



LIFE SCHOOL
INTERNATIONAL

**UNDERSTANDING
YOUR INHERITANCE
IN CHRIST**

Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ. Copyright © 2009 by Ken Kessler. Printed and bound in the United States of America. All rights reserved. Written permission must be secured from the publisher to use or reproduce any part of this book, except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles.

Published by:

Lifeschool International
P.O. Box 671063
Marietta, GA 30066-0136
(770) 509-1481
<http://www.LifeschoolInternational.org>
info@Lifeschoolinternational.org

Italics in biblical quotes indicate emphasis added.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Updated (NASU) Edition*. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture marked NKJV is taken from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

1	CALLED TO INHERIT A BLESSING	5
2	STEPS OF ANCIENT COVENANT MAKING	19
3	UNDERSTANDING OUR POSITION IN CHRIST	37
4	THE BLESSINGS OF ABRAHAM	49
5	THE BLESSINGS OF THE NEW COVENANT	61
6	AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIP	71
7	HOLD FAST TO THE COVENANT	79
8	PRINCIPLES FOR NEW COVENANT LIVING	93
	ANSWER SHEETS	103
	FINAL EXAM	105

Session 1

Called To Inherit a Blessing

This session covers:

- God's desire to bless you
- The connection between covenant and blessings
- The basics of a biblical covenant
- How covenant draws two together as one

This session corresponds to:

- The Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* book
- Session 1 of the *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* CDs

The Promise of Blessing

1. The Scriptures promise wonderful and much needed blessings to believers through their relationship with Jesus Christ.

- In both the good times when we are experiencing God's favor and in the tough times when it seems like God is nowhere to be found, it is great to know that God promises to bless us.
- In a brief but powerful phrase, Peter wrote that "you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9).
- This same theme is repeated throughout the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, the Book of Deuteronomy, most notably Chapter 28, highlights the fact that those who diligently obey the Lord will experience blessings in every facet of their life.
- Psalm 103 identifies at least nine different blessings, such as forgiveness of sin, healing, renewal of strength, redemption from difficult times, grace, and compassion to those who follow God.

- Psalm 1 tells us that followers of God will be like a tree planted by streams of water and will prosper in whatever they do.
- Proverbs 8:34-35 reinforces the Old Testament idea that followers of God are promised blessings as they walk in obedience to the Lord.
- The New Testament introduces the same theme—that believers are promised blessings in their relationship with Christ. Paul wrote that “in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles” (Gal. 3:14).
- In Ephesians 1:3, Paul stated that “Jesus Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” In 1 Corinthians 2:9, Paul wrote that “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”
- The Apostle John prayed that believers would prosper and be in good health just as their soul prospered (3 John 2).
- From beginning to end, an encouraging thread runs through the Scriptures—our heavenly Father desires to bless us!

2. The end-time Church must know that God wants to bless us.

- We live in a generation that is already experiencing the beginning of end-time events—events that will ultimately culminate in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Almost daily we hear about the fulfillment of ancient prophecies that have remained dormant for thousands of years. We are not living in this time period by accident, but like Esther, we were born for such a time as this!
- Living under the shadow of end-time events is both exciting and fearful. It is exciting because God is moving powerfully in our day; and He will pour out His Spirit in even greater measure in the days to come. These are days of harvest as multitudes of people come to know Jesus as Savior, Lord, and Bridegroom.
- But it is also a fearful time. We only have to skim through the Book of Revelation to understand that life in the end-times will be more difficult. As we approach the end of the age there will be an increase in natural disasters, persecution, economic turmoil, diseases, and plagues that our medical communities cannot remedy. These events and problems will put tremendous pressure on even the most committed Christians. The tension of end-time events will require us to depend upon God for provision, healing, protection, and strength.
- You may be thinking that these days don't sound too exciting. But they are! They are exciting because in the midst of difficulties, God will pour out His glory. God desires for us to flourish in these days—to prosper, to live in health, to be shielded from terror, and to experience His wonderful presence in unprecedented ways. We live in a generation when God is preparing His glorious Bride to arise without spot or wrinkle and to rule the earth with Jesus.
- As these last days emerge in their fullness, God is assembling an army of overcomers who will stand against evil and darkness. They will live by the power of God's Word rather than succumb to the circumstances of life. However, to come into this level of glory, the Body of Christ

must make many transitions. One of these transitions is learning to live by the covenant promises of God.

3. Many believers do not know they are called to inherit a blessing.

- Throughout the Scriptures, God promises to bless His people. However, many believers do not know the great blessings they are promised.
- Hosea 4:6 tells us that many perish due to a lack of knowledge. This verse is especially true when it comes to knowing the specific blessings that God promises His people because of His covenants. As a result, many believers do not experience the full blessings of what they are promised in their relationship with Christ.

The purpose of this class is to help believers understand the great blessings they are called to inherit in Christ. This class also identifies more than twenty different blessings that are promised to followers of Jesus and how to experience these blessings in their fullness.

The Connection between Blessings and Covenant

1. Every blessing from God is based on His covenant promises.

- God interacts with man through covenant. God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. Because of this, every blessing offered by God is only made available through His *covenant* promises.
- To live in the reality of God's blessings, it is imperative that we understand the depth and breadth of God's covenants.
- Covenant is the foundation from which every promise in the Bible depends and is the reason why God's blessings flow into our lives.
- Text Box: Because God's covenants and His blessings are so closely connected, we will look at God's covenants in an in-depth way for the remainder of this session and in the next two sessions.

2. God's promises are secured by covenant.

- As already mentioned, God's blessings are based upon His covenants with man. In fact, covenant is *how we know* that God will bless us and possibly even more importantly, covenant is the *means by which* we get a hold upon God.
- To see why covenant is so important to knowing that God will bless us, let's look at the promises of blessing that God made to Abraham. In Genesis 12:1-3, God told Abraham,

Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from

your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And *in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*

- Abraham obeyed and began to experience the initial blessings of walking with God. However, several years passed and Abraham had not yet received the full extent of God's promised blessings. Abraham began to wonder if God really was going to fulfill His promises to him. It wasn't that Abraham doubted God. He just needed to know for sure that God was going to be true to His word. He needed something to hold on to until the blessings came.
- In this context, Abraham asked a very important question. He said, "O, Lord GOD, how may I *know* that I will possess it?" (Gen. 15:8). In other words, Abraham asked, "How can I know that You are going to bless me like You said?"
- God answered Abraham's question immediately by establishing a covenant with him. In essence God was saying to Abraham, "You *can know* I will be true to My word to you because I will secure it by a covenant."
- Then, after Abraham sacrificed an animal and cut it in half, God walked between the pieces as He entered into a solemn covenant with Abraham.
- If Abraham had not known for sure that God was going to fulfill His word, he would have never possessed his full inheritance. Abraham had too many obstacles to overcome. He had to walk in blind faith and he did not have the luxury of the full counsel of God's written Word. Abraham had to know that God would fulfill His promises to Him.
- In the culture in which Abraham lived, a covenant was the most binding commitment that two people could make. When God entered into a covenant with Abraham, the Lord was making the most powerful statement possible of His intentions to bless him.
- This covenant helped Abraham know that God was serious about fulfilling His promises. Through this covenant, God demonstrated His eternal commitment to fulfill His promises and to bless Abraham. Not only that, God was revealing an essential attribute about Himself, which is this: God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God.
- For us to experience the fullness of our destiny, we must know without any doubt or uncertainty that God will bless us—just as Abraham knew that God was going to bless him.
- We know that God wants to bless us in the same way Abraham knew that God wanted to bless him—because of covenant. God's blessings are secured through covenant. Because we have entered into a *covenant* relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we now *know* that He desires to bless us.
- The following quote by Andrew Murray in his book, *The Two Covenants*, summarizes this idea:

And so the covenant was, above all, to give man a hold upon

God, as the covenant keeping God, to link him to God Himself in expectation and hope, to bring him to make God Himself alone the portion and strength of his soul.¹

The Basics of a Biblical Covenant

1. The definition of covenant helps us to understand this vital concept.

- The word "covenant" is used approximately three hundred times in the Bible. It is a concept that permeates both the Old and New Testaments and is a central theme throughout Scripture. In fact, what we normally call the Old Testament and New Testament should be translated as the Old Covenant and New Covenant. The covenant is so important that it separates two dispensations in the Bible!
- The dictionary defines covenant as a formal, solemn, and binding agreement; a compact; a written agreement or promise usually sealed between two or more parties, especially for the performance of some action.
- The definition of the Hebrew word for covenant, *beriyth* (ber-eeth'), adds the sense of cutting because it defines covenant as being established by passing between pieces of the flesh of a sacrifice to form a compact, confederacy, or league. It also carries the meaning of binding or to fetter.
- The definition of the Greek word for covenant, *diatheke* (dee-ath-ay'-kay), suggests the meaning of a "disposition, a contract, arrangement of any sort, which one wishes to be valid, the last disposition which one makes of his earthly possessions after his death, a testament or will, or a compact.
- Putting these definitions together, we come up with the following definition:

A covenant is a formal, solemn, and binding agreement that suggests the binding or fettering of two entities together as one. A covenant is often secured by a blood sacrifice and binds two parties together based upon a common purpose for life, often extending to future generations. A covenant provides a clear statement of God's purposes and intentions expressed in terms that bind God by solemn oath to perform what He has promised.

2. Every interaction between God and man is based on covenant.

- Covenant is central to all that God does. Every promise of God comes from His covenants with man.
- Our salvation originates from God's covenant promises. The assurance that we will spend eternity with Jesus comes from God's covenant.
- Our new position of forgiveness, righteousness, blamelessness, and acceptance are covenant blessings.
- Healing, provision, and life purpose are all covenant promises to us.

- Every promise of God comes from His covenants with man.

3. God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God.

- Even though covenants are rare in our modern society, covenants were a common, universal practice in the ancient cultures in which the Bible was set. The practice of making covenants is not an exclusively biblical concept. Many different nations and people groups outside of the Bible regularly entered into covenants.
- Covenants were initiated during ancient times for a wide range of social and interpersonal relationships. Between nations, covenants were made to establish treaties. Between individuals, covenants expressed a pledge of friendship or consummated a business contract. Between a ruler and his subjects, covenants were used to form a national constitution.
- God chose the concept of covenant, which was commonly practiced by the majority of the people of both Old and New Testament days, to express His commitment to a deep and lasting relationship with His people.
- The following quote from Kevin Conner and Ken Malmin in their book entitled *The Covenants* illustrates this point.

The word "covenant" is a word that has lost its meaning and significance in present society. In Bible times the word "covenant" involved promise, commitment, faithfulness and loyalty even unto death. A covenant was sacred and was not lightly entered into by the parties involved. In Bible times a person was only as good as their covenant word. In a society where national agreements, business contracts and marriage covenants are under stress and attack, where people are "covenant-breakers" (Romans 1:31), it brings great joy and comfort to know that God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God.²

4. A covenant is far more binding than anything we think of in our culture.

- In our culture, we think in terms of contracts that have terms, lengths, and remedies. A covenant is far different.
- God chose the concept of covenant to express His desire to have a deep and lasting relationship with His people.
- A covenant binds until death. In many cases, it binds descendants for three to four generations after the one entering the covenant agreement has died, and it can even last eternally. To the ancients, a covenant communicated a very solemn agreement of loyalty, faithfulness, and commitment that could not be broken.

Now that we understand a few basics about covenant, let's examine the foundational reason for a covenant—to draw two together as one for a common purpose.

Two Becoming One

1. A covenant joins two parties together as one for a common purpose.

- The purpose of a covenant, whether it is a covenant from the pagan culture of ancient times or a covenant initiated by God, is to join two parties together for life in order *to accomplish a common purpose*.
- A covenant ends independent living by binding two together so that they begin to live for one another, give to one another, help one another, and work with one another to accomplish common goals.
- Marriage is one of the most common examples of a true covenant agreement. The Prophet Malachi writes that marriage is a form of covenant (Mal. 2:14). In marriage, a man and a woman, once living independent lives, come together to live as one. The degree of oneness in marriage surpasses any other relationship between two people. Husbands and wives become one in body, soul, and spirit. Husbands and wives begin to think alike, act alike, and develop common goals for their family. Married couples live as one, taking on a common purpose to raise children and face life's issues together. Thus, in marriage, two become one. Marriage consists of an exchange that occurs when the husband and wife each draw from all that their partner has and each gives their all to the other.
- All true covenant agreements are like this. A covenant gives each covenant party a hold upon their covenant partner. Thus, the purpose of a covenant is for two to live as one.

2. Jonathan's covenant with David illustrates two becoming one through a covenant (1 Sam. 18:1-4).

- Jonathan's covenant with David offers a clear Old Testament example of two becoming one:

Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of *Jonathan was knit to the soul of David*, and Jonathan loved him as himself. Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a *covenant* with David because he *loved him as himself*. Jonathan stripped himself of the *robe* that was on him and gave it to David, with his *armor*, including his sword and his bow and his *belt* (1 Samuel 18:1-4).

- Notice the italicized words. Through covenant, Jonathan knit himself to the soul of David because he loved him as himself. The Hebrew word translated knit in verse one means to bind or tie. We know that a covenant binds one person to another.
- Through the giving of the robes, belts, and weapons, we see the degree to which a covenant binds two parties together. When Jonathan gave David his robe, belt, and weapons, he was expressing his love for David, his eagerness for a deep, abiding friendship, and his desire to live as one for a common purpose.

- Digging a little deeper into the giving of the robe, belt, and weapons, we see what Jonathan and David were expressing. When Jonathan gave David his robe, he was in essence giving him all that he was. The robe symbolized Jonathan's character, position, and authority. Jonathan was offering David his position and authority in the kingdom of Israel.
- Recall that Jonathan was the eldest son of King Saul and was the natural heir to his father's throne. Possibly he knew that the Prophet Samuel had anointed David as the next king of Israel. Perhaps he believed that once David became king, he would need David's protection and provision since he was in the lineage of Saul. For whatever reason, as Jonathan gave David his robe, he surrendered to David his individual rights to position and authority.
- Jonathan also gave David his armor, including his sword. As he did so, he was vowing to take on David's enemies, symbolically saying to David that he would use his sword to assist David, his new covenant partner. As we read through the biblical accounts of Jonathan and David, we see that Jonathan did exactly that. He was there to protect David, placing his relationship with David even above his relationship with his father. Note the following verse:

If it please my father to do you harm, may the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also, if I do not make it known to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And may the LORD be with you as He has been with my father (1 Sam. 20:13).

- Jonathan also gave him his belt. The belt or the girdle was part of the armor. It is what held the weapons in place and is symbolic of a man's strength. As Jonathan gave David his belt, he was saying that he would strengthen David and help him in his weaknesses. We see examples of Jonathan helping David repeatedly when David fled from King Saul. Jonathan hid, helped, and assisted him in escaping Saul's grasp, encouraging him along the way.
- This covenant did not just consist of Jonathan giving and David receiving. Once David became king, he maintained a covenant commitment to Jonathan's family. Second Samuel 9 tells of David's encounter with Mephibosheth. In this passage, we learn that King David sought out any of Jonathan's family who might still be living so that he could bless them. Then he found that Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, was still alive. Because of the covenant between Jonathan and David, David restored to Mephibosheth all of his rightful inheritance and brought him to eat at the king's table (See 1 Sam. 18, 20, 21; 2 Sam. 9). So we see from this example that a covenant joins two together so that they become one.
- The covenant between Jonathan and David explains a lot about the purpose of a covenant. We clearly see from these passages of Scripture that covenant living changes everything. It changed Jonathan and David's priorities, allegiances, and united the purposes of their lives together. Living in a covenant relationship with God will change our lives as well. The Biblical account of Jonathan and David illustrates six

ways that covenant brings two together as one.

Six Ways That a Covenant Brings Two Together as One

1. A covenant establishes a common purpose.

- From 1 Samuel 16, we know that God had anointed David as king of Israel. As the Spirit of the Lord worked through David, King Saul grew increasingly jealous of David's success and the adoration he received from the people. Saul was determined to take David's life; he wanted to thwart God's purposes for David.
- In the midst of Saul's attempts to kill David, Jonathan—David's covenant partner—defended, strengthened, and protected him (1 Sam. 18-20). Why? So that God's purposes for David could be achieved.
- Jonathan, who was the natural heir to the throne, no longer lived for himself, but for his covenant partner. Jonathan was dedicated to God's common purpose for the two of them that was established by covenant.
- In a similar way, as we enter into covenant with God, we commit to a new way of living. Through covenant, we choose to live for God, surrendering our goals and priorities for God's goals and priorities. No longer do we live for ourselves, we live for Jesus.
- More than anything else, covenant living calls for a life of common purpose.

2. A covenant establishes a close friendship.

- When David and Jonathan entered into covenant, they became friends for life. Note that "Jonathan loved him [David] as himself" (1 Sam. 18:1-3).
- There was much more than a commitment to a common purpose that drew the two of them together. Jonathan and David were extremely close friends who really cared for one another. They were friends who hurt when the other hurt and rejoiced when the other rejoiced.
- A covenant knit their souls together, causing them to love one another as themselves. A covenant relationship is much more than a contract or an agreement that allows both parties to accomplish a common goal. It establishes a new and different type of relationship—a close, open, transparent friendship.
- When God made a covenant with Abraham, it was far more than just a means to create the nation of Israel. It also established a new friendship. When Abraham entered into covenant with God, he became a friend of God (James 2:23).
- As Jesus prepared to go to the cross, He called His closest disciples His friends (John 15:13-14).
- A covenant establishes a close friendship between covenant partners.

3. A covenant establishes a new loyalty.

- Covenants were always a solemn undertaking. In almost every case, covenants were accompanied by the shedding of blood—either an animal sacrifice, the co-mingling of the covenant partners' blood, or both. The very fact that blood was shed shows how serious the agreement was.
- Such a solemn pact requires a deep loyalty. We see this loyalty clearly from our example of Jonathan's covenant with David (1 Sam. 19:1-3). Although Jonathan loved his father, his loyalty was with David due to the covenant that knit them together.
- Covenants were serious, binding agreements that lasted for life or beyond. You don't find people entering into covenant for brief periods of time or for minor reasons. Covenants produced lifetime commitments that affected all involved.
- No matter what prior commitments or relationships each partner had, a covenant required a loyalty to one another that superseded all else. In fact, a covenant established a loyalty between two parties that was stronger, more enduring, and took a higher precedent than all other commitments.

