

THINKING IT THROUGH:

1. After being banished from the garden, what laws did God give man for the first two thousand years?
2. What were the two aspects of the first covenant which God made with Abram?
3. Most covenants contain an “if” and a “then” clause; what are their purposes?
4. What was Israel’s penalty for breaking their covenant with God?
5. What is the purpose of God’s Law in today’s society?
6. What are the terms of the new covenant?
7. When did the new covenant take effect?
8. What replaced God’s Law, and how is it better?

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

A Covenant is

Day 1: Read the narrative of Noah, Genesis 9:1-17. What did you learn about a covenant?

Day 2: Read the narrative of Abram, Genesis 12:1-9. What did you learn about Abram’s covenant?

Day 3: Read the narrative of Abraham, Genesis 17. What did you learn about Abraham’s covenant?

Day 4: Read the narrative of Moses, Leviticus 26. What did you learn about Israel’s covenant?

Day 5: Read the illustration found in Galatians 4:21-32. What did you learn about the two covenants?

Day 6: Read the prophecy found in Hebrews 8:6-13. Who failed the first covenant, and how did the new covenant rectify its problems?

Day 7: Read the narrative of Cornelius, Acts 10. What did you learn about the two covenants?

Memory verse:

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-- not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 3:6

Lesson 8

An Eternal Contract

THREE DISTINCT ERAS

We can speak of faith, grace, and salvation as free gifts, but does God expect something from man? If we divide the six thousand years of man's history as determined by the genealogies found in the Scripture, we find that they are divided into three distinct eras: the era of conscience, the era of Law, and the era of grace. Each one lasted about two thousand years. The first two thousand years of man's history began with the fall in the garden of Eden and continued through the time of Noah when man lived by his **conscience**. The second two thousand year period of man's history, started with Abraham and ended with Christ's resurrection, when God's people lived by **Law**. It was during this era that God revealed His will to man in the form of a written code, which man had to keep in order to share in the blessings of God. The final two thousand year period of man's history, when God's people live by **grace**, began with Christ's resurrection and will end with His return. As previously studied, grace empowers God's people to become like Him. Since there are three different ways (conscience, Law, and grace) that God has dealt with man, people might accuse God of changing. To answer this accusation, let me use an example. When my first child was born, I did not give him much freedom because he was still without the ability to reason. When he was unsupervised, he was contained within a crib or a playpen, and when he was allowed to roam free, he was constantly supervised. It would have been irresponsible for me to tell my toddler, "I am going out for a while, and I have left directions on the fridge for feeding yourself and changing your diaper; I hope to be back before bedtime." Since he could not read or understand my directions, they would have been meaningless. However, when my child was eight

claim that they were given a revelation by an angel. This is contrary to the Scripture:

*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, **if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!** (Ga.1:8-9 NASB)*

An angel may have spoken to them, but since their message is different from the one found in the New Testament, the angel was not from God:

*For such persons are false apostles, deceitful workers, **masquerading as apostles of Christ**. And no wonder, **for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light**. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also **masquerade as servants of righteousness**. Their end will be what their actions deserve. (2Co.11:13-15 TNIV)*

Just because an angel claims to be from God, it does not mean that he is from God:

*Anyone **who goes too far** and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and **does not bring this teaching**, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting **participates in his evil deeds**. (2Jn.1:9-11 NASB)*

The final book in the Bible, Revelation, reveals the end of the world but does not mention another covenant between God and man:

*I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues** which are written in this book; and **if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life** and from the holy city, which are written in this book. (Re.22:18-19 NASB)*

Therefore, Jesus ushered in God's final covenant with man. If anyone would like to suggest another gospel or revelation contrary to that of Christ, He will be eternally condemned.

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus **Christ for the forgiveness of your sins**. And **you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Ac.2:38-39 TNIV)

Therefore, all Christians are under another covenant, a new and better covenant which is far superior to anything that man has ever experienced.

