

Covenant and Passover for Today's Christian - NOTES

2-hr class for 1st yr theology students / LLM / Methodist Local Preachers

Introduction and opening worship

Covenant in the Bible

What is a covenant?

- 1 Ask class, responses to front. Eg: agreement, solemn, binding, marriage, oath, will
- 2 Hebrew = berit בְּרִית = covenant, alliance, pledge
 - a between people
 - treaty (monarch to monarch)
 - constitution (monarch to people)
 - contract (person to person)
 - alliance (of friendship)
 - alliance (of marriage)
 - b between God and people

Examples of covenants

- 1 Think of examples in modern life, feed to front. Eg: NATO, civil partnership, adoption, trade agreement, blood brothers.
- 2 Bible examples – groups look up one each and decide what kind
 - a Noah (Gen 9:1-17)
 - b Abraham (Gen 17)
 - c Jonathan and David (1 Sam 18:3)
 - d David and pretty much everybody (2 Sam 8:6, 8:14, 10:19)
 - e Solomon and Hiram (1 Ki 5:2-6, 12)
 - f Asa and Ben-Hadad (I Ki 15:18-19)
 - g Ahab and Ben-Hadad (I Ki 20:32-34)
 - h Moab and Israel (2 Ki 3:4)

7:00
remember why
we are here

7:05
link with
existing
knowledge

7:10
teaching

NOTE don't
give modern
examples here

7:15
class respond
link with
experience

7:20
apply learning

Work in 2s
and 3s

Discuss types

Ancient Near East (ANE) covenants – two types

1 Equal

- a Mirror documents, one held by each party
- b Both negotiate clauses, both agree
- c Conditional on both sides keeping the bargain

2 Unequal – benevolent (hopefully!) dictator

- a Clauses decided by suzerain (super-power) for vassal (subject)
- b Suzerain offers protection / provision /
- c Vassal swears loyalty / tribute / obedience
- d May be conditional or unconditional

Comparison – group exercise

Standard covenant form in time of Moses was Hittite ‘suzerain’ treaty. See handout. Many parallels between this and OT covenants between Yahweh and Israel. Compare ANE treaty with Mosaic covenant.
Exodus 19:3-8 / Exodus 20:1-17 / Exodus 24:3-8 / Joshua 24

Groups report back

Focus on Abrahamic covenant & the flaming pot Gen 15

1 Covenant ritual

- a What is God’s side of the bargain?
- b What is Abraham’s side?

2 What the heck is going on with the gore and the flaming pot?

- a Jer 34:18-20 – treaty rite – “May I end up like this if I break the treaty.” Where do we get similar oaths? (eg Ruth 1:17)
- b BOTH parties should pass between parts – so why does God put Abraham to sleep?
- c What / who does the flaming pot symbolise?
- d So, what’s going on?

Break

7:30
teaching

Bible is a document about real people in a real context. Need to pay attention to the context in order to understand

7:40
apply learning
work in table
groups

use handout

7:50
work as whole
class

Apply learning
to make sense
of this tricky
passage

Nothing!

= “I’ll be
damned if ...”
or “cross my
heart and
hope to die.”

God taking on
covenant
curses if
Abraham fails
(which he will)

8:00
reset attention
span

The Significance of Passover for Christians Today

Why Remember?

Retell story

- 1 Dt 29:2ff. “*Your eyes saw,*” “*Your clothes,*” “*You ate...*” Really?
- 2 What is the significance of the ‘Red marker to avoid death’? Eg Ex 12, Gen 22, Josh 2:17-21, Heb 9:11-14 (Hayes 572)

Links between OT and NT

Discuss in groups:

- 1 How is OT relevant for us today? (Rom 15:4, 1 Cor 10:11, 2 Cor 1:20, Heb 1:1-2)
- 2 Think through the NT. Where do you see Passover references? Eg, John-t-B, Rev lamb that was slain, feeding 5000, baptism, Last Supper
- 3 Why do the synoptic gospels make such a point about the Last Supper being a Passover meal?
- 4 Jesus talked about a ‘New Covenant in my blood.’ What’s that about? (Look at Jer 31:31-34, Ex 24:8, Isa 53:11-12)
- 5 Why do we need a New Covenant? What are its terms?

Groups report back

Jesus as fulfilment of Abrahamic covenant

The Mosaic covenant was conditional. It was dependent on God’s people obeying and therefore could be broken (Hos 1:9). The covenant with Abraham was unconditional and therefore everlasting (Eze 16:59-63). (Anderson, Covenant 94)

- 1 What were the features of the ceremony to ratify the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 15?
- 2 How does Jesus’ ceremony at the Last Supper recall this?
- 3 What are the implications for our participation in Holy Communion today?

Closing Worship

Assignment

Use the Mosaic / ANE structure as a framework to write a covenant suitable for your context. 1 side of A4.

