

God's big picture

"I the Lord do not change"

Malachi 3:6

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.

Hebrews 13:8

1. In what ways is it reassuring to know that God doesn't change?

Read Genesis 12:1-3; 15:5-6 & 18-20; 17:1-11

Covenant

A covenant is an agreement or pact between two parties. Covenant is a huge theme throughout the Bible. A Biblical covenant always originates with God (e.g. *'I will establish my covenant'*, Gen 6:18) and in this sense it is **one-sided in establishment**, but it is mutual or **two-sided in accomplishment**.

God promises to be faithful to his covenant (e.g. Deuteronomy 4:31) and although God makes a number of covenants¹, their essence is summarised by the statement: ***'I will be your God and you will be my people'***². Although there are several covenants in the Old Testament, both OT and NT writers regard them as one covenant ('The Old Covenant', 2Corinthians 2:14). The Israelites in OT times repeatedly fail to benefit from the full blessings of their covenant relationship with God by failing to live according to God's covenant laws.

2. From the above Genesis verses, what are the features of God's covenant through Abram/Abraham?

3. To whom do the covenant promises apply?

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:7-13

4. So why the 'New' Covenant !?

5. What are the features of the New Covenant?

6. To whom do the New Covenant promises apply?

7. What aspects of God's **character** remain unchanged from Old Testament to New Testament, Old Covenant to New Covenant?

In last week's sermon and study (***'I can't believe in a God who...'***) and in this week's we have been thinking about the big picture of how God, staying true to his character, has dealt with sinful human beings.

¹ e.g. through Noah, Genesis 8-9; through Abraham, Genesis 12-17; through David, 2 Samuel 7; through Jesus, 1 Corinthians 11:25

² Genesis 17:7; Exodus 6:7; 2Corinthians 6:16-18; Revelation 21:2-3

In an episode of the TV show 'The West Wing', Presidential candidate Arnie Vinick is talking with President Jed Bartlett:

Vinick: "One Christmas my wife gave me a very old edition of the King James Bible --- 17th century. It was a real find for a book collector. It was a thrill just to hold it. Then I read it."

Bartlett: [chuckles]. "You can't take it literally."

Vinick: "Yeah, that's what my priest friends kept telling me. But the more I read it, the less I could believe. I could not believe there was a God that said the penalty for working on the Sabbath was death. I couldn't believe there was a God who said the penalty for adultery was death."

Bartlett: "I'm more of a New Testament man, myself."

Vinick: "I couldn't believe there was a God who had no penalty for slavery. The Bible has no problem with slavery at all. Lincoln could have used a little help from the Bible."

Bartlett: "You think Lincoln was an atheist?"

Vinick: "I hope not. That would mean all his references to God were just purely political."

Bartlett: "He didn't make any until he started running for office."

Vinick: "No, and he certainly was a doubter."

Bartlett: "How about you?"

Vinick: "You going to try and save my soul?"

Bartlett: "Sorry."

Vinick: "Let's just say I struggled for a long time with that book and then finally, I just gave up the struggle."

8. If you were involved in their discussion, what would you say to them?

TC 13-xi-15

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