

# HOW FAITHFUL IS GOD?

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Can we trust God? Is God true to his promises? Is God faithful to his covenants? God made a covenant with Israel and thusly Moses says (Deut 7:9), “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations...”

Profound evil is prophesied—as in Leviticus 26—but a future redemption is assured (verses 44-45): “And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I *am* the LORD their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I *am* the LORD.”

But Israel broke the covenant—is God then obliged to keep his end of the agreement? What about divorce? The Sinai covenant is pictured as a marriage (Is 54; Jer 3; Ez 23)—does Israel’s unfaithfulness mean that God’s marriage is finished?

Many Christians think along these lines. God married Israel at Sinai but Israel was unfaithful, and so God died in Christ to that marriage and thence is free to marry another. Thereafter Christ married the Church. Israel, as one person put it to me in regard to Revelation 12, “transitioned” into the Church.

Jesus’ critics asked him about divorce (Mark 10:2), “Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife?” Matthew says it more narrowly (Mat 19:3), “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” Jesus quotes Genesis and his critics counter (Mat 19:7), “Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?” Jesus says to them (verse 8), “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.”

Did God or did Moses write the divorce law of the Torah?

Whenever the Torah records a revelation from God it is prefaced with something like, “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying...” Not so the divorce law in Deuteronomy 24:

1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s *wife*. 3 And *if* the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth *it* in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her *to be* his wife; 4 Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that *is* abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance.

Is God bound by that law?

Rather God says (Jer 3:1), “They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man’s, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.” In Malachi 2 God chides the men of Judah for putting away their wives and then it says (verse 16), “For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away...”

God set the ideal in Genesis, just as Jesus pointed out. But our hearts are hard and God leaves it to those responsible to write their divorce laws. God’s heart, however, is not hard. He will take Israel back. He says to the lost house of Israel (Jer 3:14-15), “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

After Israel sinned the sin of the golden calf God said to Moses (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 nothing of it. He—the mediator of God’s covenant—stood instead with Israel and pleaded. If that’s what God wanted he wanted no part with God (verse 32): “Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.”

WWJD?

Indeed, what would Jesus do? Would he have accepted? Would he have said, “Yes, Father, go ahead and replace them with my Church.”

### How Many Covenants?

Someone asks about the covenants. How many were there? Different people count different ways. Some count as if God covenanted with Adam. There is no mention of such in Genesis, but there might be here (Hosea 6:7): “And they like Adam have transgressed the covenant...” And then God covenanted 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.”

#### COVENANT

<p>Hebrew בְּרִית <i>bərît</i> (feminine noun), 284 occurrences in OT.          Greek διαθήκη <i>diathēkē</i> (feminine noun), 33 occurrences in NT.</p>
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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 designated 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 future line 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.”

In order to make seven covenants I have reckoned the covenant of the Sabbath separately (Ex 31:16): “Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, *for* a perpetual covenant.” Israel was confronted with the Sabbath question before getting to Sinai and the scenario for that is precisely dated—exactly one month after the Passover (Ex 16:1f.). Yet one also might count the Sabbath as the sign of the Sinai Covenant. The sign (אֹת *’ot*) 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 God’s covenant with Israel 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.”

### The New Covenant and the Bride of Christ

Trinitarians have a problem with the new covenant of Jeremiah 31. They, as I suggested earlier, tend to think that the Trinity died to the Sinai Covenant and its Second Person was thereby freed to marry the Church (“spiritual Israel”). 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 nowhere the husband!

### THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

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.

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, **which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.**

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...”

