

## SERMON NOTES OF THE COVENANT KEEPING GOD

God's blessings upon you. Thank you for taking time to listen to this message:

### TITLE: THE COVENANT KEEPING GOD

MAIN TEXT: DEUTERONOMY 7:9

Let us begin by reading the main text, which I will do repeatedly throughout this sermon in the hope that God will impress on you this text to build up your faith and trust in Him, as faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Turning to Deut. 7:9:

"Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He is God, the Faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments."

#### Definition:

A covenant is literally an agreement or contract. In the Bible it is an agreement between God and His people, in which God makes promises to His people and, usually, requires certain conduct from them.

God is a COVENANT KEEPING GOD (Deut. 7:9). God is faithful to His covenants. If God has given an oath, He will not break it (Ps. 89:4), but unfortunately at times, many people who enter into a covenant often break it. In the **Old Testament**, God made covenant agreements with Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. And in the New Testament, God has made a covenant with as many who have trusted in Christ as Saviour. This sermon focuses on the following 3 covenants of God:

1. THE COVENANT WITH ISRAEL (Exodus 19-24; Deut. 5:2-22).
2. THE NEW COVENANT IN CHRIST'S BLOOD (Matt. 26:27; 1 Cor. 11:26).
3. THE COVENANT OF MARRIAGE (Mal. 2:14; Pro. 2:17).

### 1. THE COVENANT WITH ISRAEL

The Hebrews [the early Jewish people] experienced intermittent persecution because faithful Jewish people like Mordecai and Daniel's friends believed the first and most important commandment was that they must not **worship** or pay homage to any **god other** than the Lord (Esth. 3:1-5; Dan. 3:8-19). This refusal to worship idols of the kingdoms of the Middle East [as was the custom of the time], was seen as stubborn and was resented leading to anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism refers to prejudice and discrimination against Jews as individuals and as a group. Anti-Semitism is based on stereotypes and myths that target Jews as a people, their religious practices and beliefs, and the Jewish State of Israel.

Throughout history the Jews have suffered terrible atrocities, yet have survived and prospered. Why? Because the God of Israel is a covenant keeping God, Deut. 7:9:

“Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He is God, the Faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”

In the Bible, God established the Mosaic covenant with the Jewish people, the Israelites after He saved them from slavery in Egypt in the events recorded in Exodus (19-24). Moses led the Israelites into the promised land known as Canaan. The Mosaic covenant, found in Exodus 19–24 and the book of Deuteronomy, contains the foundations of the written Torah and the Oral Torah. In this covenant, God promises to make the Israelites his treasured possession among all people and "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," if they obey and follow His commandments. God loves Israel (1 King. 10:9; Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9:13), and God has blessed Israel (Gen. 12:3; Is. 62:6-7), and established a covenant with Israel through Abraham, Moses and king David.

The Abrahamic covenant between God and Israel is revealed in Gen. 17:10-14, turning to Gen. 17 v10-11, “This is My covenant which you shall keep between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.” Circumcision was a token of the covenant, and God promised to make Abraham the father of a great people and said that Abraham and his descendants must **obey** Him. In return God would guide them and protect them and give them the land of Israel. The obedience of God’s covenant people Israel was the crucial condition to the covenant promises fulfilled, and disobedience could result in disastrous consequences (Ex. 4:24-26). Moses was to lead God’s covenant people Israel by example, and accordingly, Moses’ personal life in obedience to God had to be in order before he could direct the spiritual lives of God’s covenant people. Moses had neglected to administer to his son the sacred rite of circumcision—the act that symbolized God’s covenant with His covenant people Israel. This failure almost cost Moses his life (see Ex. 4:24-26). Also, 1 & 2 Kings describes the history of the kings of Israel and Judah in light of God’s covenants. The theme of the books is that of the welfare of the people and the kings of Israel and Judah depended on their obedience to covenant obligations. However, Israel’s and Judah’s obedience to the covenant with God has clearly not always been the case [Is. 5:1-7, a parable comparing Israel to a disappointing vineyard].

