

THE GOD WHO PURSUES (4)

The Covenant with David

"I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God."

A. Introduction

1. God is a God who desires to be in a relationship with the people He has made in His image.

This desire is seen in a series of FIVE covenants, that God made with people, which together express and explain the ONE eternal covenant.

The eternal covenant is God's promise to people of relationship and eternal life through faith in Christ, who has obeyed the demands of the covenant and paid the penalty covenant breakers deserve.

2. God's pursuit of a relationship with the people He has made began with Adam and the covenant He made with him.

This covenant promised the blessing of relationship with God and eternal life in God's presence if he loved, trusted and obeyed Christ by ruling over the world, and death and separation from God should he disobey Christ.

Adam broke the covenant and this resulted in death and separation from God as he is banished from the Garden of Eden.

God pursues and provides a way to have a relationship with people outside the Garden by promising a Saviour who would undo the curse of sin through a sacrifice that takes the penalty of death instead of them.

God's people are those who trust in Christ, this promised Saviour. But by the time of Noah very few people were, and the earth declared good was ruined by sin.

God's response is to punish sin by destroying all of life with a Flood.

3. God continues to pursue a relationship with people by providing a way for Noah and others who trust in the Saviour to be kept safe.

After the flood the covenant made at creation with Adam is reaffirmed with Noah who is called to trust Christ and obey His Word.

But the problem of sin remains as Noah gets drunk and exposes his nakedness, and his descendants are no better as they rebel against God's Word at Babel.

God's response is to punish sin by scattering the people over the face of the earth.

As no human is able to keep this covenant, the only way God can pursue and remain in relationship with people, is if He preserves the earth until the Saviour arrives and if this Saviour takes the penalty of death covenant breakers deserve, pictured in the sign of the bow pointed up at heaven.

The only way people can be in relationship with God is through faith in this Saviour.

4. After the mess of Babel, and the scattering of the human race over the face of the earth, God again steps in and pursues a relationship with people by preaching the gospel to Abraham.

"The Scriptures foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (Galatians 3:8)

God promises blessing to Abraham – He will be a great nation with a great name – but this can only happen if he has a people, and place for them to live.

God also promises blessing to the world through Abraham and his offspring.

God confirms these promises by making a covenant with Abraham, during which God says that He is willing to die on behalf of Abraham and his descendants if they fall short of the terms of the covenant.

This is why Abraham when he trusts in Christ the promised Saviour, is declared righteous.

Like Adam and Noah before him, Abraham is called to walk before God as His representative by being blameless (living in a right relationship with God and all that God had made).

As Abraham and his descendants lived blamelessly, they would draw the nations to Christ, and this would lead to Abraham becoming more than one nation and his descendants (those that believe in Christ) inheriting more than the land of Canaan.

But they were unable to keep their side of the covenant, which is why the covenant sign of circumcision pointed to this obedient Son who would be cut off for them because of their failure to keep the covenant.

Undergoing circumcision identified with Him and was an outward sign of their inward need to trust in Him.

5. God kept His covenant with Abraham and gave him many physical descendants, but they ended up as slaves in Egypt.

How could they be a great nation and bring blessing to the nations when they were slaves and without a land of their own?

How could they be a great nation and bring blessing to the nations when they deserved to be punished for their sins?

God pursues a relationship with Israel by providing a saviour who was trusting in the Saviour to lead them out of slavery in Egypt and the Passover Lamb, which took the judgment they deserved.

“He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.” (Hebrews 11:26)

“Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that Jesus delivered his people out of Egypt.” (Jude 5)

At Mount Sinai God makes a covenant with Israel that built on the covenant made with Abraham.

If they kept the covenant they would be His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation – this is the role that Adam then Noah was given, that was passed onto Abraham.

Israel was to love, trust and obey God in response – something they could not have done while they were slaves in Egypt – by living blamelessly as they obeyed the 10 Words God gives.

The problem is that even though the people of Israel agree to the covenant, they are covenant breakers as seen in the Golden Calf incident.

So the law drove Israel to the sacrificial system and on to Christ who keeps the law and died to pay the penalty for those who break it.

“The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:24)

The message of the covenant with Moses, then, like it was Abraham and Adam/Noah, is trust Christ who keeps the covenant and who will die to pay the penalty for breaking it.

The way Israel demonstrated this was by keeping the Sabbath, which reminded Israel of their need to trust in Christ who would keep the covenant for them, so they could enjoy the rest (salvation) He would bring.

However, if they rejected Christ, by rejecting the covenant, they would be cut off, which is what happened to the generation of Israelites who left Egypt and died in the wilderness.

So the covenant was renewed with the generation that would enter the land (the book of Deuteronomy), and instructions given about how to live in the land, as well as warnings about what would happen to them if they failed to live this way (curse, exile and death).

B. After the Covenant with Moses

1. God led the people into the land of Canaan, the land promised to Abraham.

"Thus he brought them to the border of his holy land, to the hill country his right hand had taken. He drove out nations before them and allotted their lands to them as an inheritance; he settled the tribes of Israel in their homes." (Psalm 78:54-55)

Everything is now in place for the people to keep the covenant.

"Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you." But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:19-21)

What happens next is all too familiar – the nation of Israel constantly breaks the covenant.

