

# The Two Covenants

## *(Outlined & Illustrated)*

### Covenant of Promise

- Abraham “**Believed**” God and it was “accounted to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6)
  - (this was the “Gospel preached to Abraham” -Gal. 3:8)
- Child (Seed) Promised
- **Sacrifice offered** to ratify the Covenant. (Genesis 15)
- Saved by Faith and **Faithful** (Obedient to God’s Commands and Laws—**Genesis 26:5**)

### Isaac

- Child of God’s Promise
- **God fulfills His own Promise**
  - Abraham & Sarah couldn’t have done this themselves

### Covenant of Law

- “All that the Lord has said we will do” (Exodus 19:8 & 24:7)
  - Man’s Promise (effort) to fulfill God’s expectations.
- Covenant ratified by blood of a **Sacrifice** (Exodus 24:8)

### Ishmael (Abraham’s mistake)

- Not the Child of Promise
- **Man’s effort to fulfill God’s Promise.**

**Note:** A covenant takes two parties to enter into (as noted in Gal. 3:20). In this case the covenant was made between God and man. The original covenant God had made was the covenant of Promise given to Abraham (Gen. 15). A second Covenant of Law which had not been made with the fathers (i.e. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) (Deut. 5:3), was added at Sinai because of “transgressions” (sins being committed) (See Gal. 3:19). However, this Covenant of Law did not in any way “disannul” the original Covenant of Promise (See Gal. 3:17). The Original Covenant still stood and any man was able to enter into it. As stated, a covenant takes two parties to enter into. The problem with the second was not on God’s side. It was the people who entered into it under a false understanding of God’s plan. The Bible says the “fault” was found with “them” (the people) because “they” continued not in the covenant (See Heb. 8:7-9).

They had made a promise they couldn't keep; "All that the Lord has said we will do" (Ex. 24:7). This false idea was based on man's effort to fulfill what only Christ (the promised "seed") could actually accomplish. This is why Paul says that Christ was born "under the Law" "to redeem them that were under the Law, that they might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5). Christ was born under the Covenant of Law and the promise "All that the Lord has said, we will do" was actually fulfilled in Christ. Christ did do *all* that the Lord had said—every bit of it. He therefore fulfilled that covenant of Law so that he might establish His covenant of Promise; to "put His laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts" (Heb. 8:10). So, instead of trying to approach God by just doing all that He says, we instead approach God through faith in Jesus Christ and His perfect righteousness which saves us. Then by His grace working in the heart we come to love and obey the commandments which He has given us (even as Abraham did in the original covenant of Promise—see Genesis 26:5).

In Galatians 4:21-26 Paul tells us that these two covenants are illustrated through Abraham's two sons—Ishmael and Isaac. God had promised Abraham that he would have a Child of his own flesh (Gen. 15). Abraham and Sarah did not see the immediate fulfillment of this promise so they tried to take it into their own hands (Gen. 16). Abraham had a child (Ishmael) with his wife's slave girl instead of trusting God's promise that it would come through Sarah. God in turn told Abraham that He would not accept that child—it was not the promised child—it was not "good enough" because it was not the child of both Abraham and Sarah. Abraham and Sarah attempted to fulfill God's promise by their own "human effort", but this was no good. In Genesis 17 God comes back when Abraham and Sarah are almost 100 years old. It is now "humanly" impossible for them to have children. So, God gives them the child He had promised and which Abraham and Sarah had come to "believe" would yet be given them.

These are the two covenants. The first of them (Ishmael) is a seeking to obey "all that God has said" and a hoping that He will find this effort acceptable for righteousness before Him. Of course, it isn't. The Bible says, "all our righteousness are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). This is like Adam and Eve trying to cover their nakedness with fig leaves (Gen. 3:7) (man's effort). It's just not good enough. The second of them (Isaac) is a trusting or "believing" in God to do something for you that you *cannot* do for yourself. That is, you "believe" in God, and He "accounts it to you for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6 and Gal. 3:6). You cannot save yourself by your own efforts of righteousness. You must trust God to do it for you; to save you by His own power. You must let Him fulfill His own promise. And then, by His power working in you, you will love and obey His Laws (Heb. 8:10, John 15:4, 5). This is the same as what God did for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He took away their fig leaves, slew an animal, and covered them with the skin of that Animal instead (Gen. 3:21)—only God's work (effort) was sufficient. So, Christ was slain that we might be covered with His "skin" of righteousness. Our own will never do!