4. A covenant requires a lifetime commitment.

- Covenants lasted for life and in many cases, bound descendants for several generations. In fact, many biblical covenants are perpetual agreements and are still in effect today.
- Note how Jonathan expressed the expected duration of his covenant with David when he told him, "You shall not cut off your lovingkindness from my house forever, not even when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth" (1 Sam. 20:15).
- Another powerful example of the serious, lifetime commitment involved in covenant making is found in Joshua 9. In this passage, the Gibeonites deceived Joshua into making a covenant of protection with them. Even though the Gibeonites lied to Joshua about who they were and where they lived, Joshua was bound by covenant to honor his word and not harm them. Much later, during the reign of King David, a three-year famine came upon Israel because King Saul in his zeal harmed the Gibeonites, thus violating the covenant that had been cut with Joshua. God required David to make atonement with the Gibeonites for what Saul had done (2 Sam. 21).

5. A covenant requires each partner to give all that they have.

- Included in the covenant between Jonathan and David was the giving to one another all that each possessed.
- Jonathan gave David his robe, weapons, and belt, each of which symbolized his position, authority, possessions, strength, and protection. Jonathan did not withhold anything from David. We see this throughout the biblical account of their friendship.

- Jonathan told David, “Whatever you say, I will do for you” (1 Sam. 20:4). This brief phrase illustrates Jonathan’s commitment to give all to David. Likewise, David gave to Jonathan all that he had, even extending provision and blessing to Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:1-7).
- Covenants involve the giving of all that each covenant partner has to the other so that each one is blessed.
- Covenants are not halfhearted agreements; instead, covenants require the total surrender of each party to the covenant pact and their covenant partner.

6. A covenant gives each partner the right to draw from the other.

- In 1 Samuel 20:4-8, Jonathan and David are planning David’s escape from King Saul. In this context, note David’s plea to Jonathan: “Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you” (1 Sam. 20:8).
- Not only does Jonathan give David all that he has, but David *asks* Jonathan to be merciful and kind toward him. Thus, David draws from the covenant agreement.
- This is an extremely important aspect of covenant to comprehend. We are not only promised blessings because of covenant, we are also given the *right to draw from our covenant partner*. This right is more than just a privilege of covenant; it is legal permission to ask our partner to come to our aid.
- Andrew Murray wrote, “And so the covenant was, above all, to give man a hold upon God, as the covenant keeping God.”
- A covenant gives each covenant partner a hold upon the other, permitting each partner to draw freely from the strengths and abilities of their partner.

As we see the benefits of covenant living, we know that the covenant itself is a mighty promise to us, a promise to which we can hold fast. And we know that as we learn to hold onto the covenant, we will live increasingly in the fullness of the blessings of our inheritance in Christ.

Notes

1. Andrew Murray, *The Two Covenants* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, n.d.), pp. 5, quoted in Kay Arthur, *Covenant* (Chattanooga: Precept Ministries of Reach Out, Inc., 1986), pp. L-3, P-1.
2. Kevin Conner and Ken Malmin, Foreword to *The Covenants* (Portland: City Bible Publishing, 1997).

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. Because the Lord's return is so close, it is not as important to know God's blessings as it was in past generations.
- _____ 2. The Scriptures promise wonderful and much needed blessings to believers through their relationship with Jesus Christ.
- _____ 3. Hosea 4:6 tells us that many prosper because of their knowledge.
- _____ 4. Every blessing offered by God is only made available through His *covenant* promises.
- _____ 5. The concept of covenant is used extensively in the New Testament and, even though referred to, is not discussed explicitly in the Old Testament.
- _____ 6. A covenant is a formal, solemn, and binding agreement that suggests the binding or fettering of two entities together as one.
- _____ 7. A covenant agreement was much like what a marriage contract is today. Just as marriage agreements can easily be broken, covenants were often dissolved in ancient times.
- _____ 8. A covenant is far more binding than any agreement we think of in our culture.
- _____ 9. A covenant joins two parties together as one for a common purpose.
- _____ 10. Based on 1 Samuel 18, Jonathan's covenant with Samuel illustrates two becoming one through covenant.

Fill in the Blank

11. Covenant is how we know that God will _____ us, and possibly even more important, covenant is the means by which we get a _____ upon God.
12. _____ offers a good example of how covenant helped a man know that God would bless him and fulfill his promise to him.
13. The word "covenant" is used approximately _____ times in the Bible. It is a concept that permeates both the _____ and _____ Testaments and is a central theme throughout Scripture.
14. To the ancients, a covenant communicated a very _____

18 Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ

_____ of loyalty, faithfulness, and commitment that could not be broken.

15. God is a covenant-_____, covenant-_____ God.

From the list on the right, identify five ways covenant brings two together as one.

- _____ 16.
- _____ 17.
- _____ 18.
- _____ 19.
- _____ 20.

Possible Matches for 16-20

- a. A covenant establishes a common purpose.
- b. Covenant is the primary way we know that God will bless us.
- c. Covenant is used to draw two together throughout the Old and New Testament.
- d. A covenant establishes a new loyalty.
- e. A covenant gives each party the right to draw from each other.
- f. God has called us to inherit a blessing.
- g. A covenant requires a lifetime commitment.
- h. Every interaction between God and man is based on covenant.
- i. A covenant establishes a close friendship.

Session 2

Steps of Ancient Covenant Making

This session covers:

- Covenant making in ancient cultures
- Eight common steps of entering a covenant
- How each step of ancient covenant making applies to us today

This session corresponds to:

- Chapters 3-5 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* book
- Sessions 2 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* CDs

Covenant Making in Ancient Cultures

1. In the ancient Near East dating back to the time of Abraham, covenants were a common aspect of life and were made on a regular basis.

- Covenants were as common in ancient times as business contracts, international treaties, and legislative decisions are today. They were made between individuals, tribes, and nations, and they were entered for the purposes of protection, strength, and prosperity.
- Often, the promise of blessings would be involved, such as abundant harvests, prosperity, good health, or many children. Almost every covenant called upon one or more of the many pagan deities to witness the ceremony and to visit the participants with either blessings for obedience or curses for disobedience.
- The Mari Tablets, discovered in the 1930s in present day Syria, sheds light on what life was like during the early years of history, going back even to the time of Abraham.¹ These tablets, some twenty thousand in number, describe a wide variety of practices in the

ancient Near East. Among the many details described, one was the rite of covenant making during the days of Abraham.

- Delbert Hillers gives us insight into this covenant-making rite by documenting a covenant ceremony which involved the king of Mari. Hillers tells how a representative of the king of Mari, presiding over the covenant ceremony, refused to enter into the treaty lightly and insisted upon having a donkey sacrificed.²
- Hillers' example shows us three important points about covenants. First, it reveals how common covenants were during the time that God cut a covenant with Abraham. Second, it shows that animal sacrifices were an integral part of ancient-covenant making. And third, it reinforces how serious covenant agreements were considered in ancient times.

2. Examples from history show that covenant making was a common practice in biblical times.

- H. Clay Trumbull shares an extra-biblical account of a Near Eastern covenant that illustrates many of the common steps involved in making an ancient covenant:

In bringing this rite of the covenant of blood into new prominence, it may be well for me to tell of it as it was described to me by an intelligent native Syrian, who saw it consummated in a village at the base of the mountains of Lebanon; and then to add evidences of its wide-spread existence in the East and elsewhere, in earlier and in later times.

It was two young men, who were to enter into this covenant. They had known each other, and had been intimate [as friends], for years; but now they were to become brother-friends, in the covenant of blood. Their relatives and neighbors were called together, in the open place before the village fountain, to witness the sealing compact. The young men publicly announced their purpose, and their reasons for it. Their declarations were written down, in duplicate—one paper for each friend—and signed by themselves and by several witnesses. One of the friends took a sharp lancet, and opened a vein in the other's arm. Into the opening thus made, he inserted a quill, through which he sucked the living blood. The lancet-blade was carefully wiped on one of the duplicate covenant-papers, and then it was taken by the other friend, who made a like incision in its first user's arm and drank his blood through the quill, wiping the blade on the duplicate covenant-record. The two friends declared together: "We are brothers in a covenant made before God: who deceiveth the other, him will God deceive." Each blood-marked covenant-record was then folded carefully, to be sewed up in a small leathern case, or amulet, about an inch square; to be worn thenceforward by one of the covenant-brothers, suspended about the neck, or bound upon the arm, in token of the indissoluble relation.³

- We can also look to more modern times at the lives of the famous explorers Sir Henry Stanley and David Livingstone. John Osteen in his book, *Unraveling the Mystery of the Blood Covenant*, shares an interesting story about Stanley.⁴ The following summarizes Osteen's illustration.

Livingstone, the first great missionary to Africa, was in the African jungles so long that England, his native country, began to worry about his status. As a result, the English government sent David Stanley to find him. Stanley's search party encountered great difficulties in their travels. They were plagued by disease and starvation, and were even threatened by cannibals. At one point, the group encountered a strong, hostile African tribe near the equator.

When the tribe showed no signs of letting them pass through their land, Stanley's interpreter advised Stanley to cut a covenant with the tribe to avoid severe peril. Not knowing what else to do, Stanley agreed. First, negotiations were made between Stanley's party and the African tribe. The terms were agreed upon and the ceremony began. A representative was chosen from each group and the two representatives went through the blood-covenant rite.

After blood was drawn from the wrist of each representative, mingled together and mixed with wine, both drank the mixture. Gunpowder was then rubbed on each person where the blood had been drawn, creating a permanent mark. The pagan priest that officiated the ceremony then pronounced blessings for following the terms of the agreement and curses for violating the pact.

To seal the agreement, Stanley and the chief exchanged gifts. The chief wanted Stanley's prized possession, a goat that he had brought from England that provided milk for his weak stomach. The chief offered Stanley a spear bearing his insignia. Stanley wondered what he would do with an old spear. As he traveled throughout the darkest places in Africa in search of Livingstone, he soon found out. When other tribes with evil intent saw the chief's spear in Stanley's hand and his covenant mark, they knew that Stanley was in covenant with the most feared tribe in the land. Further, they knew that if they attacked Stanley or refused him passage, they would not only have to fight Stanley's search party, but also the African tribe in covenant with Stanley. Rather than opposing Stanley, the tribes bowed before him, allowing him to pass freely through their territories, and provided him with anything he needed. Stanley reportedly used the covenant rite at least fifty times during his travels in Africa. Stanley was mightily blessed because of covenant!

3. God chose to use a common practice of everyday life—entering into a covenant—to illustrate His commitment to His people.

- When God entered into covenant with Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus, He drew upon many of the same practices that were common in the day in which they lived.
- Because God employed cultural practices of the day to introduce His covenants with man, it spoke volumes to the people who lived in the days when biblical covenants were formed.
- It revealed to them how *seriously* God takes His covenant invitations, how *seriously* God *expects* His people to take covenant, the *extent* of God's blessings to His people, and God's *faithfulness* toward His covenant promises.
- As we see the steps of ancient-covenant making applied in God's covenants with us, it underscores how serious God is about His covenant promises to us and it conveys the extensive blessings that God has offered us because of covenant.

Steps of Covenant Making**1. From the historical evidence, several steps of covenant making emerge as common in ancient times.**

- Ancient covenants were always very solemn and serious agreements. Animal sacrifices were almost always included. Covenants were accompanied by the promise of blessings for obedience and the warning of curses for disobedience. In pagan societies, the participants almost always invoked their false gods as witnesses to secure the agreement. Finally, a sign of the covenant would usually accompany the sealing of the agreement.
- From historical information, we see the following eight steps commonly used in ancient covenant ceremonies:
 - The Pre-Ceremony Actions
 - The Selection of the Covenant Representatives and the Cutting of the Covenant Sacrifice
 - The Exchange of Robes, Belts, and Weapons
 - The Walk unto Death
 - The Pronouncement of Blessings and Curses
 - The Seal of the Covenant Mark
 - The Exchange of Names
 - The Covenant Meal
- Not every ancient covenant included all of these steps, but many were included.
- A brief review of these eight steps will give us a basic understanding of God's covenants with man.

The important point to us is that God chose these same steps to enter into covenant with man. Thus, what each step represented to the people of Abraham's day applies to us today.

Eight Steps of Covenant Making

1. The Pre-Ceremony Actions

- *Overview*
 - In a typical ancient covenant, before the covenant was enacted, the two parties would discuss the terms, conditions, the promises of blessing, and the warning of curses related to the agreement.
 - As a part of this step, they would weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the treaty and evaluate whether it was a worthwhile opportunity. They would spend time counting the cost of entering into the covenant.
 - In essence, they would assess whether the personal sacrifice demanded by the pact would return equal or greater blessings.

- *How It Applies to Us Today*
 - When God initiated a covenant with Abraham, a period of time preceded the actual covenant ceremony recorded in Genesis 15. This pre-ceremony interaction between God and Abraham is recorded in Genesis 12:1-8.
 - In this passage, God proposed the terms, conditions, and promises. Abraham's role was to count the cost and to respond in faith and obedience. Abraham had to decide if the promises of blessings were worth the sacrifice of leaving his homeland. Abraham had to choose between the security of living near his family or going to a strange, unfamiliar land in which he was an alien.
 - God required Abraham to respond to the invitation *prior* to the covenant ceremony. God told Abraham that if he would leave his country, leave his family, and go to the land that God would show him, *then* he would be blessed.
 - Abraham responded positively to the invitation, thus setting the stage for the actual covenant ceremony that took place in Genesis 15.
 - Pre-ceremony actions were also a part of establishing the New Covenant. Jesus came to earth as a man and spent the three years of His public ministry specifying the terms, conditions, and promises of the New Covenant.

- Jesus often stated, “You have heard that it was said....but I say to you” (Matt. 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43). In doing this, Jesus was laying out the requirements of entering the New Covenant. In fact, much of Jesus’ teaching can be viewed as the stipulations for New Covenant living. Other examples of cost counting are Luke 9:23-24 and Luke 14:25-33
- Jesus has invited all men to be saved. His invitation is to enter into covenant with God through Him. We live in a day of cheap grace and seeker-sensitive churches where people say a brief prayer that declares a set of facts about Jesus. The New Covenant is much different. It is not an invitation that asks for a decision to believe, but rather an invitation that calls us to a covenant life of faith and surrender.
- The pre-ceremony actions illustrate clearly that there is a cost to entering into a covenant with God—we must totally surrender our lives to Him.

2. The Selection of the Covenant Representatives and the Cutting of the Covenant Sacrifice

- *Overview*

- In typical ancient covenants, before the ceremony began, a covenant representative was chosen on behalf of each group engaged in the pact. These representatives entered the covenant on behalf of everyone in their group. Two would actually make the covenant that would bind the entire group to the expectations of the covenant agreement.
- As the ceremony started, the representatives would take the animal sacrifice and cut it down the middle from head to tail. The two pieces of the sacrifice were laid open with the bloody side facing upward. Since the animal was usually quite large, a significant amount of blood would escape, flowing toward the center of the two pieces of the sacrifice.
- The representatives would then stand near the sacrifice.

- *How It Applies to Us Today*

- In the covenant with Abraham, the two covenant representatives were the Lord and Abraham. The Lord, taking the form of a smoking oven and a flaming torch, passed through the pieces of the covenant sacrifice (Gen. 15:17).
- Abraham was the covenant representative that God chose on behalf of mankind. Together, God and Abraham entered into a covenant for the entire human race.
- As we see the New Testament fulfillment of this step, we begin to see the majesty and greatness of the New Covenant. Jesus is the representative of the Father in the cutting of the New Covenant (Phil 2:5-8). Jesus was the One chosen by the Father to cut covenant on behalf of heaven.

- A very important distinction of the New Covenant is that Jesus is also the covenant representative on behalf of mankind (Hebrews 2:17-18). Jesus is the representative of the human race before the Father. He cut the New Covenant on our behalf.
- Jesus is also the New Covenant sacrifice (John 1:29, 1 Cor. 5:7).
- In summary, Jesus is the covenant representative for both God and man, and He is the New Covenant sacrifice.
- Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6). He is the go between, representing both God and man. Jesus did it all.

In Session 3, when we will look at this step in detail, what Jesus did for us in the New Covenant will have an entirely new meaning and you will appreciate the New Covenant like never before.

3. The Exchange of Robes, Belts, and Weapons

- *Overview*
 - In many cases, the parties to the covenant would exchange robes, belts, weapons, or some other token as a symbol of their desire to no longer to live independently but as one.
 - The exchange of robes symbolizes the putting on of each other and becoming one. It says that I give you all that I have and you give me all that you are. It implies that I give you all my assets and I take all of your liabilities. It signifies a new position, new character, and new authority.
 - The belt or the girdle was part of the armor. It is what held the weapons in place and is symbolic of a man's strength. The exchange of belts is symbolic of giving your covenant partner your strengths and taking on his weaknesses.
 - Weapons are used to defeat enemies. Thus, the exchange of weapons symbolizes the responsibility and the power to defeat the other's enemies.
- *How It Applies to Us Today*
 - As God, Jesus took off His robe of glory and came to earth, clothing Himself in the likeness of humanity (Phil. 2:5-7). By so doing, He made the wonderful, royal robe of righteousness available to us. By His work on the cross, Jesus took upon Himself our robe of filthy rags, which has been defiled by our sin and independent living. He who knew no sin became sin so that

He might nail our iniquity to the cross. For further study, see these supporting Scriptures: Isa. 64:6; Luke 15:12-13; Luke 15:22; Gal. 3:27; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rev. 7:13-14.

- As we enter the New Covenant, God takes all of our weaknesses and gives us His strength for living. In covenant, even though we are weak, we have access to the strength of God (Phil 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:9-10).
- Christ defeated every enemy that has or will come against the purposes of God. In the past, He defeated the enemies of God at the cross (Col. 2:11-15). In the future, He will destroy our enemies at His second coming (2 Thess. 1:3-10). Presently, He lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25) and has given us all power over the enemy. Jesus told the disciples, "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you" (Luke 10:19).

4. The Walk Unto Death

- *Overview*

- Next, to express how seriously each party of the covenant viewed their part of the agreement, they would participate in "a walk unto death" by walking around the pieces of the sacrificed animal. Some have said that they would walk in the form of a figure eight.
- As the two representatives walked between the two pieces of the sacrifice and faced each other, they would look to heaven and say something like this: "Do so to me as has been done to this animal if I break this covenant. If I fail to keep this covenant, may I die even as this animal has died."⁵
- In this step, each representative pledged to fulfill his obligation to the covenant or die trying. After this step, there was no escape, no way out. Both parties would take a vow unto death in order to fulfill their side of the pact.