"But they put God to the test and rebelled against the Most High; they did not keep his statutes. Like their fathers they were disloyal and faithless, as unreliable as a faulty bow. They angered him with their high places; they aroused his jealousy with their idols." (Psalm 78:56-58)

They needed a king that God would provide when the time was right.

"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." (Judges 21:25)

The king would lead the people to obey the covenant.

"When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left." (Deuteronomy 17:18-20)

Things go from bad to worse as God allows the Philistines to capture the Ark (the symbol of God's presence and rule).

"When God heard them, he was very angry; he rejected Israel completely. He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he had set up among men. He sent the ark of his might into captivity, his splendour into the hands of the enemy." (Psalm 78:59-61)

2. God's love and pursuit of His people is seen in what happens to Ark.

Wherever the Philistines keep it, God sends devastation.

"The LORD's hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumours." (1 Samuel 5:6)

Finally the Philistines send the Ark away on a cart which heads in a straight line back to Israel.

"Now the people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they rejoiced at the sight. The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and there it stopped beside a large rock." (1 Samuel 6:13-14)

God's presence and rule returns to Israel but they keep Him on the fringes.

"So the men of Kiriath Jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD. They took it to Abinadab's house on the hill and consecrated Eleazar his son to guard the ark of the LORD." (1 Samuel 7:1)

Then they make an incredible request.

"So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have." (1 Samuel 8:5)

3. God says they can have a king, but they mustn't let him be the King.

"Samuel explained to the people the regulations of the kingship." (1 Samuel 10:25)

Saul is the wrong king.

"You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command." (1 Samuel 13:13-14)

They needed a king who would trust in the King.

"He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skilful hands he led them." (Psalm 78:70-72)

"David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." (Romans 4:6-8)

4. David showed that He trusts in the King.

He finished the conquest of the land.

"The LORD gave David victory everywhere he went. David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people." (1 Chronicles 18:13-14)

He brought the Ark to Jerusalem (the capital of Israel).

"So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing." (2 Samuel 6:12)

"They brought the ark of the LORD and set it up in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD." (2 Samuel 6:17)

He desired to build a house (the temple) for the LORD.

"After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent." (2 Samuel 7:1)

"My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. But the LORD said to my father David, 'Because it was in your heart to build a temple for my Name, you did well to have this in your heart. Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, who is your own flesh and blood – he is the one who will build the temple for my Name.'" (1 Kings 8:17-19)

5. In response God makes another covenant that further builds on the covenants with Abraham and Moses.

C. The Covenant with David

1. God makes some incredibly promises to David through the prophet Nathan.

Promises that will be kept in David's lifetime – a great name, a place for Israel, rest from enemies.

"Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people shall not oppress them any more, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.'" (2 Samuel 7:8-11)

Promises that will be kept after David dies – a son, a house, an everlasting kingdom.

"The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever." (2 Samuel 7:11-16)

But these promises are dependent upon the obedience of the King.

"The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne – if your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons shall sit on your throne for ever and ever." (Psalm 132:11-12)

From now, even though the people are accountable for trusting in the Saviour, the hope of the nation depends on the king's obedience.

"The LORD said through his servants the prophets: "Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols. Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle." (2 Kings 21:10-12)

This is why each king is required to copy out the Law of Moses and read it all the days of his life.

"When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left." (Deuteronomy 17:18-20)

The king would show Israel and the rest of the world how to live – he will do what the nation of Israel as a whole had failed to do.

"May his name endure for ever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed." (Psalm 72:17)

The blessing to the world promised through Abraham will come through the King of Israel.

2. God kept the promises He made to David about what would happen in his lifetime.

"David became famous after he returned from striking down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt." (2 Samuel 8:13)

"David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people." (2 Samuel 8:15)

3. But how would God keep the other promises, the ones about what would happen after David died?

Maybe David's descendants will keep on producing male heirs in an endless chain of succession that will love, trust and obey God.

But we see that none of them are able to perfectly keep the covenant – even David the greatest king of Israel couldn't do this.

“David [after committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering her husband Uriah] said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” (2 Samuel 12:13)

Because all the kings of Israel who lived were covenant breakers who failed to change the hearts of God's people and bring blessing to the nations, there needed to be one who was an obedient son born from David's line and who would live forever.

David himself knew this was how the covenant would be kept.

“The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” The LORD will extend your mighty sceptre from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth.” The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind. “You are a priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek.” (Psalm 110:1-4)

The sign to the people that the covenant would be kept was that there would be a son in the line of David until this King arrived.

4. The Promised King would be an obedient Son who will live forever and bring blessing to Israel and to the rest of the world.

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” (Isaiah 9:2)

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.” (Isaiah 11:1-3)

“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and to bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” (Isaiah 49:6-7)

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, a familiar with suffering... But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:3, 5)

“Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.” (Isaiah 53:10)

“Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendour.” (Isaiah 55:3-5)

For God to pursue a relationship with people there needs to be a King who will always love, trust and obey the King.

Like the covenants with Adam and Noah, Abraham then Moses, the message of the covenant with David is trust Christ.

This was the only way for people to be in a relationship with God and have eternal life in His presence.