AN EVERLASTING COVENANT

There have been many false prophets who claim to be the next Messiah and claim to have the last revelation of God. Jesus warned us of them:

*He replied, "Don't let anyone mislead you, for **many** will come in my name, **claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and saying, 'The time has come!'** But don't believe them.* (Lk.21:8 NLT)

The best known of these would be Mohammad and his religion of Islam. Mohammad claimed to be the last prophet of God:

*Then if anyone tells you, '**Look, here is the Messiah,**' or 'There he is,' don't believe it. **For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones. See, I have warned you about this ahead of time.*** (Mt.24:23-25 NLT)

Jesus never taught that there was another covenant. However, in the Old Testament, God foretold of the next covenant with many prophecies to define what it would look like:

*I will make **an everlasting covenant** with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and **I will inspire** them to fear me, **so that they will never turn away** from me.* (Jer.32:40 NIV)

Since no other covenant was foretold in the New Testament, those claiming to be the last prophet are false. We are continually being warned in Scripture:

*But **false prophets** also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who **will secretly bring in destructive opinions**. They will even **deny the Master** who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.* (2Pe 2:1 NRSV)

Many of today's cults (i.e., Muslims, Mormons, and Jehovah Witnesses) deny that Jesus is God. They were started by men who

years old, I could leave him alone in the yard or house for periods of time. He could go to his friend's house for the day because I knew he could reason between right and wrong. He had learned the rules, as well as, the punishment expected should he violate the rules. Usually, he did as expected, but there were moments of distraction and temptation in which he would break the rules. Dependant upon the severity of the offense, an appropriate discipline was given. As he matured and the more responsible he proved himself to be, the greater the freedom he enjoyed. However, when he failed, he lost his freedom in a form of discipline, referred to as "being grounded." At the age of seventeen, my son proved himself to be responsible. Not only did we allow him to go out for the day without any contact with us, but we also allowed him the right to use our car. Now to drive a car requires great self-control. One has to pay attention to the surroundings and the car's speed. A car is also a huge investment, the loss of which would have a profound financial effect on the family. One might claim that I had changed over the years; however, I did not. What changed was the ability and maturity of my son. My relationship with my son had changed to reflect what he had learned. It is with this understanding that we examine the three eras of man. My son as a baby illustrates the age of conscience, when God did not give any laws because man had no understanding; however, there was consequence for sin. My son as a child illustrates the age of law, when God gave basic laws because man had a minimal reasoning; however, there was personal consequence for sin. My son as a teenager represents the age of grace, when God fully communicated His will through His Spirit and man knew Him intimately; however, the consequence for sin was experienced in the loss of rights. Many unbelievers accuse God of change, but the Bible teaches that He cannot and will not change:

*God is not a human being, that he should lie, or **a mortal, that he should change his mind**. Has he promised, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?* (Nu.23:19 NRSV)

God does not change, but as mankind came to understand who they were, God's relationship with man changed to reflect that understanding. Therefore, let us consider the changes that took place in the relationship between God and man under the three distinct eras.

THE ERA OF CONSCIENCE

For the first two thousand years, God did not give mankind any laws, whereby, men would know how to live. Yet in spite of this, in the first generation after the fall, we find humanity being divided into two types of people: those with faith and those without faith:

It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. (He.11:4 NLT)

Cain was very aware that his life was not pleasing to God; in fact, God addressed this issue with him:

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? **If you do what is right**, will you not be accepted? But **if you do not do what is right**, sin is crouching at your door; **it desires to have you, but you must master it.**" (Ge.4:6-7 NIV)

Cain did not heed God's warning. One day Cain was overcome by sin and killed Abel. Cain eliminated the only man of faith living on the earth at that time. Not even Adam was a man of faith, for we read:

Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him." **To Seth, to him also a son was born;** and he called his name Enosh. **Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD.** (Ge.4:25-26 NASB)

Adam was created as an adult in the image and likeness of God. When he had children, he passed on both his likeness and image to his offspring. One hundred thirty years later, when Seth was born, man began to call on the name of the Lord:

When **Adam had lived one hundred thirty years**, he became the father of **a son in his likeness, according to his image**, and named him Seth. (Ge.5:3 NRSV)

Even though the Bible tells us that with Seth men began to call on the name of the Lord, not everyone born of Seth had the faith of his father. It wasn't until Seth was 105 years old that he became the father of Enosh (Ge.5:6), who also was a man of faith. When Enosh was 90 years old, he finally had a son named Kenan, who shared his faith (Ge.5:9). When Kenan was 70 years old, he finally had a son named Mahalalel, who shared his faith (Ge.5:12). When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he finally had a son named Jared, who shared his faith

sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, **in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us**, who do not live according to the sinful nature but **according to the Spirit.** (Ro.8:3-4 NIV; He.7:18-19; Eph.2:14-15)

