

Ezra & Nehemiah; Lesson 8 God and the Covenant

Our mission; Nehemiah 10:1–39

Memory Verse

Nehemiah 9:38; 10:39b, (NKJV) “ *And because of all this, we make a sure covenant and write it; our leaders, our Levites, and our priests seal it. We will not neglect the house of our God*”.

The Idea of the Covenant

Covenant; a usually formal, solemn, and binding written agreement: compact or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.

Marriage is a covenant; Baptism Is a covenant

Nehemiah 9:36–38 (NKJV) “*Here we are, servants today! And the land that You gave to our fathers, To eat its fruit and its bounty, Here we are, servants in it!*³⁷ *And it yields much increase to the kings You have set over us, Because of our sins; Also they have dominion over our bodies and our cattle At their pleasure; And we are in great distress.*³⁸ *And because of all this, We make a sure covenant and write it; Our leaders, our Levites, and our priests seal it.*”

Nehemiah 10:1–27 contains just the names of the leaders who signed the document. Four classes here seal. Nehemiah first, as their governor. And after him, secondly, The priests, Neh 10:2-8. Thirdly, The Levites, Neh 10:9-13. Fourthly, The chiefs of the people, Neh 10:14-27. Ezra is notably missing.

- Not every American signed the Declaration of Independence but the duly elected representatives of the people. These are the recognized and respected leaders of the remnant that came back.

Nehemiah 10:1, 2 (NKJV) *Now those who placed their seal on the document were: Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah, Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,...*

Nehemiah 12:1 (NKJV) *Now these are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,*

Nehemiah 10:14 *The leaders of the people: Parosh,...*

Ezra 2:3 (NKJV) *the people of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two;*

Covenants in History

After the Flood, God began again, now with Noah and the people who came afterward. With them, too, He sought a relationship, and central to that relationship was the idea of covenant. The Bible identifies seven major covenants that God has made with people:

First Covenant—Adam (Genesis 1–3)

Second Covenant—Noah (Genesis 6–9)

Genesis 9:14–17 (NKJV) *It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud;¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.*

¹⁶ *The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”*¹⁷ *And God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.”*

Third Covenant—Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3)

Fourth Covenant—Mosaic Covenant; Exodus 19–24

Joshua renews the covenant. (Joshua 24)

Fifth Covenant—Phinehas (Num. 25:10–13)

Sixth Covenant—David (2 Sam. 7:5–16)

Seventh Covenant—New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34)

Covenantal Structure

The whole book of Deuteronomy is written in the form of a covenant, because Moses invites God’s people to renew covenant relationship with their God. (1) preamble (Deut. 1:1–5); (2) historical prologue (Deut. 1:6–4:43); (3) stipulations or laws (Deut. 4:44–26:19); (4) blessings and curses (Deuteronomy 27–30); (5) witnesses (Deut. 30:19); and finally, (6) special provision (Deut. 31:9–13).

Leviticus 7:34 *For the wave breast and the heave shoulder have I taken of the children of Israel from off the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them unto Aaron the priest and unto his sons by a statute for ever from among the children of Israel. (22 times).*

Genesis 17:13 (NKJV) *He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.*

1 Corinthians 7:19 (NKJV) *Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.*

Depending on the language, A covenant that is violated is void.

Hebrews 8:7–13 (NKJV) For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ⁸ Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—⁹ not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” ¹³ **In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.**

A covenant can also be nullified by the death of one party.

Romans 7:2–3 (NKJV) For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. ³ So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Pledges

1. No mixed marriages that could lead one into idolatry,
2. True Sabbath observance (no buying or selling),
3. Debt cancelation and sabbatical year observance to care for the poor and give them freedom,
4. Financially supporting the temple, its services, and personnel through bringing the firstfruits, the firstborn, and the tithe, thus ensuring the continuation of true worship.

Nehemiah 10:30–31 (NKJV) We would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons; ³¹ if the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day; and we would forego the seventh year’s produce and the exacting of every debt.

Nehemiah 13:15–17 (NKJV) In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions. Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, “What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day?”

Leviticus 25:3–7 (NKJV) Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; ⁴ but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. ⁵ What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. ⁶ And the sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, ⁷ for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land—all its produce shall be for food.

2 Chronicles 36:20–21 (NKJV) And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, ²¹ to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

The Temple

The firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem; that is, take the redemption price for it, which was five shekels, as in Numbers 18:16;

Exodus 23:19 (NKJV) The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.

Numbers 18:12–13 (NKJV) “All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the Lord, I have given them to you. ¹³ Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.