

# Discussion on covenant

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 24 May 2026

Preacher: Jerome Peirson

[ 0 : 00 ] And there are some themes, as I said earlier, that I thought would be just helpful to consider in a little bit more depth and then maybe open up for some discussion and any questions that one might have for Steve about the passage this morning.

But one of the things that Steve drew out this morning that would be easy to miss was the whole matter of covenant. In the King James Version, the word that's used actually is league, which would make it even more easy to miss the significance of that.

I thought it would be helpful just to take a few moments. It's an area I think is helpful and important for us to understand a bit. One man has called covenant the architectonic framework of the entire unfolding of redemptive history. Now that sounds very wordy, doesn't it?

But what he's getting at, I think, is that if you consider the entirety of the scriptures, it's covenant that holds it together. Some may not agree with that. They look at the scriptures a different way. They're theologians that would be called dispensationalists.

But I think generally among us, we agree broadly that covenants are really important, regardless of what your views are on that. Steve was talking very much about, in the text, a covenant between men, between nations, in terms of geopolitical maneuverings.

[ 1 : 28 ] And there's so much of that within the scriptures. But actually, the reason covenant is so significant is because we have a covenant-making God. From the earliest pages of the scriptures, we see this theme like a thread running through the entirety of scripture.

Much of this will be a bit of repeat, which I say this evening. Daniel's covered this ground before. But repeat's not a bad thing, just to be reminded of these things. I was thinking about a definition for covenant, and Steve helpfully gave us one.

But I've got another one as well that is very simple and straightforward from one theologian, if I can find it. It's simply put, a covenant is a binding relationship between parties that involves both blessings and obligations.

I think that's really helpful. There's something in it being a binding relationship. It's a solemn promise. It's a binding relationship. We see that in many places.

It's between parties. And in this instance, it was between men. But often in scripture, it's between God and his people. And it always entails either blessings or a kind of sense of reward or obligations.

[ 2 : 55 ] And it can entail covenant curses as well, if that covenant isn't adhered to. And this whole aspect of covenant starts very, very early on in the scriptures.

Now, some suggest it starts in the garden, and it's not explicitly mentioned. Some suggest there's something called a covenant of works between God and Adam. I'm not going to go there, because I know that's contested.

So I think let's be a bit more on solid, sure ground in terms of what we all can really understand and agree on. But certainly one of the earliest places it comes up is with Noah in Genesis 9.

That Noahic covenant where God promises not to flood the earth again. And there's this sense of this grand reset. I think that was the word used by our tour guide yesterday.

And I really like that, reset. And that's very much what's going on, isn't there? And that's in Genesis 9, if you like. We can turn there now and just have a little look. I guess, 9-12.

[ 4 : 03 ] Does someone want to read from 9-12 up to 15? This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you, and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come.

I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will

remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Thank you. Thank you. And later on in 17, well, more is said about covenant in 16.

And in 17 says, Many see this covenant as what's called a common grace covenant.

Some suggest it doesn't have kind of redemptive or salvific qualities. I disagree with that. I think there is something of the fact that the entire creation is preserved is because the covenant of grace is going forward and for that reason.

[ 5 : 18 ] But it's certainly a covenant with the creation, isn't it? There's a preservation of the creation. And then this whole idea of covenant that I think is important for us to grasp is sometimes people, they look at the Bible and they chop the Bible up into bits.

They say, well, there was this period, this period, and this period. And there's truth in that. There are specific distinct periods with distinct qualities and discontinuity.

However, we see this thread of continuity as well. And certainly when you think of covenant, it's helpful to think of organic growth. It's growing and it's becoming clearer and clearer.

And then the next time we get a revelation of this is in the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 19. We can quickly turn there. Exodus 19, 5 to 6.

I really had to do this on the hoof. So if I've got these wrong, I do apologize. Would anyone like to read? I think that mentions covenant yet.

[ 6 : 21 ] Any readers? Thank you. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites. Praise God. Thank you. Thank you. We remember that. There's an echo there, isn't there? Is it 1 Peter? That whole idea of a holy nation, which this is fully fulfilled and realized in the church.

