

We commonly divide the bible into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Another way is to view the bible by the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. At the Lord's Supper, Jesus offered a chalice to the disciples saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you" (Lk 22:20). Jesus ratified the new covenant by offering his life on the cross for our salvation. God always treats a covenant as unbreakable on his part.

Biblical scholars understand covenants as a means to "extend kinship between two previously unrelated parties."<sup>i</sup> Through a covenant both duties and privileges are extended to others. By his death and resurrection, Jesus offers us freedom from sin. He opened the gates of heaven that the just might rise to new life in Christ receiving the promise of an eternal reward. Through Baptism, we become brothers and sisters of Jesus. We receive the promise or privilege of a royal inheritance. Each Christian has a duty to love God, and to extend kinship to one's neighbors. With the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus teaches us that a neighbor can be an unrelated party, a stranger in need.

God also enters into a covenant with man and woman in the sacrament of marriage. Husband and wife are united to one another and to God in Holy Matrimony. God considers a covenant binding and unbreakable. This is why we say, what God has joined, no man may separate. The duties and privileges of marriage include "the intimate, exclusive, indissoluble communion of life and love entered by man and woman at the design of the Creator for the purpose of their own good and the procreation and education of children; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."<sup>ii</sup>

In the Old Testament, we also see God establishing covenants with numerous individuals:

- In the story of Creation, God creates the world in six days for the benefit of Adam and Eve. They live in a privileged relationship with God in the Garden of Eden and their duties include being good stewards of creation. When Adam and Eve eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they break the covenant and introduce death into human history.<sup>iii</sup>
- The rainbow is a sign of the covenant between God and Noah. God cleanses the world by the great flood, and promises "Noah and his descendants and, remarkably, with all the animals who come out of the ark: never again shall the world be destroyed by flood. The sign of this solemn promise is the appearance of a rainbow" [Note Gen 9:8-17].
- The Book of Genesis contains a series of covenants between God and Abraham to help redeem humanity. These covenants are "cumulative, each building on the previous one."<sup>iv</sup>
  - In the initial covenant, God tells Abram "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" (12:2).
  - "Genesis 17 augments the earlier ... covenant by including a promise of kingship for Abraham's descendants and the expectation that Abraham would become not just one but many nations."<sup>v</sup> This covenant comes with the duty to circumcise every male.
  - Abraham's faith is put to the test when he is asked to sacrifice his son Isaac. Isaac is spared, but the new covenant is foreshadowed where Jesus will become the sacrificial lamb.

Throughout the Bible, we see God using covenants to help humanity to draw closer to God and to grow in holiness. "Blessed are you who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways! For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be, and favored" (Ps 128:1-2).

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<sup>i</sup> Hahn, Scott. Catholic Bible Dictionary, Pg 168.

<sup>ii</sup> West, Christopher. Basic Theology of Marriage.

<sup>iii</sup> Hahn, pg. 172.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.