8:10

Link with current knowledge

Owning the exodus. Participation in grace.

8:15

Discussion around tables. One or all questions depending on time.

John’s chronology is different, probably more symbolic.

Luke 9:31 (*exodos*), Jn 19:33 = Ex 12:46, 1 Cor 5:6-8

2 Cor 3:4-11

8:30

Seeing ourselves as participators in the everlasting covenant as restated by Jesus.

8:45-9:00

Apply learning to our context.

Covenant Clauses

Clause	Exodus 19:3-8	Exodus 20:1-17	Exodus 24:3-8	Joshua 24
1- Preamble	3	2a		2a
2 - Historical prologue	4	2b		2b-13, 17-18
3 a - General terms	5a	3	3	14
3 b - Specific terms		4-17	3	25
4 - Witnesses				22, 27
5a - Curses		5b, 7b		19-20
5b - Blessings	5b, 6a	6, 12b		
6 - Treaty documents			4	26
7 - Public reading			3a, 7a	25
8 - Oath of acceptance	8		3b, 7b	16, 21, 24
9 - Religious ceremony			4-6, 8	26

Covenant and Passover for Today's Christian - 1

Introduction and opening worship

Covenant in the Bible

What is a covenant?

Your answers:

Hebrew = berit בְּרִית = covenant, alliance, pledge

- a between people
- b between God and people

Examples of covenants

Bible examples:

- a Gen 9:1-17
- b Gen 17
- c 1 Sam 18:3
- d 2 Sam 8:6, 8:14, 10:19
- e 1 Ki 5:2-6, 12
- f 1 Ki 15:18-19
- g 1 Ki 20:32-34
- h 2 Ki 3:4

Ancient Near East (ANE) covenants – two types

Equal

Unequal – between suzerain (super-power) and vassal (subject)

Comparison

See handout 'Standard Treaty Structure'

Focus on Abrahamic covenant & the flaming pot Gen 15

Covenant ritual:

What is God's side of the bargain?

What is Abraham's side?

Compare with Jer 34:18-20.

What is the significance of the dream?

Break

Covenant and Passover for Today's Christian - 2

The Significance of Passover for Christians Today

Why Remember?

Retell the Passover story. Dt 29:2ff. "*Your* eyes saw," "*Your* clothes," "*You* ate..." Really?

What is the significance of the 'Red marker to avoid death'? Eg Ex 12, Gen 22, Josh 2:17-21, Heb 9:11-14 (Hayes 572)

Links between OT and NT

- 1 Why is OT relevant for us today?
- 2 Think through the NT. Where do you see Passover references?
- 3 Why do the synoptic gospels make such a point about the Last Supper being a Passover meal?
- 4 'New Covenant in my blood.' (See Jer 31:31-34, Ex 24:8, Isa 53:11-12)
- 5 Why do we need a New Covenant? What are its terms?

Jesus as fulfilment of Abrahamic covenant

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- 1 What were the features of the ceremony to ratify the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 15?
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Closing Worship

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Covenant and Passover for Today's Christian - 3

Standard Treaty Structure

Choose one of: Exodus 19:3-8 / Exodus 20:1-17 / Exodus 24:3-8 / Joshua 24:1-28 and identify the sections of a standard Suzerain / Vassal treaty.

Suzerain / Vassal Treaty

- 1 the preamble, which identifies the author of the treaty and gives his titles and attributes;
- 2 the historical prologue of the treaty, in which the benevolent deeds of the Hittite king on behalf of the vassal are recounted, and made the ground of the suzerain's appeal to the vassal to render future obedience in gratitude for past benefits;
- 3 the treaty stipulations:
 - a general clauses, which were the principles on which future relations were to be based, and
 - b specific stipulations;
- 4 the divine witnesses and guarantors of the treaty;
- 5 consequences:
 - a the maledictions or curses, and
 - b the benedictions or blessings.

In addition to these standard elements, there was normally some provision:

- 6 for depositing the treaty documents in the sanctuary,
- 7 for a periodic public reading of the treaty document,
- 8 for an oath of acceptance of the treaty by the vassal, and
- 9 for a religious ceremony, often with blood sacrifices, in which the treaty was ratified.

from (Thompson 13-14)

Mosaic Covenant

Covenant and Passover for Today's Christian - 4

Further Reading / Viewing / Listening

- 'Covenant' by Bernhard W Anderson in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Eds Metzger and Coogan, OUP, 1993. pp 138-139. Also 'Passover' by Hayes.
- Podcast on Covenant
<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/language-faith-part-3-covenant/>
- Podcast on The Passover Meal
<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/matthew-p32-passover-meal/>
- Podcast on Passover / Last Supper
<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/messianic-passover/>
- Animal Sacrifices in the Bible and the Connection to Jesus
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/sacrifice-and-atonement/>
- Exodus overview (only 6 mins!)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jH_aojNJM3E

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