Understanding Our Position in Christ

This session covers:

- The truth that believers are in Christ
- The progressive nature of biblical covenants and how they restore what Adam lost
- How the progressive restoration of the covenants culminate in our position of being in Christ

This session corresponds to:

- Chapters 7-8 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* book
- Session 3 of *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* CDs

Believers Are in Christ

1. **The New Testament makes it very clear that true followers of Jesus are positioned in Christ.**

   - The phrase *in Christ* appears ninety-five times in the New American Standard translation of the Bible. At least twenty-five of those occurrences refer to our position in Christ.
   - The phrase *in Christ* is a predominant theme that runs throughout the New Testament. From Romans to 1 Peter, the apostles used this phrase to explain the position of the believer through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
   - The following verses allude to who we are in Christ:

     Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God *in Christ* Jesus (Rom. 6:11).

     But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph *in Christ*, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in
every place (2 Cor. 2:14).

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Cor. 5:17).

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

- Even though the phrase in Christ is used frequently in the New Testament and is one of the most powerful blessings of New Covenant living, many have a difficult time grasping its meaning.
- To fully understand the blessings that are ours as partakers of the New Covenant, it is essential that we understand this concept.
- Understanding our covenant relationship with God is the key that unlocks the revelation of what it means to be in Christ.

In this session, we are going to look at several biblical covenants in an attempt to understand what it means to be in Christ. Understanding the progressive nature of these biblical covenants helps us understand what it means to be in Christ and the mighty blessings that are available to us through our position in Him.

Restoring What Adam Lost

1. God created man to be blessed by fulfilling a great purpose for Him.

- As God finished His work of creation, He declared that everything that He had made was very good.
- From the Genesis account, four clear purposes for God’s people are evident. They are: 1) Represent the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27); 2) Fellowship with God forever (Gen. 3:8); 3) Advance the kingdom of God (Gen. 1:28); and 4) Freely enjoy every blessing of the garden (Gen. 2:16).
- God had initiated a wonderful plan for man. Man was to be His representative upon the earth, to be His friend, to have fellowship with Him, to partner with him, to take dominion over the earth, and to be richly blessed for all eternity.

2. When Adam sinned, God’s purposes for man were temporarily aborted.

- The serpent deceived Adam and Eve, they ate the forbidden fruit, and
sin entered the world.
- As a result, Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden and God’s purposes for mankind were temporarily aborted.
- But God was not finished with man.

3. **After man fell into sin, God began a work of progressive restoration.**

- Through His covenants, God is restoring all that Adam lost. More specifically, it is through the *progressive nature* of the covenants that God is restoring every aspect of His original purposes for man.
- For example, through the New Covenant, God has restored His four original purposes for mankind.

As we are declared holy, righteous, and blameless in Christ through the New Covenant, our new position of being in right standing with God is restoring us back into the image of God.

When Jesus cut the New Covenant, the veil separating man from God was torn, giving us free access to the throne of God, and opening the way for an intimate relationship with Jesus.

With the coming of Jesus, the kingdom of God has come and the Lord has given us the authority to advance the kingdom of God and to take dominion over the earth.

Finally, God has blessed us for all eternity with every spiritual blessing, with prosperity, freedom, and health.

- However, God didn’t start His process of restoration by going directly from the Garden of Eden to the New Covenant. He has progressively restored His purposes throughout history; first, through the Old Testament covenants, and finally, with the New Covenant.
- If we skip the Old Testament covenants, we miss several essential components of God’s progressive restoration, and thereby, miss the revelation of many rich blessings contained in Old Testament covenants that are ours in Christ.

**The Progressive Nature of the Covenants**

1. **There are nine major biblical covenants recorded in Scripture.**

- The Edenic Covenant (Gen. 1-2) was made with Adam and Eve before sin entered the world and outlines God’s original purpose and goal for the human race.
- The Adamic Covenant (Gen. 3) was made after Adam and Eve sinned and presents the seeds of God’s redemptive plan for man.
- The Noahic Covenant was made with Noah after the flood (Gen. 6-9) and reestablishes God’s purpose for creation and is the foundation upon which the Abrahamic covenant is built.
The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12-22) promised the land of Canaan as an eternal inheritance to his descendants and great blessings upon all who partake of this covenant.