When the nation and its king turned away from the requirements of the covenant with God, they experienced the covenant curses instead of the blessings. Defeat by enemies was listed in Deut. 28:25 as one of the curses that would come on Israel if she disobeyed the covenant. King Solomon’s prayer recorded in 1 King, reflects awareness of the covenant obligations the Lord had placed on His covenant people, he knew the consequences that disobedience would entail (1 King. 8:33-61), particularly the list of curses for covenant breaking found in Deuteronomy, which climax in forced exile from the land (Deut. 28:63-64; 29:25-28; 30:1-5; 1 King. 8:46; Lev. 26:33-45). In the history of God’s covenant people Israel and Judah, this eventually happened with respect to nineteen consecutive evil kings ruling in Israel [the northern kingdom] leading to captivity by Assyria (1 King. 17:7-32; 18:10-12), and with respect to Judah [the southern kingdom] occasional godly kings reformed the evil practices of their predecessors, but sin outweighed righteousness leading to captivity by Babylon (2 King. 21). But, particularly the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 resulted in exile for over 2000 years, before Israel

was once again declared a sovereign state in 1948. But Israel's failure to keep covenant obligations does not mean that there is no hope for the future. Why? Because the God of Israel is a covenant keeping God, and He remains faithful to Israel [read Deut. 7:9]:

"Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He is God, the Faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments."

The LORD spared Judah and its royal house the judgment He brought on the house of Ahab because of the covenant He had made with David (2 Sam. 7:16, 29; 2 Chr. 21:7), and therefore in 2 King. 11:1-3, the attempted evil scheme to completely destroy the house of David failed because God's redemptive plan centered in the Messiah, which the Davidic covenant promised (2 Sam. 7:11, 16; 1 King. 8:25). The Bible clearly reveals that God remains faithful to His covenants with Israel and David despite His covenant people's many failures to keep covenant obligations, and it is also by the power of God that the covenant people are able to keep His commandments. King Solomon grasped this apparent failure on the covenant people's side, he asked for a divine work of grace within the covenant people that would enable the entire nation to be faithful to the covenant (1 King. 8:58), as did Moses intercede on behalf of Israel in spite of their sin and asked the Lord to be merciful because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut. 32:12-14). In like-manner, as Christians, each one of us should not forget about God's covenant promises to Israel, as the Bible also encourages us to pray for Jerusalem and Israel's protection and peace (Ps. 122; 124), and also like the apostle Paul, let us desire a revival, a spiritual awakening of the soul of many more Israelites (Rom. 9:1-5). For the future remains open for a new work of God in the hearts of His covenant people Israel in faithfulness to His covenant promises to Israel through Abraham (2 King. 13:23), Moses (Exod. 19-24) and king David (2 Sam. 7:16), and also as revealed in the end time prophecies such as the seventy weeks prophecy, which due to time and the extensiveness of the subject we cannot get into right now.

And finally in regards to God's covenant with His covenant people Israel—the sun and moon represent a biblical truth in regards to God's faithfulness toward Israel—as long as these ordinances remain (Jer. 31:35-36; Gen. 8:22), it is God's intention to keep and fulfil covenant promises to His covenant people Israel (Jer. 31:31-36; Heb. 8:7-13; Rom. 11:26-27). As the Scripture reveals, "all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26-27). ALL ISRAEL saved refers to the once divided kingdom during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 King. 12:1-17; 2 Chr. 10:1-17), becoming one kingdom and nation under Christ's reign, and therefore, ALL ISRAEL reflects Israel as a whole, all the tribes of Israel united, just like when king David ruled over ALL ISRAEL (1 Chr. 28:4), David's greater Son (Christ) by grace through faith alone, He will save and also reign over ALL ISRAEL united under a Davidic King (Ezek. 37:22; Rom. 11:26-27), particularly those who respond in faith (Rom. 11:23-32). No other god has acted in history as has the God of Israel, performing miracles and directing the course of events so that His long-range covenant promises are fulfilled (Ex. 15:11; Deut. 4:39; 7:9; Ps. 86:8-10). For this reason, it is the view of many Bible commentators that God has not finished His work with Israel, despite the current rejection of Christ, there are Bible verses that seem to imply that there shall be a last great awakening of souls in Israel that shall lead onto a global awakening of souls prior to the Son of Man's [Christ] second coming (Mark 13:10-27; Matt. 24:14-31; Rev. 7:9-14; 14:14-16).

