

comes from the old French word *covenir* (to come together) which in turn is derived from the Latin *convenire* (convened to arrange an agreement). But the OT word *berith* means to bind together, while the NT word *diatheke* emphasises an agreed arrangement. A biblical divine covenant was thus an arrangement instituted by God whereby he proclaimed his will to his people and bound (obligated) them to himself with promise. In ancient Semitic times the pattern form for a covenant was widely known.

God's first proclamation to man in the Scriptures (Gen 1 & 2) comes as a covenant in its pattern (Hos 6:7. "Like Adam they have broken the covenant") and gives us his unchanging first mission to men. (1) God, the sovereign Creator of man in his own image, is the speaker (1:26) -- preamble. (2) Having placed man on earth he must tell man what his mission to the world is as he ordains them for their task (1:27-28a) -- historical prologue. (3) The covenanted stipulations of God's will for man are: (a) man is to be fruitful producing servants for God (1:28, 2:5b). The word translated "cultivate", *abad* is the usual word "to serve." (b) Man is to "subdue the earth" for God as a steward of his world (2:15) and Word (2:15-16) bringing out the potential of both for God (4:26, 28). (c) Man is God's vicegerent to rule all of nature for God including himself and all of his responsibilities (1:26, 28-30). (4) The Tree-of-the-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil was the witness to the reality of the ever-present Word of God (2:17), while (5) the Tree of Life was God's provision for reminding them that he was the way to life without death and the way of life (2:9 & 3:22). (6) The proclaimed blessing and cursing keyed the ultimate in importance, obedience to God's will for life and death for disobedience (2:17).

The covenant's most characteristic expression in Scripture is God's proclamation, "I will be your God and you shall be my people," (Lev 26:12. Note also Gen 17:7, Exod 19:5, 6 and Jer 7:23). In the unfolding of the covenants down through redemptive history, man was to find saving grace and the way of life, and in covenant obedience he found his true good and the glory of God. Nothing contrary to God's covenanted will can be approved, so that will must be daily sought in the Book of the Covenant. After man's fall into sin, a new dimension of saving grace was added to the covenant so that the covenant breaker could be restored to fulfilling the mandate to cultural and spiritual service in the world (Gen 3:9-19). Now under the evangelistic mandate of the New Covenant (Matt 28:18-20) restored covenant breakers are the witnesses to the reality of the covenanted Word of God (Acts 1:8). They are to be in the world, as lights, (Phil 2:15) but not of the world (1 John 2:16).

The people of God are a covenanted people; they are to glorify him with obedient service and have nothing to do with idolatrous substitutes. When in the OT they ignored this and tried to accommodate their ways to those of the surrounding culture, disaster fell on them from God. When at Sinai a sinful people told Aaron that their invisible God needed to be replaced by one that they could see going before them, he made them a golden calf, a fall-back to the Egyptian culture they had left. In Egypt a calf was sometimes used as the seat of a deity, and some have suggested that Aaron meant them to consider that the calf was the throne of the invisible