The Mosaic (Old) Covenant (Ex. 19-40) expands upon the covenant made with Abraham, identifying requirements of the Law and serving as a “schoolmaster” to bring people to Christ.

The Palestinian (Land) Covenant (Deut. 27-33) reveals in detail the blessings and curses of the covenant made in the Abrahamic Covenant.

The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 89; Ps. 132) guarantees the everlasting throne and kingdom of his seed. It was through this covenant that Jesus Christ will be King of the earth for 1000 years.

The New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8; Matt. 26) provides salvation and secures the associated blessings of the previous covenants to all who believe.

The Everlasting Covenant encompasses all other covenants.

2. Five of these nine covenants relate directly to our inheritance in Christ.

Each of these nine covenants add blessings to our lives; however, rather than taking the time to go in-depth into each one, we will focus on the five covenants that are most directly related to understanding our inheritance in Christ.

These are: 1) The Abrahamic Covenant; 2) The Old Covenant; 3) The Land Covenant; 4) The Davidic Covenant; and 5) The New Covenant.

3. The Abrahamic Covenant began the process of restoring position, destiny, and blessings to man.

Many years after God redeemed mankind through His covenant with Noah, He entered into covenant with Abraham.

In the Abrahamic Covenant, God began the process of restoring position, destiny, and blessings back to mankind.

This covenant contains some of the most profound blessings in all of history. God promised Abraham great favor, the land of Canaan as his eternal inheritance, a multitude of natural and spiritual sons, kings that would come forth from him, and an exalted name.

God pledged to bless Abraham and to make him a blessing.

In Genesis 17, God spoke to Abraham concerning the covenant, telling him to walk blameless before Him. God said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly” (Gen. 17:1-2).

In speaking to Abraham this way, God was informing Abraham of his obligation to live in obedience to Him. As Abraham obeyed God, the Lord vowed to establish the covenant.

This covenant was a major milestone toward the full restoration of God’s original purposes for man.
4. **The Old Covenant (Mosaic Covenant) builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant by outlining in detail the requirements for holy living.**

- After the sons of Abraham spent four hundred years in Egyptian slavery, God delivered them from bondage. God acted on Israel's behalf because He "remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Ex. 2:24).
- Because of God’s covenant, He raised up Moses as their deliverer. Through Moses, God severely judged the nation of Egypt with great plagues and destructive judgments until the sons of Israel were liberated. God brought them to the wilderness and instituted another covenant with them.
- The Old Covenant was established at Mt. Sinai as the Hebrew people waited for God to bring them into the Promised Land. This covenant established the moral, civil, and ceremonial laws by which the people were to live. By keeping the Law, they would live blamelessly before God.
- The Old Covenant builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant by outlining in detail the requirements for holy living. Recall that God commanded Abraham and his descendents to live blamelessly before Him (Gen. 17:1). The Old Covenant expounds upon this requirement and tells the Israelites how to live blamelessly before God. It is an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant in that it identifies the responsibilities of God’s kingdom of priests and His holy nation. The Law, which is the main document of the Old Covenant, states in intricate detail what God meant when He told Abraham to walk blamelessly.
- With the Old Covenant, God added another piece to the progressive restoration of His original purposes for mankind.

5. **The Land Covenant builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant by enumerating the specific blessings that were promised to Abraham and to his descendents.**

- After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Hebrew children were ready to enter the land. Just prior to the Israelites crossing the Jordan to possess Canaan, God instituted another covenant.
- This covenant, which we refer to as the Land Covenant, identified the specific blessings promised to Israel for obedience and the curses for disobedience. It highlighted the **rewards** for walking blamelessly before God as well as the **punishment** for sinful living.
- The specifics of this covenant are presented in great detail throughout the book of Deuteronomy and builds upon God’s covenant with Abraham (See Deut. 7:12-14, 28:1-2, and 28:15).
- The Land Covenant builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant by enumerating the specific blessings that were promised to Abraham and to his descendents. It emphasizes the **benefits** of walking blamelessly before God. In addition to the blessings for obeying the Law, the Land Covenant also itemizes the curses for disobeying it.
- Therefore, the Land Covenant builds upon both the Abrahamic and the
6. **After God instituted the Old Covenant and the Land Covenant, God built upon these covenants further in the Davidic Covenant.**