## 2. THE NEW COVENANT IN CHRIST'S BLOOD

The essence of the New Covenant is that [1] our sins are removed, remitted, or cancelled when we have trusted and believed in the Son [Christ]; [2] we have a Mediator who has established access to God; and [3] we are in a covenant relationship with God—we belong to God who has brought us into His family. Let us look at these 3 aspects of the New Covenant in more detail:

[1] Under the new covenant our sins are removed, remitted or cancelled. The Mosaic Covenant is generally called “the Old Covenant,” which reveals the nation of Israel struggling, and failing to keep its covenant obligations with God. The **New Covenant** shows the Son of Man [Christ] keeping the **covenant** for His people, doing what we cannot do. Theologian Martin Luther called the contrast between the two **covenants** law vs. gospel. Both the Old and New Covenants are the story of the same God, a God of love and mercy teaching His covenant people valuable lessons: particularly [1] God’s fatherly love in teaching His children the wisdom and importance of obedience to avoid the consequences of disobedience in the Old Covenant; and [2] God’s sovereign right to choose to save by grace alone (Rom. 9:11), and to deliver His people from the final penalty of sin through Christ in the New Covenant (Rom. 6:23). The New Covenant gives life – spiritual life by a new and better way (Heb. 10:19-20). The Old Covenant was for a specific people in a specific place and time. The New Covenant extends to the entire world: By calling this covenant “new,” does not abolish the “old,” but the new covenant supersedes the old covenant, in the sense that through new covenant the old is fulfilled and its purpose achieved (Heb. 8:13). The New Covenant in Christ’s blood is for the nation of Israel (Jer. 31:31-36; 1 Cor. 11:25), and for all nations and people who shall enter into the salvation aspects of that covenant because our dear Lord [Christ] shed His blood once and for all (Heb. 9:1).

Have you trusted in the Son [Christ] as your personal Saviour? Have you repented from sin? Has God done a work of grace in your heart? The doctrine of grace referred to as *the perseverance of the saints* is a teaching which refers to *once saved always saved*. But the question is are you genuinely saved? If you are genuinely saved and trusted in the blood of our dear Lord [Christ] for the remission of your sins, then continue in your salvation because God can be trusted to keep His part of the covenant. If God said it, He shall also do it (Num. 23:19). [As our main text in Deut. 7:9 also reveals]:

“Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He is God, the Faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”

[2] Under the new covenant we have a Mediator who has established access to God. This is what the Mediator, our dear Lord [Christ] said, “This cup is the **new covenant** in My **blood**, which is shed for you”; “drink from it, all of you”; “this do...in remembrance of me” (Mark 26:26-30; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:26; Mark 14:23). Our dear Lord [Christ] said the **new covenant** was ‘in’ His **blood**.” The Lord used the symbolism of His blood shed to communicate [1] His death on the cross, He became the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice whose blood has the power to pay and wash away sin forever, once and for all (Heb. 10:10; 1 Pet. 3:18), and [2] His blood establishes a new relationship between God and man (Heb. 10:19-22). Under the old Mosaic covenant, the Israelites were challenged to keep the law completely. Every person discovered that they could not keep God’s law because they were in fact

sinner (Gal. 3:24), and therefore could not directly approach God, even the Levites, though privileged as they were to minister before God, they were barred from the Most Holy Place, which only the high priest were permitted to enter the Most Holy Place (Heb. 9:6-8). The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place in the temple were first and foremost places that were set apart. God is Holy, which means He is to be set apart from all other so-called gods, and also separated from sin (Is. 45:5; 59:2). In a sense, the tearing of the veil—the curtains which set apart the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was symbolic of Christ Himself as the only way to the Father (John 14:6), now opening the way directly to God for every genuine repentant sinner (Heb. 9:3, 8; 10:19-22). Now the Mediator, our dear Lord [Christ] is our superior High Priest, and as believers in His finished work, we partake of His better priesthood. We can now boldly enter the Most Holy Place through Him. Hebrews 10:19-20 says, “we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Christ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body.” Here we see the image of the Mediator, our dear Lord’s [Christ] flesh being torn for us just as He was tearing the veil for us, and “the new covenant in His blood” refers to our dear Lord Christ entering the Most Holy Place once for all by His blood to establish a new relationship with God through Him (Heb. 9:12; 10:19-22).