- *How It Applies to Us Today*

- There are two excellent Old Testament examples of the walk unto death. The first one is recorded in Genesis 15:17: "It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces."
- In the covenant ceremony between the Lord and Abraham, God Himself was the smoking oven and the flaming torch that passed between the pieces. In essence, God was saying to Abraham, "Let what has been done to this animal be done to Me if I do not fulfill My promise to you!"
- Remember: This covenant ceremony was in response to Abraham's question of how he would know that God would fulfill His

- promise. God gave Abraham the greatest pledge possible.
- Another Old Testament example illustrates how familiar this custom was to the people of the Old Testament era and how seriously God took it. Jeremiah 34:18 reads, "I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not fulfilled the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and *passed between its parts*."
 - In the context of this verse, God is saying to Israel that when they passed between the parts of the animal, they made a vow to keep the covenant unto death. Essentially, God is reminding His covenant people that they are breaking the vow that was pledged during the walk unto death.
 - Jesus, the sacrifice and mediator of the New Covenant, took the walk unto death as He humbly made His way up Golgotha to be crucified. Jesus had taken His vow unto death when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39). In essence, Jesus was saying, "I will cut the covenant. I will take the walk unto death. I will be the covenant sacrifice. I will be the mediator of the New Covenant."
 - As Jesus hung voluntarily upon the cross, He paid the ultimate price of death for all who would enter into covenant with God through Him.
 - New Covenant living is not just believing a set facts about Jesus. It involves much more than believing that Jesus is God, that He died on the cross, and that He rose from the dead on the third day. New Covenant living is trusting in Jesus' walk unto death for us and then taking our own walk unto death.
 - Normally, God doesn't ask us to die physically—like Jesus did—when we take our walk unto death. Rather, our walk unto death involves surrendering our hearts to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, dying to ourselves daily, and vowing to live for God.

5. The Pronouncement of Blessings and Curses

- *Overview*

- During an ancient-covenant ceremony, while the two parties stood in the middle of the sacrifice, each would pronounce aloud the terms of the covenant.
- They would declare the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. The blessings would often include abundant harvests, prosperity, good health, and numerous children. Curses would often include retaliation by the injured party, destruction, disease, poverty, famine, and defeat at the hands of their enemies.
- In ancient pagan cultures, the parties to the covenant would invoke their many false deities, who had been called upon to witness the ceremony, to visit them with blessings or curses.

- *How It Applies to Us Today*
 - Deuteronomy 27-32 presents a clear Old Testament example of the covenant blessings and curses. With the nation of Israel on the threshold of possessing the Promised Land, God reminded them of the blessings for keeping the covenant and the curses for breaking it. In fact, once in the land, six of the tribes of Israel were to stand on Mt. Gerizim to declare the blessings to the people and six on Mt. Ebal to state the curses (Deut. 27:11-15).
 - After deciding at Gethsemane to die for mankind, Jesus, the mediator and representative of the New Covenant, took the walk unto death as He made His way up to be crucified. While He was on the cross, Jesus spoke seven sayings:

<i>Jesus' Statement</i>	<i>New Covenant Blessing</i>
1. Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34).	Forgiveness of sins
2. Today, you shall be with Me in Paradise (Luke 23:43).	Eternal life
3. Woman, behold your son (John 19:26).	A new family in the Body of Christ
4. My God, My God why have you forsaken Me? (Matt. 27:46).	Redemption from the curse of sin, sickness, and death
5. I thirst (John 19:28).	Establishment of the kingdom of God ⁶
6. It is finished (John 19:30).	Grace ⁷
7. Father, I commit My spirit to you (Luke 23:46).	Blessings secured

- As Jesus made these statements, He pronounced the blessings of the New Covenant to all mankind—blessings such as forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and blessings in this life.
- As our iniquity and rebellion were placed upon Him, He also

took the curse of sin and death. Whereas the covenants of the Old Testament contained blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, the New Covenant consists only of blessings. Through the cross, Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13).

6. The Seal of the Covenant Mark

- *Overview*
 - In a typical ancient covenant, after the animal was sacrificed, the walk unto death completed, and the blessings and curses stated, the two parties would seal the agreement with a special sign or token.
 - This became the mark of the covenant that reminded both parties of the solemn pact that bound them together as one. If the agreement enacted was a blood covenant, then the mark would normally involve the shedding of blood by the two covenant partners.
 - A normal way that covenant partners in the pagan world would seal the covenant was to drink wine commingled with the blood from each representative. After cutting their wrist, forearm, or leg, each representative would catch a few drops of blood with a cup containing wine. They would drink this mixture as a way to finalize the covenant. Remember that Jewish Law prohibited the drinking of blood; therefore, biblical covenants were often sealed with the drinking of wine, which symbolized blood.
 - In addition to the sealing of the agreement with the drinking of wine co-mingled with blood, each covenant partner would often take a dark substance and rub it into the cut. This caused the incision to become a permanent scar. The scar would serve as a public reminder that the two were now covenant partners.
 - To summarize, there were typically two aspects to sealing the agreement with a covenant mark. The first was the commingling of blood, which indicated unity, oneness, and a common purpose. The second was taking the covenant mark, which became a permanent reminder of the agreement to everyone involved.

- *How It Applies to Us Today*
 - Genesis 17:10-13 depicts the covenant mark involved in the pact between Abraham and the Lord. God instituted circumcision as a sign of the covenant between them. The shedding of Abraham's blood in circumcision sealed the covenant. In fact, for any of Abraham's descendents to enter the covenant, they also had to be circumcised.
 - As the covenant sacrifice, Jesus shed His blood at the cross. After He rose from the dead, with the marks of the cross still present, He entered into the heavenly tabernacle, and through

His shed blood, obtained eternal redemption for mankind (Heb. 9:11-12). As the covenant representative of the New Covenant, Jesus' blood offering to the Father satisfied in full the penalty of sin. Forever, His blood is the atonement for all iniquity. Whoever calls upon Him will be forgiven all their trespasses.

- Jesus' blood became the sign of the New Covenant for us. Today, He still bears the marks of the covenant in His nail-scarred wrists, feet, and side. Whenever the Father sees a believer in Christ, He sees him sealed with the blood of Christ and heir to all the blessings of the New Covenant (See also Ps. 22:16; Zech. 12:10; John 20:27-28; Matt. 26:27-28).
- As believers in Jesus Christ, our covenant mark is a circumcised heart. This proves that we have truly entered the New Covenant and bear the mark of the blood of Jesus. Just as circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, a circumcised heart is the sign of the New Covenant (See Rom. 2:28-29; Col 2:11-12).
- Just as drinking wine co-mingled with blood was common in covenant rituals, Jesus said that we cannot be a partaker with Him unless we drink His blood (John 6:53-56). When Jesus made this statement, there is no doubt that He was referring to the common covenant practice of drinking wine co-mingled with blood. We drink Jesus' blood by accepting His blood as the only thing that will cleanse us from sin and bring us near to God.

7. The Exchange of Names

- *Overview*

- The exchange of names was the next step in ancient-covenant making. Clay Trumbull in his book, *The Blood Covenant*, writes:

To exchange names, therefore, is to establish some participation in one another's being. Hence, as we may suppose, came the well-nigh universal Oriental practice of inter-weaving the name of one's Deity with one's name, as a symbolic evidence of one's covenant-union with the Deity. The blood-covenant, or the blood-union, idea is at the bottom of this.⁸

- The exchange of names was much more than an external symbol. It implied the exchange of personality, character, reputation, essence, and authority.
- It symbolized the two becoming one.

- *How It Applies to Us Today*

- In the Old Testament, we see this practice illustrated in the

covenant that God made with Abraham. God changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah (Gen. 17:5, 15). In both cases, He made the change by adding the "heth" sound. This sound is the sound of God's name "YHWH," probably pronounced Yahweh.

- The New Covenant also points to the exchange of names. Jesus used the name of the Father throughout His earthly ministry. In John 17:6, Jesus stated in His prayer to the Father, "I have manifested Your name." We also see that Jesus was given a new name that was greater and more powerful than any other name (See Phil 2:5-8; Eph. 1:20-23).
- As Christians, we have access to all of the Hebrew names of God. We can call on our covenant partner as Jehovah-Rapha, Jehovah-Jireh, or Jehovah-Sabaoth. Because of the covenant, we have access to all of the authority and power that accompanies the name of Jesus. We are promised that we can ask anything in Jesus' name, the name which is above every name.

8. The Covenant Meal

- *Overview*

- The final step in ancient-covenant making was the celebration of the covenant meal. By this point, the parties had agreed upon the covenant, the promises were made, and all of the exchanges were executed. It was now time to celebrate the pact that had been sealed.
- The covenant meal was a time of great celebration. The meal included bread and wine, which represented the body and blood of the covenant partners. Sometimes the wine was mixed with blood. At other times, the wine merely represented the blood.
- As they celebrated the meal, they made their concluding declaration to live as one. By eating the bread and drinking the wine, the covenant partners were expressing for the final time their vows to live for each other.
- From this point forward, the two parties and all whom they represented were viewed as one.

- *How It Applies to Us Today*

- In the covenant God initiated with Abraham, we see the covenant meal celebrated between God's representatives, Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:5-10).
- In Luke 22:14-20, Jesus said the wine of the Lord's Supper represented the blood of the New Covenant. Thus, the Lord's Supper is the New Covenant meal.
- The ultimate fulfillment of the New Covenant meal is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Jesus told the Laodicean Church, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My

voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). Jesus promised the overcoming Church the great blessing of celebrating the completion of the New Covenant with an intimate meal with Him.

Summary of Blessings

1. As we progress through this class, we will see many wonderful blessings of following Christ as a New Covenant believer.

- In Session 3, we will learn of the blessings that we inherit from our position of being in Christ.
- In Session 4, we will discover that we are heirs to the blessings of Abraham.
- In Session 5, we will learn of the distinctions of the New Covenant.

2. After analyzing the steps of ancient covenant making, below is a summary of several of the blessings that belong to us in Christ.

- We are clothed in Christ's robe of righteousness.
- We have access to God's strength despite our weaknesses.
- God will wage war against our enemies, which include the world, the flesh, and the devil.
- Our sins are forgiven and we have access to eternal life because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.
- We have access to all of the names of God in both the Old and New Testament—which means that we have access to what those names mean. For example, we can call on our covenant partner as Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord our healer or Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord our provider.
- We are sealed with our own personal mark of the covenant—a circumcised heart that assures us that we are saved and will go to heaven when we die.
- When we partake of the bread and wine during communion, we are reminding ourselves of all of the blessings that are ours through covenant.

Notes

1. As cited in "Where History Began Before History" (December, 2001), at www.far-and-near.com/journeys/mari.htm.
2. Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 40.
3. H. Clay Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant* (Kirkwood, MO: Impact Christian Books, Inc., 1998), pp. 5-6.
4. John Osteen, *Unraveling the Mystery of the Blood Covenant* (Houston, TX: John Osteen, 1987), pp. 14-18.
5. Kay Arthur, *Covenant* (Chattanooga: Precept Ministries of Reach Out, Inc., 1986), pp. L-4, P-2.

6. Jesus did not ask for something to drink just because He was thirsty. There was a much deeper meaning to His statement. I have listed three reasons why Jesus said this. First, He spoke this phrase to fulfill Scripture (Ps. 22:15). Second, He thirsted spiritually. At the point in time that Jesus asked for the vinegar (a cheap wine used by the masses), He had already taken the sin of the world upon Himself. Jesus had been separated from His heavenly Father and yearned for His relationship with the Father to be restored. Third, and the reason for the blessing listed in this book, was to proclaim the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth. At the Last Supper, Jesus said that He would not drink of the vine until He had come in His kingdom (Matt. 26:29).
7. When Jesus said that it is finished, He was proclaiming that all of the work of the cross had been accomplished. Because the work has been finished, as New Covenant believers, we live by grace. In other words, we live based on the power of God within us that was activated by Jesus at the cross.
8. H. Clay Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant* (Kirkwood, MO: Impact Christian Books, Inc., 1998), pp. 263-264.

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. In ancient times, covenant making was an every day practice in many cultures, and for this reason, God chose to use covenant making as a way to show His commitment to His people.
- _____ 2. God has used many of the same steps of covenant making that the ancients used to introduce His covenants with man.
- _____ 3. The Mari Tablets, discovered in the 1930s in present day Syria, shed light on what life was like during the early years of history, going back even to the time of Abraham.
- _____ 4. Even though there was no spiritual implications in pagan covenants, God used the idea of covenant to interact with man.
- _____ 5. One of the steps of covenant making was the walk unto death.
- _____ 6. Another step of covenant making was the walk of life.
- _____ 7. Before entering a covenant, the ancients would weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the treaty and evaluate whether it was a worthwhile opportunity.
- _____ 8. In cutting the New Covenant, the two parties entering the covenant on behalf of mankind were Jesus and us.
- _____ 9. Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant.
- _____ 10. As we enter the New Covenant, God takes our weaknesses and gives us His strength for living.

Fill in the Blank

11. As the two representatives took the _____ unto _____ and stood between the two pieces of the sacrifice, they would say something like this: "Do so to me as has been done to this animal if I break this covenant. If I fail to keep this covenant, may I die even as this animal has died."
12. During an ancient-covenant ceremony, while the two parties stood in the middle of the sacrifice, each would pronounce aloud the terms of the covenant. They would then declare the _____ for obedience and _____ for disobedience.
13. As believers in Jesus Christ, our covenant mark is a _____ heart.

36 Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ

14. Deuteronomy 27-32 presents a clear Old Testament example of the covenant _____ and _____.

15. In cutting the New Covenant, Jesus is the covenant representative for both _____ and _____, and He is the New Covenant _____.

From the list on the right, identify five steps of covenant making.

- _____ 16.
- _____ 17.
- _____ 18.
- _____ 19.
- _____ 20.

Possible Matches for 16-20

- a. Selecting a covenant representative and cutting the covenant sacrifice.
- b. Placing the harvest sacrifice upon the altar.
- c. The wedding ceremony as it relates to a marriage covenant
- d. The pronouncement of blessings and curses
- e. The walk unto death
- f. The drinking of blood
- g. The exchange of names
- h. The covenant meal
- i. The announcement of the covenant on the mountaintop

Session 3

Understanding Our Position in Christ

This session covers:

- The truth that believers are in Christ
- The progressive nature of biblical covenants and how they restore what Adam lost
- How the progressive restoration of the covenants culminate in our position of being in Christ

This session corresponds to:

- Chapters 7-8 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* book
- Session 3 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* CDs

Believers Are in Christ

1. The New Testament makes it very clear that true followers of Jesus are positioned *in Christ*.

- The phrase *in Christ* appears ninety-five times in the New American Standard translation of the Bible. At least twenty-five of those occurrences refer to our *position* in Christ.
- The phrase *in Christ* is a predominant theme that runs throughout the New Testament. From Romans to 1 Peter, the apostles used this phrase to explain the position of the believer through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The following verses allude to who we are in Christ:

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God *in Christ* Jesus (Rom. 6:11).

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph *in Christ*, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in

every place (2 Cor. 2:14).

Therefore if anyone is *in Christ*, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Cor. 5:17).

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God *in Him*" (2 Cor. 5:21).

- Even though the phrase *in Christ* is used frequently in the New Testament and is one of the most powerful blessings of New Covenant living, many have a difficult time grasping its meaning.
- To fully understand the blessings that are ours as partakers of the New Covenant, it is essential that we understand this concept.
- Understanding our covenant relationship with God is the key that unlocks the revelation of what it means to be in Christ.

In this session, we are going to look at several biblical covenants in an attempt to understand what it means to be in Christ. Understanding the progressive nature of these biblical covenants helps us understand what it means to be in Christ and the mighty blessings that are available to us through our position in Him.

Restoring What Adam Lost

1. God created man to be blessed by fulfilling a great purpose for Him.

- As God finished His work of creation, He declared that everything that He had made was very good.
- From the Genesis account, four clear purposes for God's people are evident. They are: 1) Represent the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27); 2) Fellowship with God forever (Gen. 3:8); 3) Advance the kingdom of God (Gen. 1:28); and 4) Freely enjoy every blessing of the garden (Gen. 2:16).
- God had initiated a wonderful plan for man. Man was to be His representative upon the earth, to be His friend, to have fellowship with Him, to partner with him, to take dominion over the earth, and to be richly blessed for all eternity.

2. When Adam sinned, God's purposes for man were temporarily aborted.

- The serpent deceived Adam and Eve, they ate the forbidden fruit, and

sin entered the world.

- As a result, Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden and God's purposes for mankind were temporarily aborted.
- But God was not finished with man.

3. After man fell into sin, God began a work of progressive restoration.

- Through His covenants, God is restoring all that Adam lost. More specifically, it is through the *progressive nature* of the covenants that God is restoring every aspect of His original purposes for man.
- For example, through the New Covenant, God has restored His four original purposes for mankind.

As we are declared holy, righteous, and blameless in Christ through the New Covenant, our new position of being in right standing with God is restoring us back into the image of God.

When Jesus cut the New Covenant, the veil separating man from God was torn, giving us free access to the throne of God, and opening the way for an intimate relationship with Jesus.

With the coming of Jesus, the kingdom of God has come and the Lord has given us the authority to advance the kingdom of God and to take dominion over the earth.

Finally, God has blessed us for all eternity with every spiritual blessing, with prosperity, freedom, and health.

- However, God didn't start His process of restoration by going directly from the Garden of Eden to the New Covenant. He has progressively restored His purposes throughout history; first, through the Old Testament covenants, and finally, with the New Covenant.
- If we skip the Old Testament covenants, we miss several essential components of God's progressive restoration, and thereby, miss the revelation of many rich blessings contained in Old Testament covenants that are ours in Christ.

The Progressive Nature of the Covenants

1. There are nine major biblical covenants recorded in Scripture.

- The Edenic Covenant (Gen. 1-2) was made with Adam and Eve before sin entered the world and outlines God's original purpose and goal for the human race.
- The Adamic Covenant (Gen. 3) was made after Adam and Eve sinned and presents the seeds of God's redemptive plan for man.
- The Noahic Covenant was made with Noah after the flood (Gen. 6-9) and reestablishes God's purpose for creation and is the foundation upon which the Abrahamic covenant is built.

