

Doctrine of the Covenant

1. The Hebrew word for covenant is *berith* and means primarily "a cutting," with reference to the custom of cutting or dividing animals in two and passing between the parts in ratifying a covenant.
 - *Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. 2 And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. 7 And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. 8 And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? 9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. 10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. 11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. 12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. 17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. 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: 19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, 20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, 21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.*
 - *Jeremiah 34:18 And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, 19 The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf;*
2. In the *New Testament* the corresponding word for covenant is *diathece* which is frequently translated testament in the Authorized Version.

3. In its biblical usage the Greek word *diathece* like its Hebrew word *berith* refers to two parties who engage in an agreement. The word is used of a covenant between God and man; e.g. God covenanted with Noah, after the flood, that a like judgment should not be repeated. It is not precisely like a covenant between men, but was a promise or agreement by God.
4. According to Reformed Theology, the principal covenants are the Covenant of Works — God promising to save and bless men on condition of perfect obedience — and the Covenant of Grace, or God's promise to save men on condition of their believing in Christ and receiving him as their Master and Saviour.
5. The Covenant of Works is called the *Old Covenant*, from which we name the first part of the *Bible* the *Old Testament*, the Latin rendering of the word covenant.
6. The second is called the *New Covenant*, or *New Testament*.
7. A covenant between man and man is also a solemn compact or agreement.

- Covenants can be made between tribes or nations.

Joshua 9:6 And they [the inhabitants of Gibeon] went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us. Joshua 9:15 And Joshua made peace with them [the Gibeonites], and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.

1 Samuel 11:1 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

- Covenants can be made between individuals. *Genesis 31:44 Now therefore come thou, let us [Laban and Jacob] make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.*

8. In a covenant each party bound himself to fulfill certain conditions and was assured of receiving certain advantages.
9. In making such a covenant God was solemnly invoked as witness and an oath was sworn.
 - *Genesis 31:50 If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee.*
 - *Genesis 21:31 Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba; because there they sware both of them.*

10. A sign or witness of the covenant was sometimes framed, such a gift, or a pillar or heap of stones erected.

- *Genesis 21:30 And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well.*
- *Genesis 31:52 This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.*