[3] Under the new covenant we are in a covenant relationship with God—we belong to God who has brought us into His family. This is evident in the ordinance of Holy Communion. Christians, as members of the family of God partake of **Holy Communion** in remembrance of **the** body and blood of our dear Lord [Christ] that was torn and poured at **the** cross. Taking **Holy Communion** does not only remind us of His suffering, but also shows us **the** amount of love our dear Lord [Christ] has for all in a covenant relationship with Him—He is faithful and He can be trusted to keep His part of the covenant (Deut. 7:9), just as we share in His suffering, we shall also share in His glory in the future eternal kingdom to come (Luke 22:15-16). **Communion** literally means "sharing." It's breaking bread together. The word "**communion**" comes from King James Bible translation of the Greek word for "sharing" which Paul used in describing the taking of bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ. The Latin comes from a root word **meaning** participation by all. All are invited and welcomed. All are to celebrate in joy and thankfulness. All are fed. All are loved, forgiven, and reconciled. All are given the grace they need to live as citizens of God’s kingdom. The Lord delights in the members of the family of God partaking in Holy Communion (Luke 22:15-20). In it He reveals for us the goodness of God and enacts God’s covenant love for His children. Our dear Lord [Christ] gives Himself freely to all His children who “love Him, who earnestly repent of their sin, and seek to live in peace with one another.” As members of the family of God, we are to partake of Holy Communion often until the Lord returns (1 Cor. 11:26), particularly publicly (Act. 2:42), but also privately with other members of the family of God (Act. 2:46). Finally, Holy Communion is a wonderful privilege which reminds us that we are in a covenant relationship with God—we belong to God, and He is worthy of our praise and thanksgiving because He is a covenant keeping God (Deut. 7:9).

“Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He is God, the Faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”

### 3. THE COVENANT OF MARRIAGE

Five important biblical teachings to consider about MARRIAGE:

[1] Marriage is a union between a man and a woman who enter into a covenant [an agreement or contract] to live together as husband and wife (Gen. 2:24-25; Pro. 2:17; Ezek. 16:8).

[2] Marriage is often referred to as "holy matrimony" because marriage is holy [sacred, set apart or consecrated to God], and therefore is NOT to be thought of as a common or secular thing, but rather this holy union formed by a sacred ceremony or assembly before God (Mal. 2:14) represents three cords [husband, wife and God]—a close covenant relationship not easily broken (Eccl. 4:12).

[3] Marriage is a covenant relationship that is honourable (Heb. 13:4), and a covenant NOT to be entered into lightly or entered out of lightly because it is a lifelong relationship and companionship that enables the man and woman to become one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5; Mal. 2:14), both physically (1Cor. 7:3-5) and spiritually (1 Pet. 3:7), until death (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2). Hebrews 13:4 is also very helpful in regards to the covenant of marriage, let read it:

“Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed is undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Hebrews 13:4 helps us to understand that marriage is the only relationship whereby sexual relations is permitted, any sexual relation outside of the bond of marriage brings defilement because it involves fornication, and where there is no remorse or repentance from the guilty spouse, then after a certain period—God will judge (Rev. 2:21-22). It is clear that “fornication” is the sexual sin generally associated to the unmarried, and adultery is the sexual sin exclusively associated to the married. But the Bible reveals that it is possible for a married person to be involved in fornication (Hos. 1:2; 2:2-7; Ezek. 23:2-5; Mark 6:18), as according to Webster’s definition of “fornication,” it can be defined as consensual sexual intercourse between two persons not married to each other. And therefore, when a married person commits adultery, they also commit fornication in the process [and in so doing, the married man or woman allows fornication to enter into their marriage to break the marriage bond].

[4] There are certain customs and traditions attached to marriage, such as in some cultures parental consent is required and a bride price is paid by the bridegroom to the family of the bride in order to ratify the marriage (Gen. 24:53; 29:20-30; 34:12; Exo. 22:16-17; 1 Sam. 18:23-28; 2 Sam. 3:14). Many Bible commentators agree that one important message of the first recorded miracle of the Lord at a marriage was to endorse Christian marriage in the church (John 2:1-11). However, whether the sacred ceremony or assembly to form the marriage was [1] a church wedding, or [2] whether performed at a registry office, or [3] whether a traditional marriage—these 3 ways are equally approved and accepted by God to form a marriage in accordance with biblical teachings particularly if [1] vows are exchanged

