

The Lord's Covenant People

Chapter 15

The Nature of Covenants

- What is a covenant? Why are Latter-day Saints called a covenant people?

From the beginning, the Lord has made covenants with His children on earth. When His people make covenants (or promises) with Him, they know what He expects of them and what blessings they may expect from Him. They can better carry out His work on earth. The people who covenant with the Lord and with whom the Lord makes covenants are known as the Lord's covenant people. Members of the Church are part of the Lord's covenant people.

Within the gospel, a covenant means a sacred agreement or mutual promise between God and a person or a group of people. In making a covenant, God promises a blessing for obedience to particular commandments. He sets the terms of His covenants, and He reveals these terms to His prophets. If we choose to obey the terms of the covenant, we receive promised blessings. If we choose not to obey, He withholds the blessings, and in some instances a penalty also is given.

For example, when we join the Church we make several covenants with God (see chapter 20 in this book). We covenant with the Savior at baptism to take upon ourselves His name. He promises that “as many as repent and are baptized in my name, which is Jesus Christ, and endure to the end, the same shall be saved” (D&C 18:22). We covenant with the Lord as we partake of the sacrament (see chapter 23 in this book). We promise to take His name upon ourselves, to remember Him, and to obey His commandments. We are promised



that the Holy Spirit will be with us. (See D&C 20:77–79.) When we receive temple ordinances, we make other sacred covenants and are promised exaltation for faithful obedience (see D&C 132; see also chapter 47 in this book).

God has also made special covenants with particular persons or groups. He made special covenants with Adam, Enoch, Noah, the children of Israel, and Lehi (see Moses 6:31–36, 52; Genesis 9:9–17; Exodus 19:5–6; 2 Nephi 1). He made a special covenant with Abraham and his descendants that blesses members of the Church and all nations of the earth today.

- Think about the covenants you have made with God and the blessings He has promised you for keeping these covenants.

God's Covenant with Abraham and His Descendants

- What is the Abrahamic covenant?

Abraham, an Old Testament prophet, was a very righteous man (see the picture in this chapter). He refused to worship his father's idols. He kept all of the Lord's commandments. Because of Abraham's righteousness, the Lord made a covenant with him and his descendants.

The Lord promised Abraham that he would have numberless descendants. He promised that all of them would be entitled to receive the gospel, the blessings of the priesthood, and all of the ordinances of exaltation. These descendants, through the power of the priesthood, would carry the gospel to all nations. Through them, all the families of the earth would be blessed (see Abraham 2:11). God further promised that if they were righteous He would establish His covenant with all generations of Abraham's children (see Genesis 17:4–8).

- How do the commandments and promises in the Abrahamic covenant apply to us? (Consider how this question applies in different settings, such as at home, in the workplace, in the community, or as missionaries.)

Members of the Church Are a Covenant People

- What blessings and responsibilities come to God's covenant people today?

The blood descendants of Abraham are not the only people whom God calls His covenant people. In speaking to Abraham, God said, "As many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed [lineage], and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father" (Abraham 2:10). Thus, two groups of people are included in the covenant made with Abraham: (1) Abraham's righteous blood descendants and (2) those adopted into his lineage by accepting and living the gospel of Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 30:2).

When we are baptized into the Church, we enter into the covenant the Lord made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Galatians 3:26–29). If we are obedient, we inherit the blessings of that covenant. We have the right to receive help and guidance from the Holy Ghost. Worthy males have the right to hold the priesthood. Families can receive the blessings of the priesthood. We can gain eternal life in the celestial kingdom. There are no greater blessings than these.

Along with the blessings we receive as the Lord's covenant people, we have great responsibilities. The Lord promised Abraham that through his descendants the gospel would be taken to all the earth. We are fulfilling this responsibility through the full-time missionary program of the Church and the missionary work done by the members. This opportunity to preach the gospel to all the world belongs only to the Lord's Church and His covenant people.

As the Lord's covenant people, we should keep His commandments. The Lord said, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10). If we reject our covenant after accepting the gospel, the covenant becomes void and we will stand condemned before God (see D&C 132:4). He has said: "Refrain from sin, lest sore judgments fall upon your heads. For of him unto whom much is given much is

For teachers: You can help class members or family members think more deeply about a question by giving them time to ponder. After they have had enough time, ask for their responses.

required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation” (D&C 82:2–3).

The New and Everlasting Covenant

- What do we promise to do when we accept the gospel? What blessings does Heavenly Father give us as we keep these promises?

The fulness of the gospel is called the new and everlasting covenant. It includes the covenants made at baptism, during the sacrament, in the temple, and at any other time. The Lord calls it everlasting because it is ordained by an everlasting God and because the covenant will never be changed. He gave this same covenant to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and other prophets. In this sense it is not new. But the Lord calls it new because each time the gospel is restored after being taken from the earth, it is new to the people who receive it (see Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 37:26).

When we accept the new and everlasting covenant, we agree to repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, receive our endowments, receive the covenant of marriage in the temple, and follow and obey Christ to the end of our lives. As we keep our covenants, our Heavenly Father promises us that we will receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom (see D&C 132:20–24; see also chapter 47 in this book).

The greatness of that promise is hard for mortals to understand. The commandments He gives are for our benefit, and as we are faithful we may forever share the blessings and beauties of heaven and earth. We may live in His presence and partake of His love, compassion, power, greatness, knowledge, wisdom, glory, and dominions.

- What does being the Lord’s covenant people have to do with how we dress, act, and keep the commandments of God?

Additional Scriptures and Other Sources

- 1 Peter 2:9–10 (peculiar people)
- D&C 54:4–6 (effects of covenants kept and broken)
- D&C 132:7 (covenants made by proper authority)

- D&C 133:57–60 (purpose of covenants)
- D&C 35:24 (promises for obedience to covenants)
- Hebrews 8:6 (Jesus Christ is the mediator of a better covenant)
- Bible Dictionary, “Covenant,” 651