

Koinonia week 5

Question: "What are the covenants in the Bible?"

Answer: The Bible speaks of seven different covenants, four of which (Abrahamic, Palestinian, Mosaic, Davidic) God made with the nation of Israel. Of those four, three are unconditional in nature; that is, regardless of Israel's obedience or disobedience, God still will fulfill these covenants with Israel. One of the covenants, the Mosaic Covenant, is conditional in nature. That is, this covenant will bring either blessing or cursing depending on Israel's obedience or disobedience. Three of the covenants (Adamic, Noahic, New) are made between God and mankind in general, and are not limited to the nation of Israel.

The Adamic Covenant can be thought of in two parts: the Edenic Covenant (innocence) and the Adamic Covenant (grace) (Genesis 3:16-19). The Edenic Covenant is found in Genesis 1:26-30; 2:16-17. The Edenic Covenant outlined man's responsibility toward creation and God's directive regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Adamic Covenant included the curses pronounced against mankind for the sin of Adam and Eve, as well as God's provision for that sin (Genesis 3:15).

The Noahic Covenant was an unconditional covenant between God and Noah (specifically) and humanity (generally). After the Flood, God promised humanity that He would never again destroy all life on earth with a Flood (see Genesis chapter 9). God gave the rainbow as the sign of the covenant, a promise that the entire earth would never again flood and a reminder that God can and will judge sin (2 Peter 2:5).

Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3, 6-7; 13:14-17; 15; 17:1-14; 22:15-18). In this covenant, God promised many things to Abraham. He personally promised that He would make Abraham's name great (Genesis 12:2), that Abraham would have numerous physical descendants (Genesis 13:16), and that he would be the father of a multitude of nations (Genesis 17:4-5). God also made promises regarding a nation called Israel. In fact, the geographical boundaries of the Abrahamic Covenant are laid out on more than one occasion in the book of Genesis (12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21). Another provision in the Abrahamic Covenant is that the families of the world will be blessed through the physical line of Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). This is a reference to the Messiah, who would come from the line of Abraham.

Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10). The Palestinian Covenant, or Land Covenant, amplifies the land aspect that was detailed in the Abrahamic Covenant. According to the terms of this covenant, if the people disobeyed, God would cause them to be scattered around the world (Deuteronomy 30:3-4), but He would eventually restore the nation (verse 5). When the nation is restored, then they will obey Him perfectly (verse 8), and God will cause them to prosper (verse 9).

Mosaic Covenant (Deuteronomy 11; et al.). The Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant that either brought God's direct blessing for obedience or God's direct cursing for disobedience upon the nation of Israel. Part of the Mosaic Covenant was the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the rest of the Law, which contained over 600 commands—roughly 300 positive and 300 negative. The history books of the Old Testament (Joshua–Esther) detail how Israel succeeded at obeying the Law or how Israel failed miserably at obeying the Law. Deuteronomy 11:26-28 details the blessing/cursing motif.

Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:8-16). The Davidic Covenant amplifies the “seed” aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. The promises to David in this passage are significant. God promised that David's lineage would last forever and that his kingdom would never pass away permanently (verse 16). Obviously, the Davidic throne has not been in place at all times. There will be a time, however, when someone from the line of David will again sit on the throne and rule as king. This future king is Jesus (Luke 1:32-33).

New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The New Covenant is a covenant made first with the nation of Israel and, ultimately, with all mankind. In the New Covenant, God promises to forgive sin, and there will be a universal knowledge of the Lord. Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17) and create a new covenant between God and His people. Now that we are under the New Covenant, both Jews and Gentiles can be free from the penalty of the Law. We are now given the opportunity to receive salvation as a free gift (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Within the discussion of the biblical covenants, there are a few issues that Christians are not agreed upon. First, some Christians think that all of the covenants are conditional in nature. If the covenants are conditional, then Israel failed miserably at fulfilling them. Others believe that the unconditional covenants have yet to be totally fulfilled and, regardless of Israel's disobedience, will come to fruition sometime in the future. Second, how does the church of Jesus Christ relate to the covenants? Some believe that the

church fulfills the covenants and God will never deal with Israel again. **This is called replacement theology and has little scriptural evidence.**

Others believe that the church initially or partially will fulfill these covenants. While many of the promises towards Israel are still in the future, many believe that the church shares in the covenants in some way. Others believe that the covenants are for Israel and for Israel alone, and that the church has no part in these covenants.

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Here we can briefly review the week 4 curriculum for more details on the Calvary Chapel position and the scriptural support found in in sectionC

>>>>>>the church is completely different and distinct from Israel (dispensationalism/premillennialism). (Calvary Chapel view)

Question: "What is Christian ethics?" (Have folks in the group take turns reading the scriptures as we get to them in the answer below)

Answer: Christian ethics is well summarized by Colossians 3:1-6: "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming."