The first covenant of the Law with its animal sacrifices did nothing to enable us to live holy lives. It is only through Christ and by the indwelling of His Spirit that our consciences can be clean before God:

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them **so that they are outwardly clean.** How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse **our consciences from acts that lead to death**, so that we may serve the living God! **For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant**, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance— now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (He.9:13-15 NIV)

The new covenant promises to give us the ability to keep the covenant, with complete dependence upon God:

Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from **God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant**, not of letter but **of spirit**; for the letter kills, but **the Spirit gives life.** (2Co.3:5-6 NRSV)

Under the old covenant, man had to remember the Law that was written on stone and then personally apply it to their lives. Now with the new covenant, God writes His laws in our minds and on our hearts through the presence of the Spirit and He empowers us to live His way:

"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 into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts.** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'know the Lord,' **for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them.** For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." (He.8:10-12 NASB)

God writes His laws on our minds when we repent and writes them on our hearts through baptism. For this reason, our **"if"** terms are to repent and be baptized; **"then"** He forgives us our sins and gives us the Holy Spirit:

*Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.** For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, **not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law** until all is accomplished.* (Mt.5:17-18 NASB)

The Law is in effect today to convict us that we are sinners; however, knowing God's Law has never empowered anyone to live a godly life:

"Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"**? These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but **they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. (Co.2:21-23 TNIV)

Law is never made for good people; it is made for evil people to be convicted of their sin and need for a Savior:

*Now we know that **the law is good, if one uses it legitimately.** This means understanding that **the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless** and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.*

(1Ti.1:8-11 NRSV)

The purpose of the Law is to convict us that we are sinners and have come under God's wrath. Once we come to the realization that we are sinners and receive the Savior, the Law has fulfilled its purpose:

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ** that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, **we are no longer under the supervision of the law. (Ga.3:24-25 NIV)

The moment we receive Christ, we enter into a new covenant with God through Jesus' blood. When Christ died on the cross, the curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom (Mk.15:37-38), signifying the passing of the old covenant:

*Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.*** (Lk.22:20 NKJV)

The covenant of Law could not overcome man's desire to sin; only Christ can enable us to fulfill the Law by His Spirit:

***For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son** in the likeness of*

(Ge.5:15). When Jared was 162 years old, he finally had a son name Enoch, who shared his faith (Ge.5:18). Let me remind you that these men had other sons and daughters, born before and after the son who shared their father's faith, but they followed the way of Cain. This pattern becomes clear in Enoch's life when we read:

*When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. **Enoch lived 365 years, walking in close fellowship with God.** Then one day **he disappeared, because God took him.*** (Ge.5:21-24 NLT)

To have faith in God is to walk with Him rather than to walk opposed to Him. Enoch walked with God:

*By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: **"He could not be found, because God had taken him away."** **For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God,** because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.* (He.11:5 TNIV)

When Enoch was 65 years old, he finally had a son, Methuselah, who shared his faith and became the oldest man who ever lived--969 years old (Ge.5:21). When Methuselah was 187 years old, he finally had a son named Lamech, who shared his faith (Ge.5:25). When Lamech was 182 years old, he finally had a son named Noah, who shared his faith (Ge.5:28). Of Noah we read:

*By faith Noah, **warned by God** about events as yet unseen, **respected the warning and built an ark** to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became **an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.*** (He.11:7 NRSV)

When Noah was 500 years old, he had three sons named Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who shared his faith (Ge.5:32). I feel it is important to understand that as far as the Bible is concerned, only one line of twelve people lived who had faith before the flood: Abel, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, and Noah's sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Each of these twelve men had other sons and daughters, yet at the time of the flood, only Noah and his three sons and their wives survived in the ark. Other than these twelve men, there is no record of anyone else who followed God. In fact, the Bible concludes that the wickedness of the earth reached such a saturation point that God said:

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that **every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved** that he had made man on the earth, and **his heart was filled with pain.** (Ge.6:6 NIV)

Without guidelines, man's depravity went out of control; they turned to violence as the means to gain what they desired:

So God said to Noah, "**I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence** because of them." (Ge.6:13 TNIV)

God had to destroy the world with a flood but saved Noah and his family in an ark. God warned the people through Noah:

He did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but **protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others.** (2Pe 2:5 NIV)

Noah lived another 350 years; but before he died (2006 years after creation), a man named Abram was born. Therefore, even though they had no law to guide mankind from creation to the death of Noah, there was a line of twelve men who lived by faith. The rest of the world became so wicked that God had to destroy it.