- God told Abraham, "I will make you a great nation" and "kings will come forth from you" (Gen. 12:2, 17:6). And Moses told Israel, "If you diligently obey the LORD your GOD...the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth" (Deut. 28:1).
- In the Davidic Covenant, God fulfilled these promises by pledging to David that his house, kingdom, and throne would endure forever (2 Sam. 7:8-17; Ps. 89). Since God purposed that man should rule over all the earth to the glory of God, He instituted a covenant whereby this objective could be fulfilled.
- Through David’s lineage, Jesus Christ became the fulfillment of David’s promise. Further, Jesus is coming soon as the great King over all the earth. He will set all who are in covenant with Him above all the nations of the earth (Zech. 14:9).

7. **All of the Old Testament covenants are fulfilled in the New Covenant.**

- From Abraham until David, God restored His original purposes one covenant at a time.
- All of the promises contained in the preceding covenants find their fulfillment in Jesus. And each covenant leads mankind and history itself on a progressive journey toward Jesus.
- The promises of great blessings and prosperity made to Abraham are fulfilled in Jesus.
- The responsibility of the Law, a heavy yoke for centuries, is fulfilled in Jesus.
- The eternal throne of King David spoken of in the Davidic Covenant is fulfilled in Jesus.
- Jesus is the sum of all things, fulfilling every covenant and every covenant promise.
- The amazing truth about the progressive nature of the covenants is this: The promises and blessings of every biblical covenant are available to us today. Each promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and is accessible to us in the New Covenant.
- The New Covenant restores everything that Adam lost!

Now that we have examined the progressive nature of the covenants, let’s take a look at how Israel entered the Old Testament covenants. This will illuminate in a powerful way what it means to be in Christ.
How Israel Entered Into the Covenants

1. Old Testament saints entered the Abrahamic, Old, and Land Covenants in Abraham.

- Recall that these three covenants are progressive. The Abrahamic Covenant promised great blessings to Abraham and his descendants if they walked blameless before God. The Old Covenant extended the Abrahamic Covenant by defining through the Law what it meant to walk blameless before God. The Land Covenant clarified the blessings of Abraham, explaining in great detail what God meant when He promised to bless Abraham.
- To establish the Abrahamic Covenant, God cut covenant with Abraham and then He specifically confirmed the covenant with Isaac and Jacob. However, God did not cut covenant again with either Isaac or Jacob (Gen. 26:23-24; 35:11-12). Note Psalm 105:8-10, "He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant which He made [cut] with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant."
- Even though God cut covenant with Abraham, the benefits of this covenant were not merely for him but were offered to all who entered this covenant through circumcision.
- Circumcision was the initiation rite for entering the Abrahamic Covenant. God gave Abraham the responsibility to circumcise every male among his people as a sign of the covenant. Since the covenant cut with Abraham was a perpetual agreement that also included his descendants, circumcision was a requirement for whoever wanted to partake of this pact.
- Thus, all circumcised Old Testament saints partook of the Abrahamic covenant in Abraham.
- God did not cut covenant with every Jewish baby who was born. Through faith sealed by circumcision, each child entered into the promises and responsibilities of the covenant that God had already made with Abraham. Abraham was the representative of the people in the covenant ceremony. Every Jewish child was an heir to the same blessings and obligations as Abraham through their covenant representative.
- Therefore, in Abraham, each Israelite was in covenant with God. In fact, Genesis 12:3 states explicitly, "And in you [Abraham] all the families of the earth will be blessed."
- Furthermore, a child born after the initiation of the Abrahamic, Old, and Land Covenants entered into the promises and responsibilities of these covenants through the acts of their forefathers.