So we see this idea of continuity, organic growth. And it's interesting, isn't it? When we look at the Mosaic period, there is a danger that one can look at it and think this is just about works and law.

Because often law is very much in the foreground. It's almost a sense of do this and live. And you can read it and you can think, oh, is God reverting to a kind of work system here?

Or do they have to earn their salvation? But actually, my view is along many kind of orthodox theologians is that actually there is an element of broader, there's a narrower way you can take the Mosaic covenant, which is very much a legal, strict, works-based thing, which we see in Galatians and so forth.

[ 7 : 41 ] But there's the more broad Mosaic dispensation where you've got the sacrificial system, you've got the gospel. So there is gospel there. People, in one sense, were saved the same way as we are, but they had less revelation.

Christ had not come. So again, this thread of covenant going through the Mosaic dispensation.

Then we come to where we are at the moment in our morning series, the Davidic covenant.

I'm not going to go into this in any detail, but you hear of this. This is explicitly stated in Psalm 89, verses 4 to 3, Psalm 89. Where we get more clarity and the covenant is narrowing down its focus actually into an individual, a king, a shepherd king, an anointed king.

Three, sorry, three and four.

Anyone would like to read that? Valerie, are you our reader tonight? Oh, Brenda's going to read.

[ 9 : 09 ] You said, I have made a covenant with my chosen one. I have sworn to David my servant. I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you. And I've just realized I've missed probably one of the most essential covenants in the scriptures that's so foundational. How could I have missed it? You're wondering.

Impuzzlement. But we think of the Abrahamic covenant. I'm really significant, actually, isn't it?

Because in the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 15, that comes into kind of sharp relief.

There's this sense of continuity. Because if you read carefully in Genesis 15, there's mention of what will happen to the people of God as they're in captivity. Which suggests not a discontinuity that that covenant, and Paul obviously mentions it in Galatians, that covenant still stands.

I'll say a little bit more about the Abrahamic covenant because I think it's important. But in Genesis 15, verse 14, it says, And also that nation whom they shall serve, that's the people of God, Israel, will I judge, and afterwards shall they come out with great substance.

[ 10 : 28 ] Oh, no, earlier than that, sorry. This is way before the people came out of Egypt.

And this is part of the covenantal kind of promise that will happen. And if you read in Genesis 15, we're all very familiar with this covenant ceremony that's very strange.

And just worth taking a few moments to think about this. You have the animals that cut in two, various different animals. And you recall that we have this strange vision of the smoking fire pot going down the middle of the animals.

And Abraham goes into this deep sleep. Some have suggested that in ancient Near Eastern kind of ceremony and the way of doing things and striking these covenants, these geopolitical situations, you would have what's called a suzerain king.

So a suzerain king would be a victorious, conquering king, a king who has the upper hand. You had all these different tribal kind of situations.

[ 11 : 55 ] And then there would be a vassal king who's the conquered. And what they would do in these covenants, they would cut, they'd slice the animals in half. And they would both walk down the middle as if to say, if we break this covenant, this pact, this disagreement between us, may the same thing happen to us.

So it's a sense, it's a kind of self-malediction. It's a curse if it's broken. And reading this, you can see that it's actually God that goes down the middle of these pieces that are cut.

So it's almost like God saying a self-malediction if I break the covenant. I think that's significant because in a way we're seeing that in terms of the story with David. So covenant is a really important thing.

And as Steve really helpfully pointed out, it's more than a contract. We were chatting with Victor after the meeting. And Victor was talking about how in the area of architecture, even if the parties move on and go on to different projects and things like that, the idea of covenant, the covenant that's made is still standing, it's still greater.

And we have a covenant keeping God. And that's good news, isn't it? Because when we consider his faithfulness, when we consider his truthfulness, his unchangeableness, the fact that he has covenanted to save us, that should be very assuring, stabilizing.

[ 13 : 25 ] And even Israel, in the Old Testament, we read in many places that they were covenant breakers, weren't they? But God, you know, the whole of Hosea, in a sense, there's that theme, isn't there, of marriage and covenant.