GOD MAKES A COVENANT

It is important to understand that both Noah and Abram lived at the same time. In the crossing of these two men's lives, God entered a new relationship with one man, Abram. Abram's father was not a man of faith, for he served other gods:

Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: '**Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.**'" (Jos.24:2 NKJV)

God chose Abram and made a covenant with him, singling him out from the rest of mankind. A covenant is an eternal contract that is subject to its terms: **If** man does his part, **then** God will fulfill His part. Abram was 75 years old when God made a covenant with him:

The LORD had said to Abram, "**Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**" (Ge.12:1-3 TNIV)

covenant of Law was to make mankind aware that they cannot achieve holiness by their own effort. God's hope was that they would humbly seek beyond themselves to His Savior:

So **the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ** that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, **we are no longer under the supervision of the law.** (Ga.3:24-25 NIV)

Therefore, Israel entered a covenant of Law with God; however, not many kept the covenant; thereby, they experienced the judgment and wrath of God rather than His blessing.

A CHANGE IN COVENANTS

Abraham had been given two aspects of God's covenant: the first to the nation of Israel—a covenant of Law, and the second to all the peoples of the earth—a new covenant. Abraham's two wives illustrate the two covenants:

The son of the slave-wife **was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment** of God's promise. But the son of the freeborn wife **was born as God's own fulfillment** of his promise. **These two women serve as an illustration of God's two covenants.** The first woman, Hagar, represents Mount Sinai where people received the law that enslaved them. And now Jerusalem is just like Mount Sinai in Arabia, because she and her children live in slavery to the law. But the other woman, Sarah, represents the heavenly Jerusalem. **She is the free woman, and she is our mother.** (Ga.4:23-26 NLT)

This new covenant was not just another covenant; it had to be a better covenant:

Jesus has become **the guarantee of a better covenant.** (He.7:22 NKJV)

Jesus became the mediator of the new covenant. It was superior to the old covenant because it came with new promises:

But Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree **he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises...** In speaking of "**a new covenant,**" **he has made the first one obsolete.** And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear. (He.8:6,13 NRSV)

Even though the new covenant made the old one obsolete, the Law still has a purpose today:

*nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. **I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it** anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; **it is sin living in me that does it.*** (Ro.7:14-20 NLT)

The Law is best summed up as "Do this, and you will live." However, Israel and Judah could not do what the Law required. This failure caused them to experience the wrath of God, generation after generation:

*They have returned to **the sins of their forefathers**. They have refused to listen to me and **are worshiping other gods**. **Israel and Judah have both broken the covenant I made** with their ancestors.* (Jer.11:10 NLT)

Israel and Judah didn't just break the Law, but at times their evil also surpassed the nations who lived in the land of Israel before them:

*But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that **they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed** before the Israelites.* (2Ch.33:9 NKJV)

God is always able to keep His covenant, but the covenant was contingent on both Israel and Judah fulfilling their parts first:

*The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, **broken the everlasting covenant.*** (Isa.24:5 TNIV)

Even though some sought after God, the majority constantly rebelled against Him and disobeyed His commands. God's covenant was everlasting, but Israel always failed to keep their part of the covenant:

*For if there had been nothing **wrong with that first covenant**, no place would have been sought for another. **But God found fault with the people** and said: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. **It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors** when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because **they did not remain faithful to my covenant**, and **I turned away from them**, declares the Lord"* (He.8:7-9 TNIV)

Since it was impossible for Israel to keep their covenant, God promised to one day make a new covenant. It was God's desire that man should gain an understanding of holiness through the Law. The Law was never meant to enable Israel to live a holy life. God's purpose for the

God's covenant with Abram had two aspects of blessing: first to become a nation and second to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. If Abram was to become a great nation, he had to leave his country, his family, and his friends and go to an unknown land. We know Abram believed God because he obeyed Him:

By faith Abraham**, when he was called, **obeyed by going out** to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and **he went out, not knowing where he was going. (He.11:8 NASB)

When Abram was 99 years old, God changed Abram's name to Abraham and reminded him of His covenant:

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; **walk before me, and be blameless.** And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous."* (Ge.17:1-2 NRSV)

God was asking Abraham to be blameless. To be blameless is not to be sinless; rather, it is to be without blame. In other words, God was attaching to the covenant the stipulation that Abraham follow in absolute obedience to all God asked of him. This stipulation is clearly evident when we read:

*By faith Abraham, when God tested him, **offered Isaac as a sacrifice.** He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son.* (He.11:17 TNIV)

When God asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, Abraham set out early the next morning to do it. God stopped Abraham when he lifted the knife to kill Isaac on the altar. Abraham was blameless, for when God asked, Abraham responded in instant obedience. When God asked Abraham to circumcise every male in his household as a sign of their covenant, Abraham obeyed:

This is My covenant**, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: **every male among you shall be circumcised.** And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and **it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. (Ge.17:10-11 NASB)

Abraham kept the covenant of which circumcision was a sign; hence, God blessed him and his descendants by making them the great nation of Israel. Therefore, Abraham kept the covenant he made with God by blamelessly doing everything God asked of him.

THE COVENANT OF LAW

Abraham's descendants went to Egypt during a severe drought and stayed there for four hundred years. Israel became a great nation in Egypt. Just as twelve men lived for God prior to Abraham, now twelve tribes were in Israel with a thirteenth tribe, Levi, being appointed to serve God at His tabernacle. On Israel's journey back to the land that God had promised Abraham, He re-established Abraham's covenant with Israel:

*Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ...Now **if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then** out of all nations **you will be my treasured possession.**"* (Ex.19:3, 5 NIV)

The covenant that God made with the twelve tribes of Israel contained the "if" and the "then" clauses. If Israel fully obeyed God, then God would make Israel His treasured possession. Moses wrote the words of the covenant on two stone tablets:

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance **with these words I have made a covenant** with you and with Israel." So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And **he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.**"* (Ex.34:27-28 NASB)

In the terms of the covenant that God made with Israel, God did not ask man to become perfect like Himself, but rather, God asked Israel to honor Him and to stop committing harm to their neighbor:

*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. "**You shall have no** other gods before Me. **You shall not make** for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything... **You shall not take** the name of the LORD your God in vain... **Remember the Sabbath day**, to keep it holy... **Honor your father** and your mother.. **You shall not murder.** **You shall not commit adultery.** **You shall not steal.** **You shall not bear false witness** against your neighbor. **You shall not covet**... anything that is your neighbor's.* (Ex.20:1-17 NKJV)

The terms of the covenant were just ten simple commands. Israel agreed to God's proposal of covenant: to obey not just the Ten Commandments but everything the Lord had said:

*Then he took the Book of the Covenant and **read in the hearing of the people.** And they said, "**All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.**"* (Ex.24:7 NKJV)

The people of Israel agreed to the terms of the covenant. Israel was also aware of the blessings for keeping the covenant, and they also knew the punishment for disobeying it:

*But **if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes,** or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but **break My covenant,** I also will do this to you...^(v18) And **after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins...**⁽²¹⁾ **Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins...**⁽²³⁾ **And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins...**⁽²⁷⁾ **And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.*** (Le.26:14-15;18-19;23-24;27-28 NKJV)

God loved those with whom He made a covenant enough to punish them in increasing increments (7x7x7x7=2401 times), until they would turn from and confess their sin to God:

But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers—their treachery against me and their hostility towards me, which made me hostile towards them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham... (Le.26:40-42 NIV)

Israel kept breaking their covenant with God, and God kept punishing them and waiting for them to return because He loved them. The purpose of the Law was to give sin definition, to convict men of their sinfulness, and to cause them to humbly come to God in their need. Paul, in speaking about his life under the Law before he became a Christian, wrote:

*So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. **The trouble is with me,** for I am all too human, **a slave to sin.** I don't really understand myself, for **I want to do what is right, but I don't do it.** Instead, **I do what I hate.** But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; **it is sin living in me that does it.** And I know that*