[a verbal oath or agreement of commitment affirmed before God who is the main witness of the man and woman entering into a covenant - Mal. 2:14], and [2] there is a sexual encounter to consummate the marriage, so to fulfil the physical aspect of the "one flesh" principle (Gen. 2:22-24; Matt. 19:4-6). However, a verbal oath or vows exchanged to enter into a covenant is extremely important, evident in the biblical account of Israel's covenant with the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:1-27). It was a covenant foolishly entered into by the leaders of Israel. The Israelites should never have made such a covenant with this people. But they did so, and therefore the Israelites were obliged to keep this covenant. King Saul's actions were a violation of Israel's covenant with the Gibeonites, made nearly 400 years earlier, therefore the breaking of this covenant by king Saul's evil scheme and attempt to annihilate the Gibeonites resulted in God's judgment upon Israel by the means of a famine upon the land during king David's reign (2 Sam. 21:1-10). In like-manner, married couples must take heed to their vows and oaths in the covenant relationship with their spouse and God, because failure in doing so, particularly in regards to adultery and fornication violates the central requirement of the covenant relationship that husband and wife are to be "one flesh." "Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed is undefiled..." Therefore, any sexual relationship outside of the bond of marriage brings defilement (Gen. 49:4; 34:2, 13, 27; Deut. 24:1-4). Should husband or wife persist in covenant breaking conduct, it will bring upon itself its own destruction as God will judge adulterers and fornicators (Heb. 13:4). God is a COVENANT KEEPING GOD (Deut. 7:9). A genuine marriage is a marriage in which God is the third person in the covenant relationship, in a sense the Chief Cornerstone who holds everything together. What God has joined together; no man can put asunder. So, if God is for your covenant of marriage who can be against it?

[5] Finally, there is the legal commitment to consider [before any written legal marriage contract which is very important in modern marriages], the marriage covenant [contract or agreement] that the husband and wife enter into is founded on the marriage law at the beginning. Marriage is God's institution—THE ORIGINAL PLAN for the covenant of marriage was universal in application to all people. God established marriage at the beginning (Matt. 19:4-6) for primarily the following 3 reasons: [1] a covenant of lifelong commitment and companionship (Gen. 2:18), which may include the right to financial support or sharing financial affairs (Pro. 24:3-4; Act. 20:35); [2] a covenant for procreation in order to acquire godly off-springs (Mal. 2:15), and the right in sharing parental responsibilities (Pro. 22:6; Eph. 6:4); and [3] particularly a covenant to prevent fornication (1 Cor. 7:1-5)—and have the right to enjoy sexual relations with spouse (Pro. 5:18-20; Son. 5:1; 7:1-13). Marriage was God's idea, it was God who brought the woman to Adam (Gen. 2:22), so that the two may be joined as husband and wife, and Adam was in agreement, evident by his verbal oath and commitment to become one flesh with his wife (Gen. 2:23-24).

In summary, GOD is a COVENANT KEEPING GOD (Deut. 7:9), in the first heading we spoke about His faithfulness to His COVENANT WITH ISRAEL, and how we can learn from the examples of the likes of the apostle Paul who desired a spiritual awakening in Israel. In like-manner, let us remember to pray for Israel's peace and protection, but particularly pray for a renewal of allegiance to the Lord through the second heading which was THE NEW COVENANT IN CHRIST'S BLOOD for Israel and for all nations and people who shall enter into the salvation aspects of the new covenant, so that [1] our sins are removed through our dear Lord [Christ] shed blood once and for all (Heb. 9:1); [2] we have access to the Holy God through the Mediator, the Lord [Christ]; and [3] we are in a covenant relationship with God and have the privilege of partaking in Holy Communion. And the third and final heading was THE COVENANT OF MARRIAGE. God is a COVENANT KEEPING GOD (Deut. 7:9), He is faithful to THE

COVENANT OF MARRIAGE between a man and woman. A genuine marriage is a marriage in which God is the third Person in the covenant relationship, the One who holds everything together. What God has joined together; no man can put asunder. So, if God is for your covenant of marriage who can be against it? Therefore, if you have entered into the salvation aspects of the new covenant in Christ's blood, or if you have entered into the covenant of marriage, or both—then strive to observe covenant obligations, so to walk in trust and obedience to God, in the knowledge that God will do His part and will always be faithful to His covenants.

Let us end by reading Deut. 7:9 again:

“Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He is God, the Faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”

I hope this message has been helpful, and may God bless you richly.