

Week 3: In the Beginning

God did it: The Contract

There is nothing written down or in the mind that is not a contract. I have a child and in my mind, I have a picture of how they should behave. I have a wife and expect certain things from her. I take a job and they expect certain things from me. Some of these things are our expectations and others are written down in a contract.

1. Below write out a few expectations you desire from your peers. It could be children, bosses, or a spouse. We all expect something.

I will keep repeating it because it stands out all over the Bible. God did it. It's a weird scenario because people make choices, yet God's plan continues regardless. God made people and they disobey his command. God works out a plan with Noah and only the family survives. Cain kills Abel. People build a tower. God scatters the people and puts a simple divider between them: words. Yet, God is not done.

In the first 11 chapters, we have chronologically half the Bible done. Time spent is closely equal to what remains, and a lot remains. From this point forward God yet again focuses on a person and a family. That family builds a nation and religion. The creation account is vague and broad. The Flood is massive but very little information is left. It's so easy to add to the story with logic and wandering minds. Yet, what remains is a man named Abram and a contract with God.

These are just some of the questions that come up with all this boring talk about laws and covenants. Some of the most dragged out reading is found between God and the people. Why do we need laws and covenants? Again, it comes back to *God did it*. From chapter 12 of Genesis forward we find God making a pack with Abram. If you notice, it's God who seals the deal. God approaches Abram, Moses, and even King David in later stories to seal a deal. A contract.

1. What types of contracts have you made? (ex. Spouse, boss)
2. What is a contract to you?
3. What is a covenant?
4. Do you agree that we need laws?
5. Is a commandment something to be feared?

It's easy to dismiss these laws and commands, yet our whole society is built off of the words written here. Do not steal. Do not murder. We make contracts with landlords, bosses, and purchases. This place in the Bible is the beginning of the negotiation between us and God. This is his creation. Yet, God will talk with us about the right way to live. Laws are for the good of us all. Far too many people feel they are restrictive and harsh. What happens with the absent of law? It's called chaos, disorder, and mayhem.

The cool part is the conversation. Several times the characters in the Bible talk and negotiate with God. The God we hear about is mean, over bearing, and angry all the time. That is not the real God. God is love but he is more than love. God is angry but more than just angry. Isn't that us in a nut shell. Someone has to set rules and guidelines. Isn't that what real government was built on. Below is a snapshot of some of the laws and contracts between us and God.

Next week's reading: Read the verses below for next week with these questions in mind.

1. You have papers that say you own your house. You have a copy of a contract between your business and you. These contracts set guidelines on how you will be treated and what is expected from the owner and the worker. God says to Noah two things that he is very consistent with. One is that we are to go forth and multiply. God created us so that we could create others. It's all about family. The second is a sign. In chapter 9 God makes a covenant with Noah by creating a rainbow. Again, *God did it.*

Gen 9:1 *"God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."*

Genesis 9:12-15 *"God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh."*

2. Abram in chapter 12 begins his relationship with the unknown God. Abram comes from a land of many Gods. It would have been tough for him to leave his family, land, and ways to follow a God he barely knows. God slowly proves himself and teaches Abram about God and himself. Again, God makes a covenant with this man and all the future generations by saying go fourth and

multiply. We look at contracts and laws as final and binding. Did you notice God said *he will* in the contract? He never asked anything of us in these contracts.

Genesis 12:1-2 *“Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”*

Genesis 15:5 *“He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”*

3. Through the ages God guides Abram towards maturity. Even at an old age Abram had a lot to learn. Then God changed Abram’s name to Abraham. Again, the focus shifts from one man and his descendants to another man in that line: Moses. There is also another shift. God says to Moses he is the same God of Abraham. I believe that was intentional. Remember God asked them to go forth and multiply. The covenant between God and Abram was to be extended to all his offspring. That is clarified to Moses by God. In Moses day, there were many Gods. I think Moses hid his face because he knew of that God of Abram. That God had a reputation as powerful.

Exodus 3:6 *“He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.”*

4. Again, God asks his people to Go forth. God confirms his covenant with the descendants of Abraham. What we are really seeing here is a story of God and his people. We are also seeing a glimpse of Gods character. From Noah to Moses is a commitment, covenant, and promise to see it through to the end. What end? The God message is that *God did it*. The continuation of that message is that *God is still doing it* generations later.

Exodus 33:1 *“The Lord said to Moses, “Go, leave this place, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, and go to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, “To your descendants I will give it.”*
Leviticus 26:9 *“I will look on you with favor and make you fruitful and increase your numbers, and I will keep my covenant with you.*

The Jesus Connection

The Jesus connection can be tricky. I know many Bible scholars that do what is called apologetics. It is proving that God exists. It is proving Jesus is in the Old Testament. I really don’t like it. It takes away from what God is trying to do and say. The Gospel message is called the good news. What is that? It’s that God is here and God is not done. That is the consistent message from God right from the beginning. He could have toasted Adam and Eve. He could have killed Satan. Yet, here we are today. The descendants of Adam still exist. Satan and his fallen angels are still here. So what is the Jesus connection?

Matthew 1:23 *“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).*

Isaiah 7:17 *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you[c] a sign: The virgin[d] will conceive and give birth to a son, and[e] will call him Immanuel.”*

God promised to be with them. In the Old Testament God repeated time and again he will rescue them. He has a plan. The prophets and scriptures are just stories and words on a page. To many that is just what they are. Fun reading and interesting arguments. Yet, throughout history the God of the Hebrews remains. Do the Gods of Egypt remain? Do the Gods of the Aztecs remain? Yet, this Jewish/ Christian God remains. He said he would be with us. Emanuel is a title or name given to a leader like president. It means God is with us. Jesus means savior. The coming of God's son to earth is by design.

Matthew 28:19-20 *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

This is the connection given to Eve that her offspring will crush the serpents head. It is the covenant to Noah, Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, King David, and even Mary the mother of Jesus. Jesus is asking the disciples to multiply, he is asking them to go to the ends of the earth. He is saying this process will never stop even until the end of time. I hinted before that Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God the father was all there in the beginning. The message is also that they will be there at the end of time too. There is more going on than meets the eye in this Bible story between God and his creation. That is the Jesus connection.