2. Several examples will help clarify how this concept affected the life of an Old Testament saint.

- King David is an excellent example of how an Old Testament saint entered these covenants. As a child, David was circumcised according to
the commandment given to Abraham (Gen. 17:11). Therefore, David partook of the Abrahamic Covenant and the promises of it through circumcision. He was also responsible for keeping the Law of the Old Covenant. Similarly, he shared in the blessings and curses of the Land Covenant since it applied to whomever lived in the land of Israel. Although God did not actually cut any of these covenants with David, he was an heir and partaker of each of them. To a degree, David was in Abraham and in Moses.

• Throughout his life, we see snapshots of King David living in a covenant relationship with God. In 1 Samuel 17:26, David said about Goliath, “For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?” To the men around him, David’s statement demonstrated the bold confidence that came from being in covenant with God. Since Goliath was uncircumcised—thus not in covenant with God—David expected the Lord to defeat him. Why? Because one of the promises of the Abrahamic and Land Covenants was that God would defeat the enemies of those that belonged to Him (Gen. 22:17; Deut. 28:7).

• Following his affair with Bathsheba, we see another example of David living as an heir to these covenants. Because David broke the Law he was placed under a curse. The Prophet Nathan told David that the illegitimate child born through his iniquity would die (2 Sam. 12:13-19). It is easy to see that David lived in covenant with God through the Abrahamic, Old, and Land Covenants.

• Another example of the Israelites entering the covenant through circumcision is noted in Joshua 5. The Hebrew nation was on the threshold of going into Canaan to conquer the inhabitants of the land. However, many of the people had not been circumcised because they were born during Israel’s wilderness wanderings (Josh. 5:5). God instructed Joshua to circumcise the people before they went to war. Why? The Israelites were totally dependent upon the promises of God contained in the Abrahamic and Land Covenants for victory over their enemies. Thus, they had to enter the covenant with Abraham through circumcision before they fought the battles ahead in order to ensure success.

• King Josiah is one final example of how the Israelites partook of these three covenants. Prior to his reign, Israel acted corruptly toward the covenant. They forsook the Lord and worshiped pagan gods. Their high places were altars to demons as the people prostituted themselves through idolatry. When Josiah became king, he tore down the high places and brought about a reformation throughout the land. He also repaired the temple and reinstated worship. As the temple was being repaired, they found the Law of Moses. Notice what Josiah said when he read the Law for the first time:

Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book which has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book (2 Chron. 34:21).
• Even though Josiah was unfamiliar with the contents of the Law, Israel was still suffering from the curse of the Land Covenant. Again, we see how these three covenants applied to the descendants of Abraham.

Our Position in Christ

1. The New Covenant was cut between the Father and the Son.

• This truth establishes an essential foundation for understanding what it means to be in Christ. It is important that you understand this vital point. The New Covenant was not cut between God and you or God and me; it was cut between God the Father and God the Son.
• Then it was confirmed with each of us as we received Jesus as Savior and Lord. This wonderful truth is the basis for every promise of the New Covenant.
• To better understand, let’s retrace the establishment of the New Covenant. In the fullness of time, God the Son came to earth to establish the New Covenant (Phil. 2:5-11). Jesus was clothed with the robe of humanity and born of a virgin. He lived a perfect, sinless life. For thirty years, Jesus lived in obscurity as God prepared Him for ministry.
• During the last three years of His life, Jesus went about Israel stating the terms, conditions, and blessings of the New Covenant. When the time came for the covenant ceremony, Jesus as the Passover Lamb was chosen as the covenant sacrifice. Jesus, being fully God, was selected as the Father’s representative. Jesus, being fully man, was chosen also as mankind’s representative.
• As the unique, precious blood of our Lord was shed at the cross, the New Covenant was cut between our heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus. By so doing, Jesus secured all the promises and blessings of the New Covenant.
• After He rose from the dead, Jesus entered the heavenly tabernacle, and through His shed blood, He obtained eternal redemption for mankind (Heb. 9:11-12). He became the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 9:15). The Greek word translated mediator is defined as “one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or to form a compact, or for ratifying a covenant.” Thus, Jesus became our representative in the covenant ceremony and initiated the New Covenant on our behalf.
• Just as Abraham was Israel’s covenant representative in the Abrahamic Covenant, Jesus was man’s covenant representative in the New Covenant. In the same way Abraham’s descendents shared in the blessings of Abraham by being in him, believers partake in the blessings of the New Covenant by being in Christ. In a manner parallel to the Old Testament saints entering the Abrahamic Covenant through circumcision, we enter into the New Covenant that was cut with Jesus by faith through the circumcision of the heart.
2. Because the New Covenant was cut between the Father and the Son, we enter the New Covenant in Christ.

