made from a *portion* of the body of Adam—not from the whole body of Adam. As Paul says (1Cor 12:27), “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” So we are not yet that bride—that great city. And even as Eve was made from part of Adam’s body, so the bride of Christ will be constructed from part of the body of Christ—from the Philadelphia assembly in particular.

The citizens of that great city are resurrected saints. The citizens of the Jerusalem above that constitute God’s wife (Gal 4:26; Rev 12:1-5) are flesh—even as in the new covenant (Jer 31:8): “Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, *and* with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.”

God is married to the nation! Christ covenants with resurrected saints. God is already married—his wife is pictured as married in Galatians 4:26 and in Revelation 12. The bride of Messiah has yet to make herself ready (Rev 19:7). God’s wife is pictured in Ezekiel 23 as split into two women, the elder Aholah (אֲהוֹלָה can be read as אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ ‘her tabernacle’) and her sister Aholibah (אֲהוֹלִיבָה can be read as אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַי בְּרַחֲמַי ‘my tabernacle is in her’). God divorced the older sister (Jer 3:8): “And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.” Nevertheless God never divorced Judah. He preserved her in captivity as good figs (Jer 24), brought her back under the edict of Cyrus his anointed (Isaiah 45), and nourished her in the wilderness during the long Diaspora (Rev 12:14). We in our lifetimes have witnessed the fulfillment of Zechariah 12:7—“The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify *themselves* against Judah.” The house of Judah persevered before the eyes of the world—the restoration of the house of Israel will be as life from the dead (1Cor 11:15; Ezek 37:11; Hosea 13:1).

Israel broke the covenant at Sinai but she will not break its final renewal (Jer 31:32), “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD...” Both houses broke the covenant and both need redeemed (Jer 11:10), “They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.”

And so the covenant is redeemed via a long process. After they broke the covenant in the sin of the golden calf, God said (Ex 32:10), “Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.” Moses would have none of it—“Over my dead body!” he in essence said (verse 32). And so God made another covenant—a stop gap covenant, you might say—“Behold, I am cutting a covenant [הִנֵּנִי חֹתֵם בְּרִית אֶתְכֶם]...” God says (Ex 34:10). And so God did:

27 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. 28 And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Maybe God’s marriage covenant has seven stages to recovery. Maybe the new covenant is the seventh. After the first covenant that they broke, there was first Moses on the mount, then next in the plains of Moab just before Moses died. Joshua renewed the covenant, and there were renewals in the days of the kings, and though it isn’t called a covenant outright, all the verbs are there in Nehemiah 9. And there is the great and final renewal that is coming—the new covenant.

Our worry should not be “getting salvation”—rather it should be the restoration of the covenant and the kingdom of God that will ensue. God will be recognized as king over all nations once he and his wife reign. Now we see our lands and the Jewish state floundering. But Judah will repent (Zech 12:10-14) and the lost sheep will be drawn (Jer 31:3)—and not until then will Messiah reign (Hosea 1:11), “Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great *shall be* the day of Jezreel.”

Redeeming the Covenant

A Second Covenant <small>Exodus 34:10, 27</small>
The Covenant in Moab <small>Deuteronomy 29:1 (2 times), 9, 12, 14, 21 25</small>
The Covenant in Shechem <small>Joshua 24:25</small>
Jehoiada renews Covenant <small>2Kings 11:17-20</small>
Josiah renews Covenant <small>2Kings 23:1-3; 2Chron 34:29-33</small>
We are cutting a sure one <small>Nehemiah 9:38</small>
A New Covenant <small>Jeremiah 31:31-33</small>

Herein I’ve broached what we might call the millennial interpretation of the seven assemblies of Revelation 2-3. There is much to say here which I won’t now—except that one interpretation of a passage does not necessarily negate all other interpretations. If God is big enough to have used multiple coding in DNA, why would he not do something similar in Scripture? Thus one might, if so inclined, see where I am driving, and with a bit of study and thought either disagree or perhaps even agree. Either way the study and thought cannot hurt.

TWO MILLENNIAL DAYS

THE FOURTH DAY	THE SIXTH DAY
<p>Genesis 1:16-19 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: <i>he made</i> the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that <i>it was</i> good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.</p> <p>Revelation 2:26-28 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.</p> <p>Revelation 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, <i>and</i> the bright and morning star.</p>	<p>Genesis 1:27-28 So God created man in his <i>own</i> image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.</p> <p>Revelation 3:11-12 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, <i>which is</i> new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and <i>I will write upon him</i> my new name.</p>

I once thought my millennial interpretation of the Seven Churches was unique and maybe crazy, but perhaps it was anticipated by Cyprian of Carthage (*Thaschus Cæcilius Cyprianus*; c. 200 – 258 AD) in his Treatises 11:11 [A.D. 250]:¹

Epistola ad Fortunatum de Exhortatione Martyrii. Caput xi.

ut primi in dispositione divina septem dies annorumⁱ septem millia continent, ut septem Spiritus et^j Angeli septem qui assistunt et conversantur ante faciem Dei, et lucernæ septiformes in tabernaculo martyrii, et in Apocalypsi septem candelabra aurea, et apud Salomonem column septem, super quas ædificavit^k domum Sapientia (*Prov. ix, 1*): Ita et istie septem fratrum numeros, Ecclesias septem humeri sui quantitate complexus, secundum quod in primo Regnarum libro legimus, sterilem septem peperisse (ii, 5).

ⁱ Annorum ratione *Lam. Ebor. NC. 1. Bod. 2.*

^j Spiritus aut *Bener. Ver.*

^k Ædificat *Lam. Bod. 1, 2, 3, 4.*

What, indeed, do we find in the Maccabees of seven brethren, equals alike in their lot of birth and virtues, filling up the number seven in the sacrament of a perfected completion? As the first seven days in the divine arrangement containing seven thousand of years, as the seven spirits and seven angels which stand and go in and out before the face of God, and the seven-branched lamp in the tabernacle of witness, and the seven golden candlesticks in the Apocalypse, and the seven columns in Solomon upon which Wisdom built her house¹ so here also the number seven of the brethren, embracing, in the quantity of their number, the seven churches, as likewise in the first book of Kings we read that the barren hath borne seven.

¹ Proverbs 9:1 sapientia aedificavit sibi domum excidit columnas septem

Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out her seven pillars.

THE NEW COVENANT

Isaiah 37

24 And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. 25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. 26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my

Jeremiah 31

31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the

Ezekiel 16

59 For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant. 60 Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. 61 Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. 62 And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: 63 That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith

¹ English translation by Robert Ernest Wallis in *Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. V*, Cyprian, The Treatises of Cyprian, Exhortation to Martyrdom by Cyprian.

people. 28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. 35 Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, *and* the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts *is* his name: 36 If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, *then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. 37 Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.

the Lord GOD.

And though Ezekiel 36 doesn't mention a covenant—that is what it describes.

22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 23 And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. 24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. 25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*. 28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29 I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. 30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. 31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. 32 Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

The bones in the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37 are the whole house of Israel (verse 11), “Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.”

But they are revived and—guess what?—they are grafted back into the tree of Judah who was never cut off from the covenant (verse 19): “Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.” And there follows words about the new covenant:

24 And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. 25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever. 26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.