And marriage, again, is another picture of covenant. So that's something we touched on this morning. So something to think about as we read the scriptures. It kind of brings to life this kind of thread that comes through them.

But Steve also helps us to think that the spiritual life... Well, how... I mean, I'll ask you. I'll hand over to you now.

And what were some of the things that Steve said from this text that depicts really what the Christian life is like? Julia? Julia? That the covenant was a sort of two-way street.

You know, it's not all about God. It's not all about us letting go and letting God. It's really about being present, using our God-given faculties, and serving God as he serves us.

[ 14 : 33 ] So I took that out of it, really, that, you know, we also have a big part to play in the covenant. Yeah, thank you.

I think that's really helpful. We're not passive kind of... In one sense, there is a passivity, and we don't work up our salvation, but we respond, don't we?

Faith is... I think Luther said faith's a busy thing. There's response, there's busyness, there's active... There's an application, there's... You know, I think... Don't let go and let God, and he's foolish.

And, you know, we embrace wisdom, which is God-given. We think before we speak, which is, you know, a wise thing to do.

I read a book on prayer, and it really was not just to babble on, but to really consider before you pray and think what you want to pray and pray in that way without just letting go and, you know, babbling on with your emotions and things like that, but really be considered in dealings with the Lord.

[ 15 : 50 ] So I really liked that, and that's what I took away this morning. Mm. Steve mentioned that... Something came to mind for me, a spiritual warfare, actually.

Oh, really? And Steve touched on that. Yeah. Yeah. Ready? You want me to say anything? There's a whole idea that struck me about it was the fact that David used the gifts that he had been given.

Steve said something about, you know, we're not to be kind of foolish or stupid. I can't remember what your wording was, Steve. But we... Spiritually stupid. Yes. It's not spiritual to be stupid. I want some alliteration. And was that thinking from the text, the fact that David strategised, he thought, he applied himself diligently to the warfare and the conquest, is that what you're thinking about?

And we should do the same in terms of how we consider the spiritual warfare that we're in. That was the point I was making, yes. Yeah. So just to push that a little bit further, and I know it's hot and we're all a bit tired, but, you know, what would that look like on the ground for us as a church?

[ 17 : 24 ] Because we are in a spiritual warfare. What examples are there that we can think of? Because obviously, we're not in the same... With the Old Testament, we have to work a bit harder in terms of application.

Someone's got their hand up. Valerie. Maybe Valerie can help us think. I think something that was quite interesting, which I had never considered before, was explaining how David...

It wasn't that the pebble that David used to defeat Goliath was like a magical pebble. I think up until now, that's how I've read it. Like, wow. It must have been such a cool pebble.

But actually, looking at the rationale, I feel like, okay, David had these existing strengths. Goliath was such a huge target. He wouldn't have been as mobile or could move as quickly or as easily because he was so big, which I thought, for me, really stuck out.

I was like, oh, I've never thought about it logically before, which I think it helps to think about, okay, what does it mean to be spiritual but not over-spiritualize things in the sense of how do we look at the strengths that we have and maximize those to the greater glory of God where for David, he had the particular strength of being able to identify weaknesses and being like, okay, so with this particular army, it wouldn't be wise to come from the front but what's their weakness or what's above the trees and so I suppose similarly to answer the question of the implications of how we could be more spiritual, I think it's helpful to be able to consider what strengths do we have, what giftings do we have and then maximize those for the greater glory of God and for the benefit of the body if it's, I don't know, speaking, serving, cooking, whatever the case may be, that would within itself be an aid to spiritual warfare in very practical, tangible, realistic ways.

[ 19 : 30 ] Yeah, no, thank you, that's really helpful and when you were saying that, Valerie, what came to mind as well is serving in the church sometimes. What can I do?

What am I good at? Have I got people skills and giftings? Am I better with practical stuff? Am I an administrator? Am I a good cook? So, yeah. But I think there was, yeah, I really took, I took from what Steve was saying this morning that that whole thing that David saw the weakness and in a way, I think you mentioned, Steve, that Goliath's strength was his weakness.