- The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12-22) promised the land of Canaan as an eternal inheritance to his descendents and great blessings upon all who partake of this covenant.
- The Mosaic (Old) Covenant (Ex. 19-40) expands upon the covenant made with Abraham, identifying requirements of the Law and serving as a "schoolmaster" to bring people to Christ
- The Palestinian (Land) Covenant (Deut. 27-33) reveals in detail the blessings and curses of the covenant made in the Abrahamic Covenant.
- The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 89; Ps. 132) guarantees the everlasting throne and kingdom of his seed. It was through this covenant that Jesus Christ will be King of the earth for 1000 years.
- The New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8; Matt. 26) provides salvation and secures the associated blessings of the previous covenants to all who believe.
- The Everlasting Covenant encompasses all other covenants.

2. Five of these nine covenants relate directly to our inheritance in Christ.

- Each of these nine covenants add blessings to our lives; however, rather than taking the time to go in-depth into each one, we will focus on the five covenants that are most directly related to understanding our inheritance in Christ.
- These are: 1) The Abrahamic Covenant; 2) The Old Covenant; 3) The Land Covenant; 4) The Davidic Covenant; and 5) The New Covenant.

3. The Abrahamic Covenant began the process of restoring position, destiny, and blessings to man.

- Many years after God redeemed mankind through His covenant with Noah, He entered into covenant with Abraham.
- In the Abrahamic Covenant, God began the process of restoring position, destiny, and blessings back to mankind.
- This covenant contains some of the most profound blessings in all of history. God promised Abraham great favor, the land of Canaan as his eternal inheritance, a multitude of natural and spiritual sons, kings that would come forth from him, and an exalted name.
- God pledged to bless Abraham and to make him a blessing.
- In Genesis 17, God spoke to Abraham concerning the covenant, telling him to walk blameless before Him. God said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly" (Gen. 17:1-2).
- In speaking to Abraham this way, God was informing Abraham of his obligation to live in obedience to Him. As Abraham obeyed God, the Lord vowed to establish the covenant.
- This covenant was a major milestone toward the full restoration of God's original purposes for man.

4. The Old Covenant (Mosaic Covenant) builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant by outlining in detail the requirements for holy living.

- After the sons of Abraham spent four hundred years in Egyptian slavery, God delivered them from bondage. God acted on Israel's behalf because He "remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Ex. 2:24).
- Because of God's covenant, He raised up Moses as their deliverer. Through Moses, God severely judged the nation of Egypt with great plagues and destructive judgments until the sons of Israel were liberated. God brought them to the wilderness and instituted another covenant with them.
- The Old Covenant was established at Mt. Sinai as the Hebrew people waited for God to bring them into the Promised Land. This covenant established the moral, civil, and ceremonial laws by which the people were to live. By keeping the Law, they would live blamelessly before God.
- The Old Covenant *builds* upon the Abrahamic Covenant by outlining in detail the requirements for holy living. Recall that God commanded Abraham and his descendants to live blamelessly before Him (Gen. 17:1). The Old Covenant expounds upon this requirement and tells the Israelites *how* to live blamelessly before God. It is an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant in that it identifies the responsibilities of God's kingdom of priests and His holy nation. The Law, which is the main document of the Old Covenant, states in detail God's demands for holy living. In addition, the Law shows in intricate detail what God meant when He told Abraham to walk blamelessly.
- With the Old Covenant, God added another piece to the progressive restoration of His original purposes for mankind.

5. The Land Covenant builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant by enumerating the specific blessings that were promised to Abraham and to his descendants.

- After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Hebrew children were ready to enter the land. Just prior to the Israelites crossing the Jordan to possess Canaan, God instituted another covenant.
- This covenant, which we refer to as the Land Covenant, identified the specific blessings promised to Israel for obedience and the curses for disobedience. It highlighted the *rewards* for walking blamelessly before God as well as the *punishment* for sinful living.
- The specifics of this covenant are presented in great detail throughout the book of Deuteronomy and builds upon God's covenant with Abraham (See Deut. 7:12-14, 28:1-2, and 28:15).
- The Land Covenant builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant by enumerating the specific blessings that were promised to Abraham and to his descendants. It emphasizes *the benefits* of walking blamelessly before God. In addition to the blessings for obeying the Law, the Land Covenant also itemizes the curses for disobeying it.
- Therefore, the Land Covenant builds upon both the Abrahamic and the

Old Covenants. It specifically highlights the great blessings for walking blamelessly before God as revealed in the Abrahamic Covenant and the terrible consequences for violating God's righteous requirements given in the Old Covenant.

6. After God instituted the Old Covenant and the Land Covenant, God built upon these covenants further in the Davidic Covenant.

- God told Abraham, "I will make you a great nation" and "kings will come forth from you" (Gen. 12:2, 17:6). And Moses told Israel, "If you diligently obey the LORD your GOD...the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth" (Deut. 28:1).
- In the Davidic Covenant, God fulfilled these promises by pledging to David that his house, kingdom, and throne would endure forever (2 Sam. 7:8-17; Ps. 89). Since God purposed that man should rule over all the earth to the glory of God, He instituted a covenant whereby this objective could be fulfilled.
- Through David's lineage, Jesus Christ became the fulfillment of David's promise. Further, Jesus is coming soon as the great King over all the earth. He will set all who are in covenant with Him above all the nations of the earth (Zech. 14:9).

7. All of the Old Testament covenants are fulfilled in the New Covenant.

- From Abraham until David, God restored His original purposes one covenant at a time.
- All of the promises contained in the preceding covenants find their fulfillment in Jesus. And each covenant leads mankind and history itself on a progressive journey toward Jesus.
- The promises of great blessings and prosperity made to Abraham are fulfilled in Jesus.
- The responsibility of the Law, a heavy yoke for centuries, is fulfilled in Jesus.
- The eternal throne of King David spoken of in the Davidic Covenant is fulfilled in Jesus.
- Jesus is the sum of all things, fulfilling every covenant and every covenant promise.
- The amazing truth about the progressive nature of the covenants is this: The promises and blessings of every biblical covenant are available to us today. Each promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and is accessible to us in the New Covenant.
- The New Covenant restores everything that Adam lost!

Now that we have examined the progressive nature of the covenants, let's take a look at how Israel entered the Old Testament covenants. This will illuminate in a powerful way what it means to be in Christ.

How Israel Entered Into the Covenants

1. Old Testament saints entered the Abrahamic, Old, and Land Covenants in Abraham.

- Recall that these three covenants are progressive. The Abrahamic Covenant promised great blessings to Abraham and his descendants if they walked blameless before God. The Old Covenant extended the Abrahamic Covenant by defining through the Law what it meant to walk blameless before God. The Land Covenant clarified the blessings of Abraham, explaining in great detail what God meant when He promised to bless Abraham.
- To establish the Abrahamic Covenant, God cut covenant with Abraham and then He specifically confirmed the covenant with Isaac and Jacob. However, God did not cut covenant again with either Isaac or Jacob (Gen. 26:23-24; 35:11-12). Note Psalm 105:8-10, "He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant which He made [cut] with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant."
- Even though God cut covenant with Abraham, the benefits of this covenant were not merely for him but were offered to all who entered this covenant through circumcision.
- Circumcision was the initiation rite for entering the Abrahamic Covenant. God gave Abraham the responsibility to circumcise every male among his people as a sign of the covenant. Since the covenant cut with Abraham was a perpetual agreement that also included his descendants, circumcision was a requirement for whoever wanted to partake of this pact.
- Thus, all circumcised Old Testament saints partook of the Abrahamic covenant *in Abraham*.
- God did not cut covenant with every Jewish baby who was born. Through faith sealed by circumcision, each child entered into the promises and responsibilities of the covenant that God had already made with Abraham. Abraham was the representative of the people in the covenant ceremony. Every Jewish child was an heir to the same blessings and obligations as Abraham through their covenant representative.
- Therefore, in Abraham, each Israelite was in covenant with God. In fact, Genesis 12:3 states explicitly, "And in you [Abraham] all the families of the earth will be blessed."
- Furthermore, a child born after the initiation of the Abrahamic, Old, and Land Covenants entered into the promises and responsibilities of these covenants through the acts of their forefathers.

2. Several examples will help clarify how this concept affected the life of an Old Testament saint.

- King David is an excellent example of how an Old Testament saint entered these covenants. As a child, David was circumcised according to

the commandment given to Abraham (Gen. 17:11). Therefore, David partook of the Abrahamic Covenant and the promises of it through circumcision. He was also responsible for keeping the Law of the Old Covenant. Similarly, he shared in the blessings and curses of the Land Covenant since it applied to whomever lived in the land of Israel. Although God did not actually cut any of these covenants with David, he was an heir and partaker of each of them. To a degree, David was in Abraham and in Moses.

- Throughout his life, we see snapshots of King David living in a covenant relationship with God. In 1 Samuel 17:26, David said about Goliath, "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" To the men around him, David's statement demonstrated the bold confidence that came from being in covenant with God. Since Goliath was uncircumcised—thus not in covenant with God—David expected the Lord to defeat him. Why? Because one of the promises of the Abrahamic and Land Covenants was that God would defeat the enemies of those that belonged to Him (Gen. 22:17; Deut. 28:7).
- Following his affair with Bathsheba, we see another example of David living as an heir to these covenants. Because David broke the Law he was placed under a curse. The Prophet Nathan told David that the illegitimate child born through his iniquity would die (2 Sam. 12:13-19). It is easy to see that David lived in covenant with God through the Abrahamic, Old, and Land Covenants.
- Another example of the Israelites entering the covenant through circumcision is noted in Joshua 5. The Hebrew nation was on the threshold of going into Canaan to conquer the inhabitants of the land. However, many of the people had not been circumcised because they were born during Israel's wilderness wanderings (Josh. 5:5). God instructed Joshua to circumcise the people before they went to war. Why? The Israelites were totally dependent upon the promises of God contained in the Abrahamic and Land Covenants for victory over their enemies. Thus, they had to enter the covenant with Abraham through circumcision before they fought the battles ahead in order to ensure success.
- King Josiah is one final example of how the Israelites partook of these three covenants. Prior to his reign, Israel acted corruptly toward the covenant. They forsook the Lord and worshiped pagan gods. Their high places were altars to demons as the people prostituted themselves through idolatry. When Josiah became king, he tore down the high places and brought about a reformation throughout the land. He also repaired the temple and reinstated worship. As the temple was being repaired, they found the Law of Moses. Notice what Josiah said when he read the Law for the first time:

Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book which has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book (2 Chron. 34:21).

- Even though Josiah was unfamiliar with the contents of the Law, Israel was still suffering from the curse of the Land Covenant. Again, we see how these three covenants applied to the descendants of Abraham.

Our Position in Christ

1. The New Covenant was cut between the Father and the Son.

- This truth establishes an essential foundation for understanding what it means to be in Christ. It is important that you understand this vital point. The New Covenant was not cut between God and you or God and me; it was cut between God the Father and God the Son.
- Then it was confirmed with each of us as we received Jesus as Savior and Lord. This wonderful truth is the basis for every promise of the New Covenant.
- To better understand, let's retrace the establishment of the New Covenant. In the fullness of time, God the Son came to earth to establish the New Covenant (Phil. 2:5-11). Jesus was clothed with the robe of humanity and born of a virgin. He lived a perfect, sinless life. For thirty years, Jesus lived in obscurity as God prepared Him for ministry.
- During the last three years of His life, Jesus went about Israel stating the terms, conditions, and blessings of the New Covenant. When the time came for the covenant ceremony, Jesus as the Passover Lamb was chosen as the covenant sacrifice. Jesus, being fully God, was selected as the Father's representative. Jesus, being fully man, was chosen also as mankind's representative.
- As the unique, precious blood of our Lord was shed at the cross, the New Covenant was cut between our heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus. By so doing, Jesus secured all the promises and blessings of the New Covenant.
- After He rose from the dead, Jesus entered the heavenly tabernacle, and through His shed blood, He obtained eternal redemption for mankind (Heb. 9:11-12). He became the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 9:15). The Greek word translated mediator is defined as "one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or to form a compact, or for ratifying a covenant."¹ Thus, Jesus became our representative in the covenant ceremony and initiated the New Covenant on our behalf.
- Just as Abraham was Israel's covenant representative in the Abrahamic Covenant, Jesus was man's covenant representative in the New Covenant. In the same way Abraham's descendants shared in the blessings of Abraham by being in him, believers partake in the blessings of the New Covenant by being in Christ. In a manner parallel to the Old Testament saints entering the Abrahamic Covenant through circumcision, we enter into the New Covenant that was cut with Jesus by faith through the circumcision of the heart.

2. Because the New Covenant was cut between the Father and the Son, we enter the New Covenant in Christ.

- In a similar way that David, Josiah, and all other Israelites entered the covenants that God had already made, we enter into the covenant made between the Father and the Son. Thus, through faith in the work of Jesus on the cross, we enter the New Covenant and are therefore in Christ.
- You may be wondering why we spent so much time explaining the details of how the Abrahamic, Old, Land, and New Covenants were established. Here's the reason: When we understand what it means to be in Christ, it unlocks very specific and powerful blessings to us.
- To illustrate further what it means to be in Christ, imagine three envelopes. The first envelope is the largest and it represents Christ. The second, somewhat smaller envelope represents you and me. The third and smallest envelope is another representation of Christ.
- When we put the second envelope into the first, it illustrates our position of being in Christ through the New Covenant. As the Father looks at us, He sees us in Christ. Therefore, we are righteous because we are in Christ. We are free because we are in Christ. We are blessed—not cursed—because we are in Christ. His promises to us are yes and amen. This is our position in Christ as a result of the covenant Jesus made with the Father. The third envelope placed into the second expresses Christ being in us. Christ in us is our hope of glory. We are still in Christ, yet through the Holy Spirit, Christ is in us. The Spirit of God is busy transforming us from glory to glory into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. What we are in position is what we are becoming in practice.

Now that the proper groundwork has been established, the next two sessions will allow us to see the wonderful blessings that are ours by being in Christ and because we are partakers of the New Covenant in Christ. The next two sessions will draw from the steps of ancient covenant making from Session 2 and the progressive nature of the covenants from this session to unveil many mysteries of how blessed we are to live on this side of the cross.

Notes

1. *The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* (Ontario, Canada: Woodside Bible Fellowship Church and the Institute for Creation Research, 1993), s.v. "mediator," referenced from *PC Study Bible v3.2* (Seattle, WA: BibleSoft, 2001).

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. Adam and Eve's life in the Garden of Eden illustrates the life of blessing that God's covenants are progressively restoring to the saints.
- _____ 2. Even though it only appears a few times in Scripture, the phrase in Christ is a predominant idea in the New Testament.
- _____ 3. To fully understand the blessings that are ours as partakers of the New Covenant, it is essential that we understand the concept of being in Christ; understanding our covenant relationship with God is the key that unlocks the revelation of what it means to be in Christ.
- _____ 4. Through covenant, God is progressively restoring His original purposes for man that were lost when Adam sinned.
- _____ 5. Five of the nine biblical covenants relate directly to our inheritance in Christ.
- _____ 6. The Abrahamic Covenant began the process of restoring position, destiny, and blessings to man.
- _____ 7. The Old (Mosaic) Covenant, while very important, has very little connection to the Abrahamic Covenant.
- _____ 8. Old Testament saints entered the Abrahamic, Old, and Land Covenants in Christ.
- _____ 9. The New Covenant was cut between the heavenly Father and every believer with Christ as the mediator of the New Covenant.
- _____ 10. We enter the New Covenant in Christ.

Fill in the Blank

11. Old Testament saints entered the Abrahamic Covenant through _____.
12. A vital point for understanding what it means to be in Christ is that the New Covenant was not cut between God and you or God and me; it was cut between God the _____ and God the _____.
13. The Old (Mosaic) Covenant _____ upon the Abrahamic Covenant by

outlining in detail the _____ for holy living.

14. The Land Covenant builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant by enumerating the specific _____ that were promised to Abraham and to his descendents.

15. In the Davidic Covenant, God pledged to David that his _____, _____, and _____ would endure forever. Jesus is returning soon and will fulfill this promise as he rules the earth along with His glorified saints.

Match the following statement on the left with the appropriate covenant on the right.

_____ 16. This covenant enumerates the specific blessings that were promised to Abraham and to his descendents.

_____ 17. This covenant began the process of restoring position, destiny, and blessings to man.

_____ 18. This covenant fulfills the Old Testament Covenants.

_____ 19. This covenant outlines in detail the requirements for holy living.

_____ 20. This covenant establishes the promise of an eternal throne for Jesus.

Possible Matches for 16-20

- a. The Abrahamic Covenant
- b. The Old (Mosaic) Covenant
- c. The Land Covenant
- d. The Davidic Covenant
- e. The New Covenant

Session 4

The Blessings of Abraham

This session covers:

- The truth that we are heirs to the blessings of Abraham
- Seven specific blessings of Abraham that we can partake of through the New Covenant

This session corresponds to:

- Chapter 10 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* book
- Session 4 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* CDs

Heirs to the Blessings of Abraham

1. In Christ, believers are heirs to the blessings of Abraham.

- In Galatians 3:9-14, Paul said,

So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer....that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles (Gal. 3:9-14).

- Galatians 3:29 adds another important statement, promising that "if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."
- This is great news! Because we are in Christ, the blessings of Abraham belong to us.

2. God promised Abraham and his descendents great blessings.

- Genesis 12:1-3 records the basic promise of the Abrahamic Covenant. It states,

Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the

land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

- In this passage, God made seven specific promises to Abraham. He said:
 1. I will make you a great nation.
 2. I will bless you.
 3. I will make your name great.
 4. You will be a blessing.
 5. I will bless those who bless you.
 6. I will curse those who curse you.
 7. In you all of the families of the earth will be blessed.
- As we read through these seven promises made to Abraham, we know that Abraham and his descendents are to be profoundly blessed. However, it is difficult to understand exactly what these blessings are by merely reading these few verses—especially if we try to apply these blessings to our individual lives.

3. The Book of Deuteronomy lists many of the blessings promised to Abraham and his descendents.

- Before examining the specific blessings promised to Abraham, we need to understand that the Book of Deuteronomy lists many of the blessings promised to Abraham.
- Because many people have never seen this connection, it is important to spend some time illustrating that the blessings of Abraham are recorded in detail in the Book of Deuteronomy. This is very important because if Deuteronomy does record blessings promised to Abraham, then the blessings of Deuteronomy belong to us as well by covenant.
- Three different places in the Book of Deuteronomy connect the blessings promised to Abraham to the blessings identified in Deuteronomy. Note these passages:

Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name (Deut. 6:10-13).