While more than just a list of "do's" and "don'ts," the Bible does give us detailed instructions on how we should live. The Bible is all we need to know about how to live the Christian life. However, the Bible does not explicitly cover every situation we will face in our lives. How then is it sufficient for the all the ethical dilemmas we face? That is where Christian ethics comes in.

Science defines ethics as "a set of moral principles, the study of morality." Therefore, Christian ethics would be the principles derived from the Christian faith by which we act. While God's Word may not cover every situation we face throughout our lives, its principles give us the standards by which we must conduct ourselves in those situations where there are no explicit instructions.

For example, the Bible does not say anything explicitly about the use of illegal

drugs, yet based on the principles we learn through Scripture, we can know that it is wrong. For one thing, the Bible tells us that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and that we should honor God with it (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Knowing what drugs do to our bodies "the harm they cause to various organs" we know that by using them we would be destroying the temple of the Holy Spirit. That is certainly not honoring to God. The Bible also tells us that we are to follow the authorities that God Himself has put into place (Romans 13:1). Given the illegal nature of the drugs, by using them we are not submitting to the authorities but are rebelling against them. Does this mean if illegal drugs were legalized it would be ok? Not without violating the first principle.

By using the principles we find in Scripture, Christians can determine the ethical course for any given situation. In some cases it will be simple, like the rules for Christian living we find in Colossians, chapter 3. In other cases, however, we need to do a little digging. The best way to do that is to pray over God's Word. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer, and part of His role is teaching us how to live: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). "As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit" just as it has taught you, remain in him" (1 John 2:27). So, when we pray over Scripture, the Spirit will guide us and teach us. He will show us the principles we need to stand on for any given situation.

While God's Word does not cover every situation we will face in our lives, it is all-sufficient for living a Christian life. For most things, we can simply see what the Bible says and follow the proper course based on that. In ethical questions where Scripture does not give explicit instructions, we need to look for principles that can be applied to the situation. We must pray over His Word, and open ourselves to His Spirit. The Spirit will teach us and guide us through the Bible to find the principles on which we need to stand so we may live as a Christian should.

Question: "Why should the Bible be our source for morality?"

Answer: If the Bible isn't the Christian's source for morality, then the question needs to be asked, "What should be?" The Christian worldview is based on two foundational axioms: 1) God exists, and 2) God has spoken to us in the Bible. If these two presuppositions aren't the starting point in a Christian worldview, then we're just like everyone else, trying to find objectivity in a sea

of subjectivity.

According to the Bible, man was created in God's image. Part of that image makes man a moral being. We are moral agents who make moral choices and are able to differentiate between right and wrong. The basis upon which we differentiate between right and wrong is our knowledge of God's law, and that knowledge comes from two sources—revelation and conscience. Revelation is self-explanatory. God gave a commandment to Adam and Eve in the Garden. He gave Ten Commandments to the Israelites after the exodus in Sinai, and Jesus boiled those Ten Commandments down to two essential commandments—love God and love your neighbor. All of these represent God's revelation of His law, which is simply a reflection of His moral character to His people.

The Bible also says that God wrote His law on our hearts (Romans 2:15). This is conscience. In other words, even without God's revelation in the commandments, we intuitively know God's law based on the fact that we were created in His image. However, due to the fall (Genesis 3), that image is marred and disfigured, including our conscience. So even though we know God's law through our conscience, we tend to distort it to our advantage. That is why we need revelation.

The Bible, which contains God's revealed moral will in His law and commandments, is His revelation to His people. As such, the Bible becomes our source of morality because the Bible is the very Word of God in written form (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). If the Christian wants to know God's will, he turns to the Bible. If the Christian wants to discern right from wrong, he turns to the Bible.

What happens if the Christian doesn't turn to the Bible as his or her source for morality? There are many ways to answer this question, but the bottom line is we all tend to trust our conscience, whether implicitly or explicitly. The human conscience can be likened to an alarm system; it warns us when we transgress our moral standard. The catch is our conscience is only as good as the moral standard that informs it. If it's not the Bible, then we inevitably inform our conscience by various other means.

The current reigning "competitor" to biblical morality in our society is *social consensus*. In other words, our morality is shaped and changed by the culture around us. It should be easy to see that if social consensus is our moral compass, then we have built our morality on a foundation of shifting sand.

Social consensus is just that—a consensus. It's a picture of the general social mores of the day. A generation or two ago, homosexuality, divorce, and adultery were still not accepted, even considered sinful. Nowadays, both homosexuality and divorce are normal and adultery isn't as stigmatized as it once was. Basically, what we have with social consensus is what happened to the Israelites a couple generations after conquering the Promised Land: "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). The people abandoned God, and within two generations they were doing what was evil in the sight of God.

So why should the Bible be our source for morality? Because without it, we are like ships adrift at sea. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord said these words: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built His house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock" (Matthew 7:24-25). The Word of God, the Bible, is the only rock upon which to build morality.