He didn't have the agility and the mobility of those mounting creatures that David had to deal with. But I'm wondering for us, you know, we don't have to necessarily follow and be exactly like the world and, you know, when we're dealing with the kind of spiritual battles that we're dealing with, we can be the church.

Our strength as the church is that we have the word of God. So I think sometimes there's a sense of we can lose confidence in what we have. We feel we need to, we need the clever, academic, philosophical answers and arguments and there's a place for that and I'm all for that but I think actually we can stand firm on what we do have and our strength is that we have answers that those things, they just can't answer.

And I'm sure there are many other applications that people can think of. So we have this idea of warfare and spiritual warfare and strategising.

[ 21 : 19 ] Rosemary, come on. Well, it's significant that David actually inquired of the Lord. I was going to come to that at the end because that's what we need to do. Yeah, I mean, I'm happy to come to it now. I'm not, you know, this is, I also forgot when we were talking about covenant and forgive me, I'm so tired but Jeremiah 31, new covenant, absolutely crucial.

Yeah. But yeah, inquired of the Lord. I was also going to say that we're all at a local church, we're part of the body and we all have different gifts.

You know, we are, I'm me, you're you and I think that was brought out recently when we were doing the course that Daniel was going through, I can't think what it was called.

Passion for Life, Passion for Life. That's right and it was underlined that we're all different and we've all got different abilities and backgrounds and our characters are different and how we approach other people is appropriate to who we are really.

Yeah. Thank you. Yeah. So yeah, yeah, I mean, your point about David inquiring of the Lord was something I thought we should do tonight and I think it all kind of intertwines and relates that because God is a covenant keeping God, a God who says I am your God, you are my people and there's that explicit covenant with David.

[ 22 : 55 ] It says in verse 10 and David went on and grew great and the Lord God of hosts was with him. It's a lovely picture of God's presence with David, he was with him and then as Rosemary's helpfully said, you have this refrain that's repeated that I think is very significant here in verse 19 and David inquired of the Lord and then later in verse 23 and when David inquired of the Lord, you kind of get this picture, he's walking with the Lord, he's inquiring with the Lord every step he takes.

Adversely in other places in the Old Testament you see where there's calamity and disaster when they don't inquire of the Lord. Do you want to say more about that Jack?

No, I was just going to say that I mean what strikes me about the life of David is that there was a strange contrast between the good things he did and the bad things and yet God still used him so much.

I mean enshrined in these verses about all the wives. Yeah, good point Jack, I thought that. Uncomfortable reading isn't it? God still used him.

God still used him, yeah. Which is an encouragement I think because sometimes we can feel that we're failures or you let him down over this or that. Yeah. When we did the tour of the British Museum yesterday, the lady called Beth who was taking us around, she was showing us the writings of the Assyrian kings, I can't remember, on these tablets.

[ 24 : 49 ] What do you call them, those kind of structures? Doesn't matter. But anyway, what she said was it was basically propaganda and the way they spoke about themselves was always just ultra uber positive and about their victories and everything like that.

And what she said, and it's kind of what we get in the word of God is truthfulness about the godly kings, the prophets, because we see you think of Abraham, you see of David, there's realism in the scriptures, isn't there?

It's not propaganda, is it? Because we see losses, we see sin, we see mess. I can't remember what they were called, Julia, and it's really annoyed me, and I'll go home tonight and it'll come to my mind.

Yeah, they were like, kind of, you know, Cuneiform, is it? Yeah, that's it, thank you, Jack, Cuneiform, this is why. Having worked at the British Museum, I should say. Oh, well, that's it, yeah. I actually remember, yeah, Cuneiform, thank you. Yeah, it's a good point, isn't it? David was, we're meant to look to the greater David, aren't we?

[ 25 : 56 ] There's a couple of mentions of anointing in here as well, which makes us think of Christ, and that greater David, Christ, the anointed one. Yes, please do.