You stand today, all of you, before the LORD your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the

men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, that you may enter into the covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath which the LORD your God is making with you today, in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and *as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today (Deut. 29:10-15).

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them (Deut. 30:19-20).

- From the preceding passages, it is clear that the promised blessings recorded in Deuteronomy are a fulfillment of the covenant oath made to Abraham.
- In case there is still some doubt, we can also clearly see the fulfillment of the seven specific promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12 highlighted in Deuteronomy. Notice the following table.

Promise Made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3	Blessing Listed in Deuteronomy
I will make you a great nation.	Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth (Deut. 28:1).
I will bless you.	All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The LORD shall cause your

Promise Made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3	Blessing Listed in Deuteronomy
I will bless you.	enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways. The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you (Deut. 28:2-8).
I will make your name great.	<p>So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you (Deut. 28:10).</p> <p>The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully (Deut. 28:13).</p>
You will be a blessing and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.	You stand today, all of you, before the LORD your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, that you may enter into the covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath which the LORD your God is making with you today, in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today (Deut. 29:10-15).
I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.	Notice how the cursing aspect of this promise is fulfilled in Deuteronomy: "The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you" (Deut. 30:7).

- What a powerful truth to know that the promise-filled Book of Deuteronomy records the blessings made by covenant to Abraham and his descendents.

4. In Christ, we are heirs to these same blessings.

- The one question that many people ask is this: "Do the promises of blessing that are recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy apply to New Testament believers or are they just a series of promises made to Israel for a specific time as they inherited the land of Canaan?"
- There is exciting news! Believers in Jesus Christ are heirs to the promises made to Abraham (Gen. 12) and expanded upon in the Book of Deuteronomy.
- As we saw previously, Paul states that believers in Christ are heirs to the blessings of Abraham:

So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer....Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:9-14).

- Galatians 3:29 adds another important statement, promising that "if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."
- It is very important that we grasp the truth of what we have shared so far. Every believer in Jesus Christ is an heir to the blessings promised to Abraham and his descendents.
- The Abrahamic Covenant has not passed away. The blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant as recorded in Deuteronomy and other places have not passed away. They are promises that Gentiles can partake of today in Christ.

Seven Blessings of Abraham That Belong to Us in Christ

1. Destiny and life purpose

- God has a powerful destiny for every believer in Jesus Christ—a life that is filled with purpose and meaning.
- Deuteronomy 28:9-10 states that the Lord will set His people apart for Himself so that His name would be known throughout the earth. The Living Bible puts verse ten this way: "All the nations in the world shall see that you belong to the Lord, and they will stand in awe." The Lord has called every believer to a wonderful, world-impacting destiny and life purpose.
- Certainly, there is a corporate element to this promise. In our generation, God is beginning to set His Church apart in purity, power, and

passionate love for Him. And this transformation will cause even the unsaved world to take notice. We are beginning to see the Church enter her destiny.

- In addition to the Church as a whole, God also has a destiny and a life purpose for every believer. There is no super-breed of “special” Christians who have a destiny while the rest of us wallow through life without meaning. We are all called to be super-Christians.
- God desires to impart a life-changing vision into every one of His covenant people, one that will make each of us nation-shakers and history-makers. God has a great plan for your life, one that was preordained in Christ before the world was created. This life purpose will fulfill and satisfy you unlike any other blessing. There is no substitute for fulfilling God’s destiny for your life (See also 1 Peter 2:9-10; Eph. 2:10).
- Though Abraham and his descendents were a blessed people for hundreds of years, even during their wilderness wanderings, they were never totally fulfilled until they actually experienced their destiny—living in the land promised by covenant.
- Likewise, God has a promise land for every believer in Christ. God’s destiny for you is not merely prosperity, health, and happiness—God desires for you to accomplish great things for Him.

2. Healing and health for body, soul, and spirit

- As the Hebrew people were preparing to go into the land and possess their full inheritance, God promised them good health. Deuteronomy 7:15 states this great promise: “The LORD will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you.”
- Even as we look at the warning of curses recorded in Deuteronomy 28, we see the unfolding of God’s intentions for His covenant people to live in health. He never intended His people to be under the curse. He wants us to live free of it.
- Note these passages from Deuteronomy:

The LORD will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they will pursue you until you perish (Deut. 28:22).

The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The LORD will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart; and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you (Deut. 28:27-29).

The LORD will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils,

from which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head (Deut. 28:35).

Then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague which, not written in the book of this law, the LORD will bring on you until you are destroyed (Deut. 28:59-61).

- God specifically listed consumption, fever, inflammation, blight, boils, tumors, rashes, blindness, mental illness, plagues, and chronic sicknesses. These are all listed as symptoms of the curse. But He promised that none of these things would come upon Israel if they walked with God.
- As part of the blessings of Abraham and because of the New Covenant in Christ, we too can live free from all of these diseases and infirmities. The Lord said in Exodus 15:26, "I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord your Healer (Jehovah-rapha)."
- Our God is indeed Jehovah-rapha, the Lord our Healer.

3. A blessed family

- A blessed family is another promise that is available to us in Christ. Speaking to Israel, Moses relayed God's promise to bless their families. God's people were promised blessed relationships between husband and wife; a blessed and fruitful womb; and blessed, righteous children.
- Look at these Scriptures:

So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time (Deut. 4:40).

Blessed shall be the offspring of your body (Deut. 28:4).

Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out (Deut. 28:6).

The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body (Deut. 28:11).

You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle (Deut. 7:14).

There shall be no one miscarrying or barren in your land; I will

fulfill the number of your days (Ex. 23:26).

- For husbands, God promises a gentle and loving wife. For wives, God promises a husband who will lead his family into prosperity and blessing.
- Husbands and wives are promised a blessed home that is safe, joyful, and filled with an abundance of good things.
- Families are promised children who will not go into captivity and will not be given to other people; they will be a continual blessing for a lifetime.
- Couples are promised that there will be no miscarriages or barrenness among them. These are wonderful promises—and even though we must often contend for them in the spirit realm--they belong to us because we are heirs to the promises of Abraham.

4. Financial prosperity

- Financial prosperity is a predominant theme of blessing in the book of Deuteronomy. Our God is a God of abundance and His blessings release overflowing prosperity upon us.
- Look at several of the promises to the people as they were preparing to take the land:

Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl (Deut. 28:4-5).

The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you (Deut. 28:8).

The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully (Deut. 28:11-13).

- God says that He blesses the produce of the ground and the works of our hands. He tells us that we will lend and not borrow and that we are the head and not the tail.
- God wants us to be financially blessed. Second Corinthians 9:8 summarizes the manner in which God desires to prosper us: "And God is

able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.”

- God wants us to prosper and be blessed so that we can be a blessing to others.

5. Success

- Deuteronomy 28:12 promises us that God will bless the work of our hands so that our storehouse will be full, even to the point that we should lend and not borrow. It reads, “The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.”
- Throughout the Church today, there is a false view of humility that promotes weakness and failure as traits of meekness in God. This mentality could not be further from the truth. God desires for us to be a success at whatever He calls us to do.
- Whether our job is in the secular workplace, our own business, or full-time ministry, God wants us to succeed. He has not called us to failure. Though there will be set backs in our journey, our ultimate destination is success.
- God wants us to prosper in all avenues of life and be effective in all that we do. He will give to us the wisdom and strength to be successful in all we put our hand to.

6. Protection from the attacks of the enemy

- The Lord will cause every enemy who rises up against us to be defeated. Note Deuteronomy 28:7: “The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways.”
- The Lord has sworn that even though the enemy will come, he must flee from us. He says we are blessed and not cursed. The Word teaches we are seated with Christ in heavenly places far above all rule, power, authority, and dominion (Eph. 2:6).
- We have been given all authority over the enemy, and he must flee whenever he tries to bring the curse back on us.
- We know that God has promised to bless us in the city and in the country.
- He promises to protect and bless us in whatever we are called to do.

7. Joy and a glad heart

- God’s blessings give us joy and a glad heart.
- Though written in the negative, God promises a glad heart to those who live for Him: “Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things” (Deut. 28:47).
- A life of service and obedience will always produce within us a heart filled with thanksgiving, awe, joy, and gladness.

- Though there are times in all of our lives when these traits are absent, God wants to bless us in such a mighty way that gladness would fill our hearts on a regular basis.

Many of God's people have not experienced these promises. There are some who are sick, some who have lack, and some whose families are not in the position they should be. These blessings were not presented to bring discouragement or cause you to question God. They were listed to release you into a new level of faith—the kind of faith that expects God to deposit blessings into your life. Expect God to shower you with goodness in the land of the living. If you believe, He will do it because you are in Christ and an heir to the blessings of Abraham.

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. The book of Leviticus lists many of the blessings promised to Abraham and his descendents.
- _____ 2. Although not clearly stated, the New Testament hints at the idea that we are heirs to the blessings of Abraham as a result of our relationship with Christ.
- _____ 3. One of the seven blessings of Abraham identified in this session is that God has a powerful destiny for every believer in Jesus Christ—a life that is filled with purpose and meaning.
- _____ 4. Healing is a promise made in the Old Testament but not in the New Testament.
- _____ 5. The promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 are reiterated in the book of Deuteronomy.
- _____ 6. The Lord promises us a blessed family just as He did the descendents of Israel.
- _____ 7. The promises made to Abraham deal with prosperity as it relates to livestock and crops, but should not be applied to financial blessings.
- _____ 8. The blessings of Abraham include a promise that God will bless the work of our hands.
- _____ 9. Although an interesting study, the blessings of Abraham pertain primarily to a specific set of blessings promised to Abraham and his natural descendents.
- _____ 10. Three different places in the book of Deuteronomy connect the blessings promised to Abraham to the blessings identified in Deuteronomy.

Short Answers and Fill in the Blank

11. Is there a clear connection in the Scriptures between the promises made to Abraham (Gen. 12), the promises made to Israel (book of Deuteronomy), and the believer in Jesus Christ? _____ (Yes or No)
12. What New Testament passage states that the New Testament believer is an heir to the blessings promised to Abraham? _____
13. One of the blessings of Abraham, Deuteronomy 28:7, states, "The LORD shall cause

your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you _____ way and will flee before you _____ ways.”

14. One of the blessings of Abraham is _____ and a glad heart.

15. How many specific promises did God make to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3?

From the list on the right, choose the five that best describe the blessings of Abraham.

_____ 16.

_____ 17.

_____ 18.

_____ 19.

_____ 20.

Possible Matches for 16-20

- a. Salvation through Jesus Christ
- b. Freedom from all demonic oppression
- c. Children who will not go into captivity and who will not be given to other people
- d. Children who will be a continual blessing for a lifetime
- e. Couples who will have no miscarriages or barrenness among them
- f. Protection against trials, tribulations, and suffering
- g. Healing of body, soul, and spirit
- h. Success in the work of our hands
- i. One who will borrow and not lend

Session 5

The Blessings of the New Covenant

This session covers:

- Why the New Covenant is a better covenant based on better promises
- A study of eight specific, life-changing blessings that are ours in Christ

This session corresponds to:

- Chapter 9 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* book
- Session 5 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* CDs

A Better Covenant

1. The New Covenant is a better covenant containing better promises than the Old Testament covenants.

- Hebrews 8:6 states, "He is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises."
- When people first begin to study God's covenants and they discover the depth and breadth of the blessings of Abraham, they wonder, "What is better about the New Covenant?"
- We have just learned that Old Testament saints in covenant with God were promised all of the blessings of Abraham. On the surface, it seems that the Old Testament covenants offer better promises than the New Covenant. But as we learn that we are heirs to the blessings of Abraham, we begin to think that the Old Testament covenants and the New Covenant are equal in their promises.
- But the truth is that the promises offered by the New Covenant are *significantly* superior to the promises of

the Old Testament covenants.

In this session and the next, we will examine why the New Covenant is a better covenant. In this session, we will look at the blessings from our position in Christ. And in the next session, we will look at the blessing of having an entirely different relationship with Christ through the New Covenant.

2. We are blessed beyond measure by being in Christ.

- Remember our envelope illustration. The first envelope represents Christ, the second represents you and me, and the third represents the Holy Spirit. As the second envelope is placed in the first, we see what it means to be in Christ. In Christ, when the Father looks at us, He sees us through the finished work of Christ on the cross. This is our position. We are positioned securely in the finished work, shed blood, and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
- The third envelope represents the Holy Spirit. Even though the Father sees us through the life of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is at work in us making us in practice what we are in position.
- Because of our position in Christ, we are blessed beyond measure. In fact, there are at least eight blessings that are ours because we are positioned in the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

Eight New Covenant Blessings in Christ

1. In Christ, we are in right standing with God.

- The Bible states that Christ became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Then Romans 5:9 tells us that we are justified (declared to be in right standing with God) by the blood of Jesus.
- Why is this true? It is the result of the perfect, sinless life of Jesus Christ—our covenant representative, and the One who cut covenant on our behalf.
- Jesus was in right standing with the Father throughout His entire life because He never sinned. As a result of what He did, at the point of our salvation, we enter into the New Covenant based on the perfect life of Jesus. Thus, we are accepted by God based on Jesus' finished work on the cross—what He accomplished for us in His life, death, and resurrection. We partake of Christ's righteousness because He is righteous and we are in Him.
- Because of the New Covenant, God has taken away our sins, remembers our lawless deeds no more (Heb. 10), and cleanses us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7).

- Because Jesus was our covenant representative, He cut the New Covenant with the Father on our behalf, and we entered into the New Covenant by faith in His work. We are in Christ and stand before the Father, not in our own righteousness, but in the righteousness of our covenant representative.
- When the Father looks at us, He sees us securely positioned within the perfect, finished work of Jesus. In the eyes of the Father, we are righteous because He sees us in Jesus and Jesus is righteous. Therefore, we hold the wonderful position of being in right standing before a holy God.

2. In Christ, we are free from the law of sin and death.

- In Christ, we are not only in right standing with God, but we are also free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-4 offers this great promise to those in Christ:

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

- The Law is holy, righteous, and good (Rom. 7:12). Yet mankind's inability to keep the Law burdened him with a heavy yoke of guilt, shame, judgment, and condemnation.
- Thus, mankind's failure to obey the Law resulted in sin and sin produced death. This law of sin and death became a heavy weight to all, resulting in slavery and bondage.
- The good news is that Jesus lived a sinless, perfect life by obeying the Law with perfect compliance. Thus, Jesus fulfilled the Law, as He stated in Matthew 5:17-20:

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- The Law has not passed away. In fact, it will never pass away. However, Jesus fulfilled every requirement of the Law. Therefore, in Christ, we are free from the law of sin and death.

- Let's summarize why this is true. When the Father looks at us, He sees Christ because Jesus is our covenant representative and we are in Him. Christ fulfilled the Law completely, satisfying every demand placed on man by the Law. Therefore, as the Father looks at us, He sees one who stands in the position of having fulfilled the Law to perfection. Therefore, we stand free from all the condemnation, shame, guilt, and unworthiness that result from not being able to maintain the precepts of the Law.
- Please understand, however, that freedom from the Law does not mean that we can sin without consequences. The Law has not passed away. God has put the Law into our hearts. There is a desire within every born-again believer to keep the moral standards of the Law.
- Nevertheless, even if we fail, our heavenly Father judges our actions through the lens of Christ's perfect life—the One who fulfilled every requirement of the Law. We are liberated from the bondage of guilt, shame, and condemnation.
- We are free to live as a son in the house of God rather than as a slave out in the fields. He who the Son sets free is free indeed!

3. In Christ, we are blessed and not cursed.

- In Galatians 3:14, Paul stated that in Christ we have access to the blessings of Abraham. We are heirs to his promises.
- But there is even better news. Not only are we heirs to the promises of Abraham, but we are also free from the curses of the Law. Remember: The Land Covenant expanded upon the Abrahamic Covenant to express specific blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.
- However, in Christ, we are promised the blessings listed in the Land Covenant, but we are not subject to the curses. Let's look at Galatians 3:10-13:

So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE."

- The Old Testament saint was promised great blessings through their covenant relationship with God. However, God also warned of horrible curses for disobedience. If the people sinned, especially repeatedly and deeply, they were subjected to severe destruction from God. To be blessed, a person had to keep the Law faithfully.
- Most likely, all of us have heard sermons and teachings implying that, even though we are in Christ, we are subject to curses from God.

When pastors have wanted their people to be more obedient, they have quoted Deuteronomy 30:19: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the *curse*. So choose life in order that you may live." In doing so, they implied that the people would be under a curse if they did not obey.

- God still blesses obedience as stated in Deuteronomy 30. However, as partakers of the New Covenant, God no longer brings curses on His people because Jesus Christ redeemed us from the curse.
- The Law, given to Moses at Mt. Sinai, set forth the moral requirements of a holy God. In Old Testament days, the Law told the people how to live blameless before God. Failure to keep the Law resulted in sin and sin produced death—both spiritual and physical.
- In the fullness of time, Jesus came to earth, lived a sinless life, fulfilled every requirement of the Law, and with His death on the cross, set us free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1-4).
- Not only did He set us free from the law of sin and death, He also set us free from all the associated curses. Look again at Galatians 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE."
- As Jesus hung on the cross and the skies grew dark for that three-hour period, He cried out to the Father, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). Because Jesus was perfect, sinless, and completely fulfilled the Law, He became our substitute, taking the curse of sin, death, and the Law upon Himself. Thus, the requirement of the Law could now be fulfilled in us because Jesus took away the curse of the Law. As we come into our position of being in Christ, we are free from the penalty of sin and are redeemed from the curse of the Law.
- As one takes a look at the curses identified in Deuteronomy, we see curses like those listed in the following table highlighted. But the good news is that in Christ we have been redeemed from these curses.