### SEVEN COVENANTS

Covenant of the Rainbow ברית הקשת <i>bərît haqqéšet</i> Genesis 6:18; 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17
Covenant of the Parts ברית בין הבתרים <i>bərît bēn habbatārîm</i> Genesis 15:18
Covenant of Circumcision ברית המילה <i>bərît hammîlā<sup>h</sup></i> Genesis 17:2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13 (2 times), 14, 19 (2 times), 21
Covenant of the Sabbath ברית השבת <i>bərît hasšabbāt</i> Exodus 16; 31:12-17; Lev 24:8
The Covenant in Horeb ברית בהר <i>bərît baḤōrēb</i> Exodus 19-24; Leviticus 26:44-45; Deuteronomy 5:2, 3; Jeremiah 31:32
Covenant of priesthood ברית הכהונה <i>bərît hakkəhunnā<sup>h</sup></i> Numbers 25:10-13; Jeremiah 33:21
Covenant of David ברית דוד <i>bərît Dāwid</i> Jeremiah 33:21; Psalm 89:3; 2Chronicles 13:5; 21:7

Evidently not all the saints are citizens of that city—for it seems solely the reward of the assembly at Philadelphia of which 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 at Thyatira 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.” In regard to the star think Matthew 2 and Rev 22:16. And in regard to power over the nations think Rev 12:5, “And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”

The marriage of the Lamb is imaged by Adam’s marriage in Genesis. Thus Paul’s *midrash* 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). 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.” 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 “coming down from God out of heaven” are resurrected saints (Rev 21:2; 1Thes 4:13-18). The citizens of Israel 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 joins with a body of resurrected saints. God is already married—his wife is pictured 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 now split into two women, the elder Aholah (אֲהוֹלָה can be read as אֶהְיֶה ‘her tabernacle’) and her sister Aholibah (אֲהוֹלִיבָה can be read as אֶהְיֶה לִּי ‘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 nowhere does it ever say that God divorced the house of Judah. God preserved Judah 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 own 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

lived and suffered before the eyes of the world—the restoration of the house of Israel will be as life from the dead (Rom 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 of Israel 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.”

The covenant is redeemed via a lengthy process. After Israel 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, as we have seen, 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 [הַנְּהִי אֲנִי כִּרְתֵת בְּרִית]...,” says God (Ex 34:10). And thusly 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.

God’s marriage covenant has seven stages—the first which they broke and six on to the final redemption. The new covenant is that final stage. After the covenant that they broke, there was Moses on the mount after which his face shined (Ex 34:29-36), then again in the plains of Moab just before Moses died.

There was then the covenant in Shechem before Joshua died, and there were renewals in the days of the kings. The great and final renewal is described throughout the prophets (Isaiah 37:24-28; Ezekiel 16:59-63; 36:22-32; etc.). It is called “a new covenant” in Jeremiah 31.

A friend, Pat Brady, suggests that Ezekiel 37 with its valley of dry bones and two sticks imagery prophesies of the same new covenant as does Jeremiah 31. He is right. The first 30 verses of Jeremiah 31 prophesy of the return and redemption of the house of Israel, and in Ezekiel 37 God says (verse 11), “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel...” In Jeremiah 31 we read (verse 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...” In Ezekiel 37 God says (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.”

### Redeeming the Covenant

<p><b>My Covenant they broke</b> Exodus 19; Jeremiah 7:21-26; 31:32</p>
<p><b>A Second Covenant</b> Exodus 34:10, 27</p>
<p><b>The Covenant in Moab</b> Deuteronomy 29:1 (2 times), 9, 12, 14, 21 25</p>
<p><b>The Covenant in Shechem</b> Joshua 24:25</p>
<p><b>Jehoiada renews Covenant</b> 2Kings 11:17-20</p>
<p><b>Josiah renews Covenant</b> 2Kings 23:1-3; 2Chron 34:29-33</p>
<p><b>A New Covenant</b> Jeremiah 31:31-33;</p>

The New Covenant should not be a doctrine unrelated to Old Testament prophecy. It is rather a primary theme of the prophets. It involves the end-time return of the lost house of Israel which will be rejoined to the house of Judah which never was sundered from the 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.”

If the lost sheep are drawn from Christendom, might they have to reckon with whether or not God’s covenant with Israel has been rescinded?

### **The Good News of the Kingdom of God**

The good news of the Kingdom of God hinges on God’s faithfulness to his Covenant. What is being established these six millennia culminates with God presiding as king over all nations and Israel/Jerusalem serving as his queen. The Good News is that their covenant/marriage will have brought forth children to eternal life. This is symbolized by Adam and Eve being created in the image of God at the end of the sixth day (1Cor 15:45-49) and being given dominion over all the creation.