The particular weak point I had in mind when I was thinking of that was the way in which, I mean, I think like an academic, of course, so you have to put up with that, was the way in which the Western nations no longer make sense because they have no identity.

You know, we get through how many seven prime ministers in ten years or whatever it was because nobody actually has a, nobody has a message that makes sense of it, that you can unite people together.

What David did after the civil war was unite the people again. post-modernism just can't do that because it's so individualistic that it makes no sense for a society to, you know, covenant together. Yeah. so, you know, that is a weak point we can attack. To say that, you know, that you have to have a meaning and that's why I like Ecclesiastes, of course, because under the sun, it's all meaningless.

[ 27 : 29 ] Yeah. Which is presumably where Daniel's going with this series on Ecclesiastes. But, you know, don't attack the world where it seems to be strong in terms of personal freedom and so on.

Just demonstrate how this freedom makes no sense if it's not in a covenant relationship. That's silenced everybody now.

Yeah, I thought that was a helpful point you made, Steve, this morning about the kind of rampant individualism and there's something about covenant commitment as well and, yes, there is a place for attack and going forward but also I think in the church, one of the ways we can demonstrate through example covenant commitment is just through church membership, through belonging and

there's something covenantal about that, isn't there?

And that doesn't mean to say that people that aren't members aren't kind of committed because I know people are in different ways but I think just by gathering as the people of God, by being here week in, week out, belonging, to something greater than ourselves is something really quite powerful.

I didn't want to cause dissension and I didn't have time anyway but I actually was thought of making that precise point that the point people think our membership is very sort of too much commitment or something like that but it's because it is a covenant.

[ 29 : 05 ] We come together and say, you know, we're all committed to this cause and that's why it has to be like it is. Your definition said it's both blessings and obligations.

We have to be clear about what those are otherwise it won't work. I didn't want to upset people. I wonder whether to say something about membership along those lines. But even more broadly, just as being Christians, we're covenantally bound to God and to each other but yeah, absolutely. Well, there's a theme here of David inquiring of the Lord and if that's good for David, that's certainly good for us.

We're not in the midst of a fierce battle in the sense in one that we can see but we are in the midst of a spiritual battle. We are in the midst of a spiritual battle and I think it would be remiss of us to think, you know, the church is in, you know, just a trouble-free there are positive signs.

It was such an encouragement earlier on to hear Annika speaking about UCC? F. Yeah, yeah. And she was sharing about how there's a real zeal among some of the students.

[ 30 : 20 ] I was really encouraged by that. So I think it would be good for us to pray for that, pray for the students, pray for us. Pray that we would do you have a prayer for us to do you have a prayer for us to I was just thinking about obligations but, you know, Christ says that my yoke is easy and my burdens are light and I think with knowing God and I guess the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the love and warmth in our hearts, these obligations are not burdensome obligations because they are done through love.

Yeah. And they're not like, you know, a set of rules that all mustn't break those and they're heavy rules. They're not burdensome when we're looking to Jesus and serving Jesus.

They're done through love and they're light and easy. Yeah, I would agree with that. I guess sometimes there's effort and strain. Oh yeah, of course.

There can be real, the Christian life is also a race which requires that sense but I think they're both, it's that kind of paradox, isn't it? Sometimes you can sweat blood. Yeah, absolutely.

But that is difficult but I don't think that's God causing that difficulty. It's more the enemy causing the difficulty but we are going to suffer that difficulty nonetheless.

[ 31 : 59 ] Now I don't mean we won't suffer hard things but I'm just saying the obligation and the, it's not a burden. Yeah. Like some obligations like if you've got a hard taskmaster which the Lord, you know, has redeemed us from a hard taskmaster then it is burdensome.

Yeah. And to, to, to fulfill your obligations to the hard taskmaster but Jesus is the opposite to that. Yeah, absolutely.

That's right now. Yeah, no, absolutely. It should be a joy and a privilege to serve the Lord, shouldn't it? But yeah. Okay. Are people happy if we kind of move on to pray?

And then we can sing to close out with greatest I faithfulness.