Type of Curse	Symptom
Sickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumption and fever • Inflammation • Boils, tumors, scabs, and rashes • Mental illness • Chronic illnesses of all types
Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of good things • Hard work with little to show for it • Oppression and theft of all your goods • Invisible locusts that consume what you have • Decrease rather than prosperity and multiplication • Always a shortage of finances

Type of Curse	Symptom
Barren Spiritual Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed heavens • Spiritual drought • Lack of peace • Lack of rest • Confusion • Uncertainty • Failure in all you undertake • A coldness, even a falling away from God • Despair of the soul
Oppressed Family Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in rebellion • Attacks upon your wife • Sons and daughters taken into captivity by the devil • Wives hostile toward their husbands • Miscarriage
Removal of God's Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defeat by your enemies • Torment and oppression by the enemies of your soul • The thief regularly killing, stealing and destroying • Dread in the night and in the day
Plagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pestilence and destruction around your life • The devouring of your possessions • Severe and lasting plague over your life

- Jesus, as our covenant representative, and the One who deserved no curse, took upon Himself every curse of sin, death, and the Law so that we could be free from the curse.
- Because we are blessed but not cursed in Christ, we should pursue a life free of these symptoms of the curse.

4. In Christ, the promises of God are ours even in our weaknesses.

- When we think of the blessings of God, we often think that we will only be blessed if we are perfect and that we will be cursed if we make just a few mistakes. But the truth is this: Because of the perfect life of Christ, we are blessed even in our weaknesses, frailties, and struggles to overcome sin.
- Second Corinthians 1:20 states, "For all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him Amen [sure, truly, or so be it], to the glory of God through us" (NKJV). In Old Testament covenants, the promises and

blessings of God were based on a blameless walk. For example, Deuteronomy 28:2 states, "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God."

- In essence, a person was only blessed if they lived blamelessly before God. So the promises of God to the Old Testament saint were not yes, amen, sure, and true. They were yes, if I obeyed; yes, if I kept the Law; and yes, if I was good enough.
- In Christ, the promises of God to us are yes and amen because Jesus lived a sinless life, obeyed the Law fully, and took the curse of the Law for us. This does not mean that we can sin without consequences. But it does mean that we don't have to be perfect and blameless to be blessed because of what Christ did on the cross.
- What a blessing and relief to know that we have access to the promises of God—not based on our works, striving, or goodness—but through our faith in Christ's work as He cut the New Covenant with the Father.

5. In Christ, God is faithful even if our faith is weak.

- In 2 Timothy 2:13, Paul said, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."
- God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God who has legally bound Himself by covenant to fulfill His promises to us. He has bound Himself by oath to be true to His word.
- The promises of God are not given to us based on our work or effort but because of Christ's work at the cross.
- This promise doesn't imply that we can deny God, live a life of total rebellion, and still inherit His promises. Rather, it reassures us that even in those times when our faith grows weak, God is still faithful.
- So often we feel like the man in Mark 9 who cried out to Jesus, "I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). In times of distress, many of us know the promises of God and even believed them to a degree, but our faith is weak.
- What a magnificent truth to know that the promises of God are centered on the work that Jesus did and not what I have done. Even if my faith is weak, God remains faithful.

6. In Christ, we are overcomers.

- Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).
- Jesus defeated every tribulation that mankind can expect to endure. Whether it is sickness, persecution, failure, lack, opposition, or bondage, Jesus crushed each of these by His death on the cross.
- In 1 John 5:4, we are offered the promise of overcoming the world also: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."
- We no longer have to look at the problems we face and wonder if we will ever be victorious. In Christ, we are promised the victory. We overcome by faith because Jesus overcame. Through His work on the

cross He overcame the world.

- Since we are in Christ, we overcome by connecting to His victorious, overcoming power through faith. Our only hope of total victory is in Christ through the power of what He did as our covenant representative at the cross.

7. In Christ, we have access to all authority.

- In the Great Commission given to His disciples, Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18-20).
- At the cross, when the covenant was cut between the heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus, the Father gave Jesus all authority. Jesus triumphed over every ruler, authority, and demonic force of wickedness that is opposed to the purposes of God (Col. 2:15). He is now seated in heavenly places having all authority, far above any other dominion, power, name, or spiritual ruler (Eph. 1:20-22).
- Paul tells us that in Christ Jesus we are also raised up and seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). In Christ, we have been given authority over every power, ruler, authority, and name. This right has been given to us in Christ when we take our position as New Covenant believers.
- With this background, look at the following familiar Scripture: "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you" (John 15:16).
- What a promise! Whatever we ask of the Father, He will do it so that we may bear fruit and expand the kingdom of God. How did we get such authority? Because we are in Christ, abiding in the authority given to Him when He cut covenant with the Father at the cross.
- Therefore, when we ask in Jesus' name—the name of our covenant representative—we are given the authority to advance the kingdom of God in the earth.

8. In Christ, we live by grace.

- As Jesus was on the cross, dying for our sins and enacting the New Covenant, He declared, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus paid the price in full and finished the work at the cross.
- Therefore, in Christ, we enter into His finished work. Because the work was finished at the cross, we now live by grace through faith. A simple definition of grace is divine empowerment. Grace is God's ability given to us so that we can do His will.
- We live by the power of God working in and through our lives. Because we are in Christ, and abide in His finished work, we have the truth and grace of God to live effectively in His kingdom and do His will.
- It is such a blessing to know that because we reside in the position of being in Christ, we can depend upon Jesus, our covenant Partner, to strengthen us with His grace and power in our times of need.

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. The promises offered by the New Covenant are significantly superior to the promises of the Old Testament covenants.
- _____ 2. In Christ, we are free from the law of sin and death.
- _____ 3. In Christ, we are blessed immeasurably for faith and obedience; however, we also experience God's curses in a greater measure when we commit deep sin.
- _____ 4. When the Father looks at us, He sees us securely positioned within the perfect, finished work of Jesus.
- _____ 5. In the fullness of time, Jesus came to earth, lived a sinless life, fulfilled every requirement of the Law, and because of His death on the cross, requires us to keep the Law as well so as to be free of the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1-4).
- _____ 6. Consumption, fever, inflammation, boils, tumors, scabs, and rashes are all a part of the curse of the Law.
- _____ 7. In Christ, the promises of God are ours even in our weaknesses.
- _____ 8. In Christ, God is faithful when our faith is strong and not as faithful when our faith is weak.
- _____ 9. Some people state incorrectly that the definition of grace is divine empowerment.
- _____ 10. Jesus cut the New Covenant with the Father.

Fill in the Blank

11. God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God who has legally bound Himself by _____ to fulfill His _____ to us.
12. In Christ, the promises of God to us are _____ and _____ because Jesus lived a sinless life, obeyed the Law fully, and took the curse of the Law for us.
13. What Scripture verse tells us that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law?

14. What Scripture verse in the gospels tells us that Christ fulfilled the Law? _____

15. Romans 5:9 states that we are _____ (declared to be in right standing with God) by the blood of Jesus.

Match the letter from the list on the right that best matches the descriptions on the left.

_____ 16. Mediator of a better covenant

_____ 17. Being in right standing with God

_____ 18. No condemnation for those who are in Christ

_____ 19. Redeemed from the curse

_____ 20. Granted authority in Christ

Possible Matches for 16-20

- a. Jesus triumphed over every ruler, power, and demon.
- b. Free from the law of sin and death
- c. Enacted on better promises
- d. Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.
- e. Justified

Session 6

An Entirely Different Relationship

This session covers:

- The difference between the New Covenant and other covenants
- Five blessings related to our relationship with Christ

This session corresponds to:

- Chapter 11 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* book
- Session 6 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* CDs

The Blessings of Our Relationship with Christ

1. Jesus is the greatest blessing of the New Covenant.

- The greatest blessing of the New Covenant, what sets it apart from everything else, is Jesus. We don't just have the blessings of God; we can have a relationship with God.
- We don't just know about God, we can know God.
- We don't have to depend on a priest, prophet, or teacher to relate to God; we can relate to God directly in a way that is unique to our personality.
- We can have the joy of friendship and fellowship with God. Moreover, we are betrothed as the Bride of Jesus Christ and we are destined for an eternal partnership with Him in the ages to come.
- What makes the New Covenant a better covenant with better promises is the wonderful *relationship* that we have with God in Christ. The New Covenant offers an entirely different relationship with God than the Old Testament covenants. Old Testament saints knew God from a distance; in Christ, we can know God intimately.

Five Blessings Related to Our Relationship with Christ

1. In the New Covenant, our sins have been removed.

- Under the Old Covenant, an elaborate system was in place to deal with sin. To cover the sins of the people, daily sacrifices and yearly atonement were required. Animals were regularly slaughtered so that their blood might pay for Israel's iniquity. A rigorous, strict code of worship was demanded to maintain holiness.
- Yet even with all of these requirements, the Old Covenant only *covered* the sins of the people. Sins were forgiven, but the stain of sin still remained. Sins were forgiven but not forgotten. As a result, guilt, shame, unworthiness, and condemnation plagued the people.
- But the New Covenant is different. The blood of the New Covenant doesn't just cover sins; it removes sins (Heb. 10:1-18). Hebrews 10:17 states, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."
- Because Jesus shed His blood to cut the New Covenant, we are free from all condemnation from past sins, free from shame and guilt, and declared blameless and righteous in the sight of God. Our conscience is cleansed so that we are free to serve the living God.
- Even the sins that we committed after coming to the Lord are under this same power of the blood of Jesus. First John 1:7 promises us that "if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." In the New Covenant, we have been given the wonderful blessing of freedom from our past—nothing that we have done can hinder our relationship with God.

2. In the New Covenant, we have been given a new heart.

- Many people experience a very distinct change when they accept Christ and are truly born-again. Where they resisted God they are now open to Him. Where they criticized pastors, churches, and Bible teachers, they are now hungry for their ministry. Where they did not believe in miracles, they now accept them wholeheartedly.
- Why the change? Because God has given us a new heart as part of the New Covenant. Through Ezekiel, God said, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26).
- Our heart that was once hostile to God has been made new. Our heart is now soft, pliable, and sensitive toward God. The Bible says, "He made no distinction between us [the Jews] and them [the Gentiles], cleansing their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). In the New Covenant, by the power of the Holy Spirit, our hearts have been cleansed by faith.
- Paul said, "Circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit" (Rom. 2:29). Just as natural circumcision cuts away the flesh, spiritual circumcision cuts away the stone-like rebellion and independence from our hearts, washing our hearts from the desire for sin and wickedness.

- The stone-like hardness of our heart—which was opposed to God—has been cut away by the Holy Spirit. We have been given a brand new heart that is tender toward God.
- Our new heart hungers for more of God, longs to be with Him, and wants to do His will. This does not mean that our hearts are fully mature. Developing a heart that longs for God’s glory with the same degree of intensity that God has is a lifelong journey. It takes time to cultivate a heart that is perfectly in-sync with God’s heart. However, our heart is no longer a source of rebellion and independence; it has been recreated to desire God and the things of God.

3. In the New Covenant, we have been given the Holy Spirit.

- Building upon the previous point, our hearts have now become the dwelling place of God’s Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit now lives within our hearts. The gift of the Holy Spirit, given to every believer, is a major distinction between the Old Testament covenants and the New Covenant.
- Under the Old Testament covenants, the saints experienced the Holy Spirit from time to time. Moses had a dramatic encounter with the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit fell in the room when Solomon’s Temple was dedicated. The Holy Spirit overwhelmed Isaiah during his vision of the throne room. The Holy Spirit ministered through the prophets, such as Samuel, Daniel, Elijah, and Elisha.
- In Old Testament days, most people only had access to the Holy Spirit in very isolated cases; however, the New Covenant is much different. Each of us has access at all times to the precious Holy Spirit—He lives within us.
- Paul said, “Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6).
- Under the Old Covenant, people were required to keep the Law in order to be blessed. However, in the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit places the Law in our hearts (Heb. 8:7-12). By the Spirit, we can now hear the voice of God, understand the Bible, experience the presence of God, live by faith, and walk in obedience.
- By the Spirit, we have the truth in our heart and live by the enabling power of God’s grace. Thus, all the New Covenant promises are ours as we live in fellowship with the Holy Spirit.
- New Covenant living is not just keeping a set of rules or principles that position us for blessing. It consists of a relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that produces great joy and fulfillment in our lives.
- The Holy Spirit is a wonderful gift from God that makes the New Covenant so different from the Old Testament covenants.

4. In the New Covenant, we are adopted as sons.

- As partakers of the New Covenant, we are no longer slaves but sons of God. Read the following passage from Galatians 4:1-7:

Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

- We no longer live in a master-slave, works-based, distant relationship with God; instead, we have a father-son relationship. In Christ, we have been adopted into the family of God with all the rights of inheritance that belong to a son.
- As Galatians 4:7 states, believers are "no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an *heir* through God." As sons of God, we are also heirs to all His promises in Christ.
- In Old Testament days, saints heard from God primarily through the prophets and priests. As sons, we hear from God directly. As sons, we are accepted based on who we are—not on what we do. As sons, we have great privileges, rights, and authority. And as sons, we are heirs to the kingdom of God and joint heirs with Christ.
- Living as a son of God is a foundational distinction between the blessings of the New Covenant and the blessings contained in the Old Testament covenants.

5. In the New Covenant, we can have intimacy with Jesus.

- Old Testament saints worshiped God at the Tabernacle of Moses, briefly at the Tabernacle of David, and later at the Temple of Solomon. Except during that brief time when the Tabernacle of David was in operation, Old Covenant worshipers had limited access to God.
- Priests performed daily duties in the outer court and in the holy place, but were restricted from the holy of holies except on the Day of Atonement. Even on this day, however, only the high priest could go beyond the veil into the presence of God. The rest of the people could only worship from afar.
- Old Testament saints depended upon the priests and prophets to hear from God and to go before Him on behalf of their needs. Old Testament saints had a distant relationship with God.
- This way of relating to God changed with the cross of Jesus Christ and the inauguration of the New Covenant. Notice what Hebrews 10:19-22 states:

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near

with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

- In the New Covenant, we can all have an intimate, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We are the temples of the Holy Spirit and we can all come boldly before the throne of grace at any time (Heb. 4:15-16).
- We can know God in depths that were impossible under Old Testament covenants. Notice Hebrews 8:11:

AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

- We can know God as Friend, Bridegroom, and King. We are offered a deep, personal relationship with Him. We can hear His voice, sense His glorious presence, commune with Him in fellowship, know His will, and even know Him.
- Intimacy with the triune God is a blessing that produces great joy and contentment in our lives, and it is a trait that sets the New Covenant totally apart from anything promised in the Old Testament.

There is no doubt about it—the New Covenant is a better covenant than the Old Testament Covenants and it offers an entirely different relationship filled with wonderful blessings.

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. The most important reason the New Covenant is better than any other is that in the New Covenant we have access to Jesus Himself.
- _____ 2. Old Testament saints knew the Lord more intimately than we can today.
- _____ 3. Through the New Covenant, our sins are covered.
- _____ 4. In the New Covenant, we have been given a new heart.
- _____ 5. Just like today, in the Old Testament, saints had the Holy Spirit in their hearts.
- _____ 6. As partakers of the New Covenant, we are no longer slaves but sons of God.
- _____ 7. The New Testament promises us even closer intimacy with the Lord than was afforded to Old Testament saints.
- _____ 8. In Christ, we don't just know about God; we can know God.
- _____ 9. In the Old Covenant, sins were forgiven, but the stain of sin still remained.
- _____ 10. In the New Covenant, we have been given the wonderful blessing of freedom from our past—nothing that we have done can hinder our relationship with God.

Short Answers and Fill in the Blank

- 11. What makes the New Covenant a better covenant with better promises is the wonderful _____ that we have with God in Christ.
- 12. Under the Old Covenant, sins were _____ whereas under the New Covenant, sins have been _____.
- 13. Which Scripture verse tells us that, as partakers of the New Covenant, we are no longer slaves but sons of God? _____
- 14. In the Old Covenant, people worshiped from a _____ whereas under the New Covenant, people can worship _____.

15. In the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit places the Law in our _____.

Match the covenant on the right that best matches the phrase on the left.

_____ 16. External rules and regulations

_____ 17. Intimate relationship

_____ 18. Adopted as a son

_____ 19. Worship from a distance

_____ 20. Sins removed

Matches for 16-20

- a. New Covenant
- b. Old Covenant

Session 7

Hold Fast to the Covenant

This session covers:

- What it means to “hold fast to the covenant”
- Why holding fast to the covenant is important in the end times
- Four ways to hold fast to the covenant

This session corresponds to:

- Chapters 1 and 6 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* book
- Session 7 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* CDs

An Invitation to Every Believer

1. The Bible exhorts us to hold fast to God’s covenant promises.

- So far in this class, we have examined in detail the concept of a covenant and the blessings promised to the believer through covenant.
- In this session and the next, we will look at some principles that will help us experience the covenant blessings that produce a rich life in God.
- Through the Prophet Isaiah, God says, “Everyone who...*holds fast My covenant*; even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer” (Isa. 56:6-7).
- Here is a basic truth. God blesses those who hold fast to His covenant and the promises that are ours through covenant. And every believer is exhorted to hold fast to the covenant promises of God.

2. To fully experience God’s promises, we must learn to hold fast to the covenant.

- Many people have been taught that God may want us to live in health or He may have chosen for us to

struggle with infirmity. Many have been taught that God may want to prosper us or He may not. Many have developed a false view of God believing His favor is selective, thinking that God bestows favor on some and withholds it from others.

- Even though every believer has access to all the blessings of God, many are living in spiritual poverty.
- To experience a breakthrough that leads to a blessed life, we must learn to hold fast to the covenant. In other words, we must learn to believe, pray, and stand on the promises that are given to us through God's covenants—no matter what is happening around us.

3. To hold fast to the covenant, we must live by the truth of the Word rather than the circumstances of life.

- Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17).
- The Word of God is reality. No matter what we see, what is happening around us, what we feel or think, the Word of God is what is real—the Word is truth.
- To live by covenant, we must learn to live by the Word of God and not be moved by our circumstances. No matter what we see, what we feel, think, or experience, we hold fast to the covenant by believing what the Word of God promises. We must hold fast to God's covenant promises no matter what kind of trial or tribulation is afflicting us.
- As we learn to hold fast to God's covenant, we will experience breakthroughs that lead to a blessed life.

Critical in the End-Times

1. As we approach the return of the Lord Jesus, the earth will be shaken by wars, natural disasters, famine, lawlessness, and persecution.