God is a legitimate Father, as it says (Eph 4:6), “One God and Father of all,” and his wife is the Jerusalem above (Gal 4:26) “...which is the mother of us all.” The first commandment with promise (Eph 6:2) is this (Ex 20:12): “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” If God is our Father and Jerusalem our Mother—just how long will be our days in the land?

We are sons and daughters now (1John 3:2): “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” When who appears? When our Father appears!

Jesus is not our Father—rather as it says (Rom 8:29), “For whom he [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

How was Jesus the firstborn? He was the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18; Rom 1:5).

We are sons now but parturition is not until the resurrection. Jesus says of those in the resurrection (Luke 20:36): “Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.”

Elsewhere it says (Heb 1:5), “For unto which of the angels said he at any time [Psalm 2:7], Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again [2Sam 7:14], I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” Here ‘begotten’ is from γεννάω—the verb for parturition is τεκεῖν as

in Revelation 12:5—“And she brought forth [ἔτεκεν] a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.” Jesus was thus the firstborn via a resurrection from the dead. Forty days later he ascended to the right hand of his Father in heaven.

Must we enter the Covenant to be in that resurrection? Must a child enter his parents’ marriage in order to be born? God’s wife is a nation of flesh and that nation bears the mark of the covenant of circumcision (Gen 17):

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. 10 This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. 11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which *is* not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

That nation still exists today, and in spite of millennia of persecution it is again sovereign in its ancient land. But being an Israelite in the flesh does not guarantee one a place in the first resurrection (Rev 20:5). The children of God, as we saw, are children of the resurrection (Gal 6:15), “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” This new creature is manifested in the resurrection (Romans 8):

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body. 24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

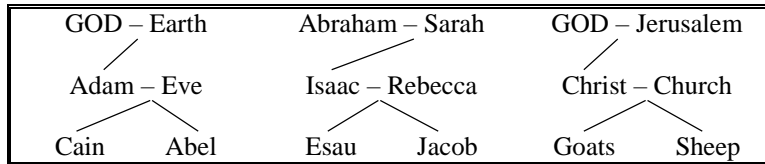
One does not have to enter the Covenant for God to be his Father and Jerusalem his Mother. But to be in the first resurrection one’s spiritual Father must be God and his spiritual Mother must be Jerusalem.

Then what about people like Enoch, Noah, and Abraham—men who lived before God cut his covenant with Israel? Can they be resurrected as sons of the Jerusalem above (Gal 4:26)? Why not? The ancients saw Adam/Messiah as there in the plan of God long before he would appear in history. Why not also the woman? And she doesn’t bear again until just before the seventh millennium—as Paul says (1Cor 15:23), “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

The good news of the Kingdom of God is that anyone of any nation—Jew or Gentile—might be a child of the covenant and thus a child of the resurrection. The good news also is that finally

when God has saved Israel and restored his covenant he then will set his hand to save the nations. The world at this time is subject to angels—they have been allotted a specified time with preordained end. When Jesus was about to cast out “Legion” it says (Mat 8:29), “And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” Again, as it says (Heb 2:5), “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.”

### THE PATTERN



The kingdom of God is God’s kingdom over all nations of this earth. When is God enthroned in his kingdom? It was when he established his first covenant—the covenant of the rainbow—as it says (Psalm 29:10), “The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.” Here the ‘flood’ is *mabbûl*, a word that occurs elsewhere only in reference to the Flood of Noah in Genesis. The flood occurred in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, and it was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day in Genesis that God established “the firmament of his power” (Psalm 150:1): “Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.”

Genesis 1:8 says, “And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.” In Isaiah 66:1 God says, “The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool...” In what way does God rule now? Daniel said (Dan 2:21), “...he removeth kings, and setteth up kings...” As Nebuchadnezzar was to learn, “...the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will...” (Dan 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21).

The kingdom of God advances on two fronts. Civilization with its literacy and technological development has spread from the tower of Babel into all the world, and meanwhile God is begetting via his covenant sons and daughters who at the end of the sixth day/millennium will be resurrected to rule (Dan 7:18): “But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.”