- In the days approaching Christ's return, life will become progressively more difficult.
- Both the glory of the Lord and deep darkness will fill the earth. In the parable of the wheat and tares, Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed. While the good seed was being sown, an enemy was sowing tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:24-25).
- In this parable, Jesus teaches that the end of the age will culminate with both good and evil maturing. The great end-time harvest of souls will be reaped, the righteous sons of God will shine forth like the sun, and the sons of the evil one will become completely lawless and depraved.
- Just as wheat is harvested when it has fully matured, Jesus teaches that lawlessness and everything that is offensive to the kingdom of God will also come to full maturity (Matt. 13:41).
- Isaiah prophesied that the earth will be shaken as an olive tree in the last days. He wrote: "The new wine mourns, the vine decays, all the

merry-hearted sigh. The gaiety of tambourines ceases, the noise of revelers stops, the gaiety of the harp ceases. They do not drink wine with song; strong drink is bitter to those who drink it. The city of chaos is broken down; every house is shut up so that none may enter. There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine; all joy turns to gloom. The gaiety of the earth is banished. Desolation is left in the city and the gate is battered to ruins. For *thus it will be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive tree, as the gleanings when the grape harvest is over*" (Isa. 24:7-13).

- Jesus said, "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matt. 24:6-7).
- In the Book of Revelation, John also wrote of war in the last days: "And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him" (Rev. 6:4).
- John also wrote, "The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths" (Rev. 9:16-18).
- Massive natural disasters will also characterize the last days. The Book of Revelation declares that great earthquakes will shake the nations, that the stars of the sky will fall to the earth, and that the mountains and islands will be moved from their places (Rev. 6:12-14). There will be locusts swarming the earth (Rev. 9:3) and the waters will become undrinkable (Rev. 8:11).
- This unfathomable upheaval will cause unprecedented economic chaos (Rev. 18:11-17), disease, pestilence, and famine. In fact, the Book of Revelation describes a severe worldwide famine: "When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, 'Come.' I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with *famine* and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth" (Rev. 6:7-8).
- The evil of the last days will not be restricted to wars and natural disasters. Lawlessness will increase, resulting in tremendous upsurges in crime, murder, and terrorism.
- In the midst of these unimaginable tribulations, true Christians and Jews will experience increasing persecution. Around the world, it will be politically correct to honor every religion of the earth except Judaism and Christianity. These two groups will become increasingly unacceptable to the world system until every person will be forced to take the mark of the beast or be killed (Rev. 13:16-18). Both Christians and Jews will be martyred because of their allegiance to God.

2. In these challenging days, God promises a place of safety for His bondservants.

- Just as God set apart the Hebrew nation in Goshen, He will prepare a place of safety for His people during the end-time tribulations. Goshen was the place where God's people lived while they dwelt in Egypt. When God's plagues were sent upon the Egyptians, God set the Israelites apart in Goshen and protected them from the plagues. They were sheltered from the swarms of flies and from the hailstorms (Ex. 8:22, 9:26). God prepared a place of safety for His people while His judgments were released in the land of Egypt.
- Other places in Scripture describe God's protection during the tribulations of the last days. Jesus told the church at Philadelphia, "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10).
- In Revelation 7:1-3, John writes, "After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.'"
- As these end-time tribulations increase in severity, the shelter of the Most High is available to sincere, devoted followers of Jesus. Even though many believers will be martyred, God also promises to protect His people. Whether in cities of refuge or by His invisible shield, God will protect His people from the severe tribulations of the end-times.

3. As these difficult days draw near, we must learn to hold fast to the covenant.

- Though God will preserve and protect us in the end-times, we must learn to hold fast to God's covenant promises.
- The following excerpt from a prophetic word given on September 24, 2008 shows how God will cause His people to prosper even during difficult times:

As I see these things [economic problems facing America], I hear the encouragement of God to His Isaacs in the earth who sow in the times of famine and reap 100 fold in the year. I'm not a prosperity preacher, I'm a prophet. And God is saying that September [2008] will convince you that you must connect to His economic system. There are always the few that are greatly blessed when the majority is shaken, threatened and fearful.¹

- In the end-times, all the godless props that we have depended upon will be removed until it is just God and us. We can no longer depend

on a good economy for our finances. We will not be able to depend on our health care system for our health. We can not depend upon our police for our safety.

- A day is coming when God is the only One we can depend on. And when that day comes, we will have to depend on God's covenant promises to us.
- That is why we must learn to hold fast to the covenant now—before things get really difficult and challenging. In the days ahead, God's covenant promises will be the only thing that we can rely on.

Four Ways to Hold Fast to the Covenant

1. Know that the promises of God are ours *through covenant*.

- There is a tremendous difference between knowing that God has made promises to His children and knowing that He has spoken these same promises through a covenant He entered on our behalf.
- A promise secured by a covenant is a promise secured by the very life of the one making the promise. Remember in Session 1 that God had made a promise to Abraham (Gen. 12). Years had passed and Abraham was not sure that God would fulfill His promise to him. He asked God, "How can I *know* that you will do what you have promised." God's response was to cut covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15).
- Abraham knew that the promise would be fulfilled at some point in time because it was secured by a covenant.
- The same is true for us. When a promise is secured by a covenant, then we can be confident that the promise will be fulfilled.
- In this class, we have seen many great promises of a blessed life in Christ. We have seen that God promises salvation, eternity with Jesus, healing, provision, freedom from the curse of sin, death, and the law, destiny, success, protection, and a blessed family.
- The great news is that these wonderful promises have been made available and secured by covenant. Because of the New Covenant cut between the Father and the Son, which was validated by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, we can be fully confident that the Father's promises to us will be fulfilled.
- We can hold fast to the covenant when we know that God's promises are secured by His covenants.

2. Understand that our heavenly Father has directed His lovingkindness toward His covenant people.

- This principle helps us understand that God is faithful to His covenant promises. As we know that the promises of God are secured by covenant and as we understand how committed God is to fulfill His Word in our lives, we will be empowered to hold fast to His covenant like never before.
- Our faith in God's faithfulness activates covenant promises in our lives. It is not enough to know that God was faithful to a group of peo-

ple thousands of years ago or that He will be faithful to a group of people in the future. We must know that God will be faithful to His covenant promises to us. Even though God may delay His answers to us, we must know and trust that God will come through on our behalf. We must know that as we live in covenant with God, He will be faithful.

- In Genesis 15:13-16, as God cut the covenant with Abraham, notice that God tells Abraham what is going to happen in the future when He fulfills the covenant. God tells Abraham that his descendents will be enslaved for four-hundred years, but that He will deliver them and bring them into the Promised Land. Hundreds of years later, as Israel was about to possess her inheritance, God spoke these words:

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and *kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers*, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. *Know* therefore that the LORD your God, *He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness* to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments (Deut. 7:6-9).

- Notice the emphasized phrases. God was saying to the Hebrew nation that He was now taking them in to possess their inheritance, which had been promised by covenant to Abraham hundreds of years before. God was acting on their behalf because of a covenant oath. In this same passage, He instructs the people that they should *know* that He is a faithful God who can be trusted to keep His covenant promises. Why can He be trusted? God can be trusted because He is always faithful to His covenant.
- More than four hundred years had passed since God made a covenant promise to Abraham. Much had happened. Abraham had long since died. But God did not forget, He did not abandon his people or forsake them in Egyptian bondage. He remembered His covenant, delivered them from captivity by His mighty hand, brought them into the Promised Land, and fulfilled their destiny. God was faithful to His covenant thousands of years ago to the descendents of Abraham, and He will be faithful to His covenant to us today. God is always faithful to His covenant.
- As we just saw in Deuteronomy 7, we know that God will keep His covenant oaths because He is faithful and He acts in lovingkindness toward those in covenant with Him. As we look at the rich meaning of lovingkindness, we will get a glimpse of God's faithful heart toward us as we live with Him in covenant.
- *God's lovingkindness is the attribute in His heart that motivates Him*

to act in faithfulness toward His covenant people.

- Lovingkindness is the attribute that forms the basis for our faith in God's faithfulness. We can believe that God will fulfill His covenant promises to us because He is a God who shows lovingkindness to thousands of generations.
- The word translated "lovingkindness" is a very important word in the Scriptures, especially to the people of God. Moreover, lovingkindness is a word that is primarily directed toward God's covenant people. It expresses God's heart toward those who live in the reality of the New Covenant. This word does not describe the heart of God toward everyone in the world; instead, it is limited to those who have surrendered their lives in covenant to God.
- The Hebrew word that is most frequently translated as lovingkindness is *cheched* (*kheh'-sed*). This word has different shades of meaning, each of which must be fully understood to comprehend this word. Lovingkindness connotes a legal obligation, an everlasting time frame, strength, steadfastness (which in itself means faithful, determined, fixed in place, not subject to change), and love. All these meanings must be included to understand sufficiently this word and thus to understand God's heart toward His covenant people.²
- Many people believe that *cheched* should be translated "covenant faithfulness."³
- The association of *cheched* with covenant keeps it from being confused with God's love for all of mankind. God loves the world; however, His *cheched* applies primarily to His particular love for His chosen and covenanted people.⁴ An English word that conveys a similar meaning is the word "devotion." God is devoted to those in covenant with Him.
- For example, marital love is often related to *cheched*. Married couples are in covenant with each other and are devoted to one another. Marriage is a legal matter that requires faithfulness, but it also transcends legal issues, involving love, appreciation, desire, determination, and commitment.
- *Cheched* defines how God has interacted throughout history with Israel specifically and with His covenant people in general. *Cheched* is central to our understanding of God's faithfulness to the New Covenant.
- The blessings of God are promised to us through covenant, and covenant is secured because of God's everlasting faithfulness, strength, steadfastness, and love; that is, His lovingkindness—His *cheched*.
- Several traits of God's heart toward His covenant people emerge from a study of God's lovingkindness. Each is an important aspect of understanding why God is so determined to fulfill His covenant promises in our lives.

- *God's lovingkindness reveals His legal commitment toward His covenant people.*
 - God has legally bound Himself to act in accordance with His covenant promises. When Jesus made the decision at Gethsemane to go to the cross, He made a covenant vow unto death. As Jesus carried His cross to the place where He would be crucified, He was taking the walk unto death for each of us. With His sacrificial death, Jesus secured the covenant by the shedding of His blood. By so doing, God chose to bind Himself legally to His unalterable word and to be faithful to the promised blessings of His covenant with man.
 - God's heart is to act faithfully on behalf of His covenant people because He has legally bound Himself to do so.

- *Lovingkindness reveals His strength toward His covenant people.*
 - There is more to God's faithful heart than just His legal responsibility to move on our behalf. God has the strength to fulfill His covenant promises. God is the omnipotent, all-powerful God. When the Hebrew people were delivered from Egyptian bondage at the Red Sea, they praised their covenant Partner, singing, "In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; in Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation" (Ex. 15:13).
 - This verse illustrates the connection between the lovingkindness of God and His strength. We all know that God has unlimited strength. However, the good news is that out of His lovingkindness, God directs His unlimited strength toward His covenant partners. Whatever the need, God's lovingkindness directs His strength to help you through the trials of life. There is no problem too great, no issue too difficult for the lovingkindness of your covenant Partner.

- *Lovingkindness expresses God's steadfastness toward His covenant people.*
 - Steadfast defines one who is firm and remains fixed in what he has said, done, or promised. A steadfast person will not be moved from his position. He is determined to see his word fulfilled because of loyalty and faithfulness.
 - Because God always acts in lovingkindness, He is steadfast in His commitment to His covenant people. He is firm in His promises. He does not waver. He does not change His mind. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is a God who can be trusted. He is a God who can be believed, relied on, and depended upon.

- *Lovingkindness reveals God's love toward His covenant people.*
 - Love is the primary attribute that motivates God to act on our behalf and meet our needs.
 - Sometimes it is difficult to understand how a holy God could care so much for sinful, weak human beings. But He does. He loves us, especially those who are in covenant with Him. He cherishes and desires us. He thinks that we are wonderful, lovely, and special.
 - God's love is hard for us to explain or describe. His love for us is strong, powerful, and overwhelming. Because of His sincere feelings of affection for His covenant partners, He is totally devoted to caring for us, meeting our needs, and helping us experience the fulfillment of His covenant promises.

- *Lovingkindness reveals His everlasting care toward His covenant people.*
 - God's lovingkindness is everlasting. It lasts forever. It never fails, changes, or ceases. God's lovingkindness—His commitment, strength, steadfastness, and love—is directed toward His covenant people forever.
 - God's lovingkindness is offered to thousands. Deuteronomy 7:9 declares that His lovingkindness is given to a *thousand generations* and Psalm 136 declares twenty-six times that God's lovingkindness is everlasting. We can be greatly encouraged in knowing that God will not leave us as orphans. He will not forsake us. He will not fail us. He will be true to His word. His word will not come back void without accomplishing what He intended. No matter how long we have waited for the fulfillment of a promise.
 - Because God demonstrates lovingkindness, He has chosen to bind Himself in faithfulness to His covenant partners. His strength tells us that He is able to meet every need. His steadfastness tells us that He is determined to come to our aid, never leaving us nor forsaking us as we call upon Him. And His love tells us that He is affectionately devoted to leading us onward to victory. His lovingkindness is everlasting!

3. Recognize that there is often a delay between when the promise is given and when the promise is fulfilled.

- Abraham is a great example of how long it sometimes takes for promises to be fulfilled. God had promised Abraham many great blessings—including a son and a piece of land. But it took about twenty-five years before Isaac was born and more than 400 years before they received their promised land.
- There was a delay between the promise and the fulfillment of the promise. As we see in the life of Abraham, he had to hold fast to the covenant while he waited.

- During this time of waiting, Abraham was blessed in many ways. But he did not have the ultimate blessing that God had promised to him—a child through which all the other blessings would come. The same is true with us.
- Though it is often difficult to wait for a promise to be fulfilled, the waiting period is important. It is during this time that God develops godly character in our lives.
- Living without the promise breaks our pride and produces true humility. During this time our trust in the Lord is perfected and our knowledge of God’s faithfulness is matured. While we wait, we learn to enjoy God and not just seek Him for His hand of provision.
- During this time of delay, however, we must learn to hold fast to God’s covenant promises. We grow in our faith by knowing that His Word is true, His promises are real, and His lovingkindness is directed toward us. We must hold fast to the covenant by knowing that God will do what He has said He would.

4. Develop a lifestyle of faith and patience that will enable us to inherit the promises.

- The author of Hebrews writes, “So that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through *faith and patience* inherit the promises. For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU.’ And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise” (Heb 6:12-15).
- The challenge that Abraham faced and that we face as we wait for the promise to be fulfilled is to maintain our faith as we wait patiently for God’s perfect timing.
- During this time, we must keep our minds focused on God and the truth of His Word. We must choose to believe the promises of God rather than what we are experiencing.
- During his time of waiting, Abraham was far from perfect. He failed several times. He went to Egypt during a time of famine. While there, he told Pharaoh’s officials that his wife was his sister. He also tried to see the promise fulfilled through Hagar rather than Sarah.
- But he also had many successes. His faith was tested for years before the promise was fulfilled. And even after Isaac was born, Abraham was still required to offer him to the Lord.
- While Abraham was being tested, he had to keep his eyes on the Lord and patiently maintain his faith. God did not fulfill His word until Abraham was *fully assured that what God had promised, He was also able to perform*. Notice the following verse:

In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God,

he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore, IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS (Rom. 4:18-22).

- God did not fulfill His promises until Abraham's faith had been tested and he overcame the obstacles he faced by believing that God was faithful to His word.
- The same is true with us today. We will only inherit the promises of God by holding fast to the covenant in the face of difficult circumstances.

Since we are living in the challenging days preceding the Lord's return, now is the time to learn how to hold fast to God's covenant.

Notes

1. Prophetic Word delivered by Dr. Sharon Stone, Christian International Europe, in the summer of 2008 in Glasgow, Scotland. Taken from the Elijah List (www.ElijahList.com) entitled "Prophetic Words about the Current Economic System and Political Crisis", dated September 24, 2008.
2. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), s.v. "covenant," referenced from *PC Study Bible v3.2* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 2001).
3. *The Complete Word Study Bible and Reference CD*, s.v. "covenant."
4. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), s.v. "covenant," referenced from *PC Study Bible v3.2* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 2001).

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. To fully experience God's promises, we must learn to hold fast to the covenant.
- _____ 2. As we approach Christ's return, His glory will fill the earth and as a result, life will become easier.
- _____ 3. Goshen was a place of safety for God's people when God sent plagues upon Egypt.
- _____ 4. A day is coming when our pastor is the only one we can depend on.
- _____ 5. Our heavenly Father has directed His lovingkindness specifically toward His covenant people.
- _____ 6. The blessings of God are promised to us through covenant, and covenant is secured because of God's lovingkindness.
- _____ 7. There is rarely a delay between when the promise is given and when the promise is fulfilled.
- _____ 8. We inherit God's promises through faith and patience.
- _____ 9. Abraham had to wait many years before he received any of God's promised blessings to him.
- _____ 10. As we approach the return of Jesus, the idea of covenant will become increasingly more important to us because it will be more than an interesting idea—it will be a lifeline.

Short Answers and Fill in the Blank

- 11. The promises of God are ours through _____.
- 12. The Hebrew word for lovingkindness is _____.
- 13. In many cases, we will only inherit the promises of God by _____
_____ to the covenant in the face of difficult circumstances.
- 14. To hold fast to the covenant, we must develop a lifestyle of _____ and
_____ that will enable us to inherit the promises.

15. Four characteristics of God's lovingkindness are _____,
_____, _____, and _____.

From the list on the right, identify five traits that best characterize God's lovingkindness.

- _____ 16.
- _____ 17.
- _____ 18.
- _____ 19.
- _____ 20.

Possible Matches for 16-20

- a. Reveals His legal commitment toward His people
- b. Explains why God's promises are inherited through faith and patience
- c. Describes God's checed
- d. Expresses God's strength toward His covenant people
- e. Depicts God's steadfastness toward mankind
- f. Reveals God's love toward His covenant people
- g. Is a word that defines God's special devotion to those in covenant with Him
- h. Focuses on God's everlasting care toward His people
- i. An important concept in understanding covenant

Session 8

Principles for New Covenant Living

This session covers:

- Four basic principles for New Covenant living
- How we enter the New Covenant by taking our own walk unto death

This session corresponds to:

- Chapter 13 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* book
- Session 8 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* CDs

As we learn to hold fast to the covenant, no matter what we see happening around us, there are several principles that we must live by in order to inherit the full measure of God's promises. We will look at four of these in this session.

Four Principles for New Covenant Living

1. We must take our own walk unto death.

- In Session 2, when we discussed the steps in ancient-covenant making, remember that one of the steps specified that each party to the covenant was to take their own walk unto death.
- Recall that the walk unto death took place after the animal had been cut into halves from head to tail. Each party to the agreement had walked through the pieces of the sacrificial animal and made their vow to the other. They would face each other, look to heaven, and say something like this: "Do to me as has been done to this animal if I break this covenant. If I fail to keep this covenant, may I die even as this animal has died."

- Remember also that Jesus, mankind's New Covenant representative, took the walk unto death on behalf of all men and women. When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39), He was saying in essence, "I will cut the covenant. I will take the walk unto death. I will be the covenant sacrifice. I will be the mediator of the New Covenant."
- As we have previously seen, the New Covenant was cut between the heavenly Father and Jesus. We enter the New Covenant by faith in the finished work of Jesus at the cross and by taking our own walk unto death. To do this, we must believe that Jesus' death on the cross paid for our sins and we must surrender our lives to God.
- Just as the ancients entered into covenant by taking their own walk unto death—vowing their very life to covenant devotion—we must make a similar statement of surrender to God: "Let me be as this slain animal [let me die] if I don't keep my part of the covenant."
- Entering into a covenant relationship with God requires that we take our own walk unto death. We must take it for the first time by really surrendering our life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And then we should take it on a daily basis by continuing to live for Jesus rather than for ourselves.
- As we understand this aspect of the covenant ceremony, the words of Jesus take on a much deeper meaning. Look at some of His sayings to all who would follow Him:

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?" (Luke 9:23-25).

Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:25-33).

- Everyone who wants to follow after Jesus is required to deny themselves. We must place Him above all earthly desires, take up our own crosses daily, and follow Him with our whole heart. We are called to take our own walk unto death by surrendering our lives to Christ everyday.
- This may be the most important principle in positioning ourselves to be blessed by God. Jesus stated the importance of this principle in Matthew 6:33 when He said, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." In this verse of Scripture, seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness implies that we place Him above anyone or anything. It means that we deny ourselves, dying to our own plans, desires, and purposes so that we can follow Him fully.
- As we make this type of decision in our hearts and keep doing it day after day, He will shower us with His blessings.
- The walk unto death is illustrated powerfully in the book of Ruth. In Chapter 1, Naomi's two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, both made a decision to follow Naomi back to Bethlehem (which means the house of bread). But only Ruth returned with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem. Note Ruth's attitude toward Naomi:

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her. So they both went until they came to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16-19).

- It was not until Ruth made this declaration of surrender and commitment—her own walk unto death—that she returned to Bethlehem. And it was only in Bethlehem that she experienced blessings, such as gleaning from the fields, marrying Boaz, and giving birth to King David's grandfather. This beautiful love story reiterates the point that we position ourselves to be blessed only after we have taken our own walk unto death.
- The first step to success in covenant living is to take the walk unto death—a once and for all surrender to Jesus Christ and His purposes. And when we sense our commitment waning, to take up the cross afresh and once again yield entirely to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This is the lifestyle that positions us for blessing!

2. We must expect a blessing.

- Expecting a blessing is another foundational principle for successful covenant living. This sounds simple, but few believers actually expect God's goodness in their lives. Though we have been redeemed from the curse, many of us have a greater expectation of bad things happening than good things.

- There was a television commercial out recently where a man went through a series of trials. He felt like he had passed through them, but as he was walking along, a piano fell on his head. This is the way many Christians live—waiting for the piano to fall on their heads. Rather than looking up to God, expecting His goodness to fall upon us in every circumstance, we expect the piano to fall on our head.
- God doesn't want us to live this way. He doesn't want us to live expecting trouble, problems, failures, sicknesses, poverty, lack, oppression, and defeat. He desires that we go through life expecting to be blessed, expecting good things to come our way, and expecting victory over every obstacle.
- When opposition comes into our lives, as it certainly will, God wants us to overcome. When we expect a blessing, we no longer grumble at the problem, but thank God that He is the way of escape; we get our eyes off the circumstances and focus on covenant promises; we stop magnifying the devil and his work, and start praising the Lord for His power and strength.
- In expecting a blessing, we are not suggesting a presumptuous attitude toward God that demands His blessings. We are not implying that we have the kind of "faith" preached by some faith teachers that has caused many to be greatly disappointed, even disillusioned in their walk with God.
- God wants us to maintain an attitude that doesn't deny the reality of the circumstance, but in the face of opposition, expresses true hope, faith, trust, and expectancy in God.
- The story of Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego illustrates this kind of attitude. As they were about to be cast into the furnace of blazing fire, they said:

If it be so [if they were to be cast into the fire], our God whom we serve is *able* to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He *will* deliver us out of your hand, O king. But *even if He does not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up (Dan. 3:17-18, emphasis mine).

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego demonstrated three basic traits of faith. First, they believed God was able and powerful enough to deliver them. Second, they believed He desired to deliver them. That is, they expected Him to actually come through. They were not looking for the piano to fall on them in the furnace. They were expecting God to deliver them from death. Finally, they were not presumptuous; they didn't demand that God set them free. Even if they died with the promise unfulfilled, they were not going to turn from a lifestyle of worshiping and obeying God. Nor were they going to get angry with God and question Him about His ways. They were not going to turn from Him saying that He doesn't answer prayers. Even if God did not come through, they were going to keep walking with Him until death.
- This kind of an expectant attitude, while not presuming upon God, is a healthy one for positioning ourselves for blessings. Therefore, begin-

ning today, begin to expect a blessing.

3. We must stand against the curse.

- Although we are redeemed from the curse of sin, death, and the Law in Christ, the devil still roams about seeking whom he can devour. He wants to bring symptoms of the curse into our lives.
- It is in this context that the third principle of living in covenant blessings is set—we must stand against the curse. We must stand against the curses that inevitably come against our life, family, church, business, city, or nation.
- Often the Church is far too passive when it comes to standing against the curse. Some people live for years, some even a lifetime, allowing the curse to rule their lives. Some never begin to fight the fight of faith. Some even live with a divided heart, wondering if the symptoms of the curse are from the devil or God.
- The Bible calls us to stand against the devil and his work in our life. Note a few Scriptures about our fight of faith:

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:12).

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world (1 Peter 5:8-9).

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm (Eph. 6:12-13).

- The devil continues to roam about, seeking to kill, steal, and destroy. Jesus has promised us that we can overcome the devil by faith since He overcame the devil on the cross.
- For us to overcome, we must take off an attitude of complacency, passivity, and tolerance toward the works of the enemy and put on an attitude of aggressive faith that fights for the blessings of God.
- We can fight in many ways. We can praise and worship. We can pray. We can confess, proclaim, declare, or decree the truths of God as acts of spiritual warfare. And we can believe in faith. Let the Holy Spirit show you how to fight. But fight! Faith is a fight.

- If you are trying to accomplish something of value for the kingdom of God, the devil will come against you. Either through oppression, depression, discouragement, sickness, lack, or accusation, the devil will attack.
- But we are in covenant with God, we are not under the symptoms of the curse, and we should not accept anything less than the full measure of God's blessings.
- As we become militant toward the enemy and his lies against us, as we take our position in the heavenly realm, seated with Jesus far above all rule, principality, and authority, and resist the work of the devil, God will come to our aid and the devil will flee just like the Bible promises.
- The Word works, but we must be aggressive in standing against the curse. We must stand on the promises of God and resist the curse.

4. We must live by the Spirit.

- The fourth principle for New Covenant living is to develop your spirit-man so that you can live in and by the Spirit of God.
- Why is this connected to successful New Covenant living? Look at several Scriptures that highlight this connection:

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:31-34).

Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of *a new covenant*, not of the letter *but of the Spirit*; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:5-6).

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would *receive the promise of the Spirit* through faith (Gal. 3:13-14).

- Jeremiah prophesied that under the New Covenant, the Law would be

put into our heart so that we would know right from wrong, have wisdom to make proper decisions, and be equipped to know God in an intimate way.

- These magnificent promises come to us through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us in Christ. In these last two references, Paul tells us very clearly that the Old Covenant was of the letter, but the New Covenant is of the Holy Spirit. He writes that the blessings of God are ours because we have been given the Holy Spirit.
- How do we live by the Spirit? Very briefly, living by the Spirit is the skill of recognizing the voice of God in every situation and following Him fully. Living by the Spirit involves obeying the Scriptures, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and being filled with the Spirit continuously. Spirit-led living includes nourishing and strengthening our spirit-man so that our soul is yielded to the Spirit and we become sensitive to the voice of God.
- Whatever the issue, whatever the problem, the Holy Spirit will lead us to the solution. He is for us, wants the best for us, and will lead us into the blessings of God. Though learning to live by the Spirit is a life-long journey, and it often requires major transitions from the way we are used to living, the rewards of a Spirit-led life far outweigh the price of changing our lifestyle.
- Therefore, it is imperative that as people who desire the blessings of God, we learn to live by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Spirit-led living enables us to know the truth, produce the fruit of the Spirit, be transformed into the character of Jesus, operate in the gifts of the Spirit, and experience the blessings of God.

Each of these four foundational principles is essential to a life that really experiences the blessings of God. Each represents a truth that must be matured and perfected throughout life. But each principle can also be enacted today as you begin your journey of being blessed. Get started now and enjoy the great adventure.

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. In order to live by covenant, we must take a walk unto death.
- _____ 2. To live by covenant, we must expect a blessing.
- _____ 3. To live by covenant, we must learn to ignore Satan's attack against us.
- _____ 4. Living by the Holy Spirit helps us to live in the blessings of God.
- _____ 5. In covenant with God, we are not subject to the symptoms of the curse, and we should not accept anything less than the full measure of God's blessings.
- _____ 6. The walk unto death is another way of saying that we must offer our life to the Lord in absolute surrender.
- _____ 7. Over the years, the Church has done a good job of taking an aggressive stand against the enemy.
- _____ 8. We can fight the enemy in many ways, but praise and worship is not one of them since it should be reserved totally toward honoring God.
- _____ 9. Living by the Spirit is the skill of recognizing the voice of God in every situation and following Him fully.
- _____ 10. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are good examples of walking by faith.

Short Answers and Fill in the Blank

11. What Scripture passage from the book of Ruth describes what it means to take the walk unto death? _____
12. _____ a blessing is a foundational principle to inherit the blessings of God.
13. People who desire the blessings of God must learn to live by the leading of the _____.
14. Although we are redeemed from the curse of sin, death, and the Law, the devil still roams about seeking whom he can devour. What must we do to resist him? _____.

15. Often the Church is far too _____ when it comes to standing against the curse.

From the list on the right, identify the five that best describe how to live in the reality of the New Covenant.

_____ 16.

_____ 17.

_____ 18.

_____ 19.

_____ 20.

Possible Matches for 16-20

- a. God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God.
- b. The blessings of Abraham
- c. Take a walk unto death.
- d. A better covenant based on better promises.
- e. Expect a blessing.
- f. Stand against the curse.
- g. The New Covenant was cut between the Father and the Son.
- h. Live by the Spirit.
- i. In the face of opposition, express true hope, faith, trust, and expectancy in God.

Answer Sheet

Session 1

1. F
2. T
3. F
4. T
5. F
6. T
7. F
8. T
9. T
10. F
11. bless; hold
12. Abraham
13. 300; Old; New
14. solemn; agreement
15. making; keeping
- 16.-20. a,d,e,g,i (in any order)

Session 2

1. T
2. T
3. T
4. F
5. T
6. F
7. T
8. F
9. T
10. T
11. walk; death
12. blessings; curses
13. circumcised
14. blessings; curses
15. God; mankind; sacrifice
- 16.-20. a,d,e,g,h (in any order)

Session 3

1. T
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. T
6. T
7. F
8. F
9. F
10. T
11. circumcision
12. Father; Son
13. builds; requirements
14. blessings
15. house; kingdom; throne
16. c
17. a
18. e
19. b
20. d

Session 4

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. T
6. T
7. F
8. T
9. F
10. T
11. yes
12. Galatians 3:9-14, 29
13. 1; 7
14. joy
15. 7
- 16.-20. c,d,e,g,h (in any order)

Session 5

1. T
2. T
3. F
4. T
5. F
6. T
7. T
8. F
9. F
10. T
11. covenant; promises
12. yes; amen
13. Galatians 3:13
14. Matthew 5:17
15. justified
16. c
17. e
18. b
19. d
20. a

Session 6

1. T
2. F
3. F
4. T
5. F
6. T
7. T
8. T
9. T
10. T
11. relationship
12. covered; removed
13. Galatians 4:1-7
14. distance; intimately (or closely)
15. hearts
16. b
17. a
18. a
19. b
20. a

Answer Sheet

Session 7

1. T
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. T
6. T
7. F
8. T
9. F
10. T
11. covenant
12. checed
13. holding fast
14. faith; patience
15. faithfulness; strength; stead-
fastness; love
- 16.-20. a,d,f,g,h (in any order)

Session 8

1. T
2. T
3. F
4. T
5. T
6. T
7. F
8. F
9. T
10. T
11. Ruth 1:16-19
12. expecting
13. Holy Spirit
14. stand against the curse
15. passive
- 16.-20. c,e,f,h,i (in any order)

Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ Final Exam

The following questions are true or false. Place a "T" for true or an "F" for false in the space provided (2 points per question).

- _____ 1. Being able to list and discuss each blessing of the Old and New Covenants is more important than living in the blessings of God.
- _____ 2. Based on 1 Peter 3:9, we know that believers are called for the very purpose of inheriting a blessing.
- _____ 3. Under the Old Covenant, the saints sins were removed whereas under the New Covenant, they are covered by the blood of Jesus.
- _____ 4. Healing of body, soul, and spirit is one of the blessings of Abraham that are available to us through the New Covenant.
- _____ 5. Two key aspects of understanding our position in Christ are the progressive nature of God's covenants and the fact that the New Covenant was cut between the Father and the Son.
- _____ 6. The New Covenant was initially made between our heavenly Father and every believer from the time of the cross forward.
- _____ 7. To fully experience God's blessings, we must learn to hold fast to the covenant.
- _____ 8. God chose to use a common practice of everyday life—entering into a covenant—to illustrate His commitment to His people.
- _____ 9. Standing against the curse is a very important principle to experiencing the blessings of God.
- _____ 10. The greatest blessing of the New Covenant is Jesus.

Fill in the Blanks (2 points per question)

11. One of the most important steps in ancient covenant making was the _____ unto death.
12. Another important step in ancient covenant making was the pronouncement of _____ and _____.
13. The Father cut the Abrahamic Covenant with Abraham and the New Covenant with _____.

14. The specific blessings promised to Abraham and his descendents as a part of the Abrahamic Covenant are described most extensively in the Old Testament Book of _____.
15. Covenant is how we _____ that God will bless us, and possibly even more importantly, covenant is the means by which we get a _____ upon God.
16. Another blessing of Abraham that is promised to believers in Jesus is financial _____.
17. To live in the reality of the blessings of God, we should _____ a blessing.
18. Covenant is the means by which _____ become one.
19. Every interaction between God and man is based on _____.
20. The fact that God relates to His people in lovingkindness helps us understand that God is _____ to His covenant promises.
21. The promises of God are inherited through _____ and _____.
22. Another principle of experiencing the blessings of God is to live by the _____.
23. In cutting the New Covenant, _____ was the representative of the Father. _____ represented mankind, and _____ was the covenant sacrifice.
24. The Old (Mosaic) Covenant builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant by outlining in detail the _____ for holy living.
25. God is a covenant-_____, covenant-_____ God.

Multiple choice: Circle the correct answer (2 points each)

26. Which of the following is not one of the seven specific blessings of Abraham identified in this class?

- a. A blessed family
- b. Protection from the attacks of the enemy
- c. Intimacy with Jesus
- d. Success in what you put your hands to

27. Which of the following are aspects of God's *cheqed* toward His people?

- a. Legal commitment toward His people
- b. Strength directed toward His people
- c. Steadfastness toward His people
- d. Love directed toward His people
- e. Everlasting care toward His people
- f. All of the above

28. Which of the following is not a step in ancient covenant making?

- a. Pronouncement of blessings and curses
- b. The walk to life
- c. The seal of the covenant mark
- d. The covenant meal
- e. The blessing of the covenant sacrifice
- f. a, b, and d
- g. b, d, and e
- h. b and e

29. Which is not one of the five covenants that relate most directly to our inheriting the blessings of God?

- a. Edenic Covenant
- b. Noahic Covenant
- c. Abrahamic Covenant
- d. Mosaic Covenant
- e. Land Covenant
- f. Davidic Covenant
- g. New Covenant
- h. Everlasting Covenant
- i. a, b, and h
- j. c, d, e, f, and g

30. As discussed in this class and from the Genesis account, which of the following is one of the four original purposes for mankind?

- a. Eat from the tree of life
- b. Crush Satan under our feet
- c. Fellowship with God forever
- d. All of the above

31. Which of the following are traits of the entirely different relationship we have with Jesus through the New Covenant?

- a. Our sins are removed.
- b. We can have success, destiny, and life purpose.
- c. We can have intimacy with Jesus.
- d. We have been given the Holy Spirit.
- e. We can experience healing of body, soul, and spirit.
- f. b, d, and e
- g. a, b, and d
- h. a, c, and d
- i. All of the above
- j. None of the above

32. Which of the following is a correct statement about the New Covenant?

- a. We are blessed for obedience and cursed for disobedience.
- b. We are blessed spiritually, but we no longer experience divine healing.
- c. We are blessed but not cursed.
- d. All of the above
- e. None of the above

33. Which of the following Scripture verses tells us that we are redeemed from the curse?

- a. Galatians 3:13
- b. Hebrews 8:6
- c. Galatians 4:5-6
- d. Deuteronomy 28:15

34. Which of the following statements is the most correct?

- a. Most important interactions between God and man are based on covenant.
- b. Every interaction between God and man is based on covenant.
- c. The offer of salvation is the only interaction between God and man based on covenant.
- d. Some interactions between God and man are based on covenant.
- e. None of the above

35. Which of the following is the best example of the meaning of the eighth step in covenant making—the covenant meal?

- a. Eating from the tree of life in the Garden of Eden
- b. The Lord's Supper
- c. Eating the manna that came from heaven
- d. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
- e. All of the above
- f. b and d
- g. b and c
- h. c and d
- i. b, c, and d

Discuss in your own words (10 points each)

36. Explain why the New Covenant is a better covenant than the Old Testament covenants.

37. List and briefly describe ten of the blessings identified in this class.

38. Drawing from the progressive nature of the Old Testament covenants and from the manner in which the New Covenant was cut between the Father and the Son, explain our position in Christ.