- In a similar way that David, Josiah, and all other Israelites entered the covenants that God had already made, we enter into the covenant made between the Father and the Son. Thus, through faith in the work of Jesus on the cross, we enter the New Covenant and are therefore in Christ.
- You may be wondering why we spent so much time explaining the details of how the Abrahamic, Old, Land, and New Covenants were established. Here’s the reason: When we understand what it means to be in Christ, it unlocks very specific and powerful blessings to us.
- To illustrate further what it means to be in Christ, imagine three envelopes. The first envelope is the largest and it represents Christ. The second, somewhat smaller envelope represents you and me. The third and smallest envelope is another representation of Christ.
- When we put the second envelope into the first, it illustrates our position of being in Christ through the New Covenant. As the Father looks at us, He sees us in Christ. Therefore, we are righteous because we are in Christ. We are free because we are in Christ. We are blessed—not cursed—because we are in Christ. His promises to us are yes and amen. This is our position in Christ as a result of the covenant Jesus made with the Father. The third envelope placed into the second expresses Christ being in us. Christ in us is our hope of glory. We are still in Christ, yet through the Holy Spirit, Christ is in us. The Spirit of God is busy transforming us from glory to glory into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. What we are in position is what we are becoming in practice.

Now that the proper groundwork has been established, the next two sessions will allow us to see the wonderful blessings that are ours by being in Christ and because we are partakers of the New Covenant in Christ. The next two sessions will draw from the steps of ancient covenant making from Session 2 and the progressive nature of the covenants from this session to unveil many mysteries of how blessed we are to live on this side of the cross.

Notes

Review Questions

True or False

____ 1. Adam and Eve's life in the Garden of Eden illustrates the life of blessing that God's covenants are progressively restoring to the saints.

____ 2. Even though it only appears a few times in Scripture, the phrase in Christ is a predominant idea in the New Testament.

____ 3. To fully understand the blessings that are ours as partakers of the New Covenant, it is essential that we understand the concept of being in Christ; understanding our covenant relationship with God is the key that unlocks the revelation of what it means to be in Christ.

____ 4. Through covenant, God is progressively restoring His original purposes for man that were lost when Adam sinned.

____ 5. Five of the nine biblical covenants relate directly to our inheritance in Christ.

____ 6. The Abrahamic Covenant began the process of restoring position, destiny, and blessings to man.

____ 7. The Old (Mosaic) Covenant, while very important, has very little connection to the Abrahamic Covenant.


____ 9. The New Covenant was cut between the heavenly Father and every believer with Christ as the mediator of the New Covenant.

____ 10. We enter the New Covenant in Christ.

Fill in the Blank

11. Old Testament saints entered the Abrahamic Covenant through ____________________.

12. A vital point for understanding what it means to be in Christ is that the New Covenant was not cut between God and you or God and me; it was cut between God the ____________ and God the ________________.

13. The Old (Mosaic) Covenant ________________ upon the Abrahamic Covenant by
outlining in detail the _________________ for holy living.

14. The Land Covenant builds upon the Abrahamic Covenant by enumerating the specific _________________ that were promised to Abraham and to his descendants.

15. In the Davidic Covenant, God pledged to David that his ________, ________, and ________ would endure forever. Jesus is returning soon and will fulfill this promise as he rules the earth along with His glorified saints.

Match the following statement on the left with the appropriate covenant on the right.

_____ 16. This covenant enumerates the specific blessings that were promised to Abraham and to his descendents.

_____ 17. This covenant began the process of restoring position, destiny, and blessings to man.

_____ 18. This covenant fulfills the Old Testament Covenants.

_____ 19. This covenant outlines in detail the requirements for holy living.

_____ 20. This covenant establishes the promise of an eternal throne for Jesus.

Possible Matches for 16-20

a. The Abrahamic Covenant
b. The Old (Mosaic) Covenant
c. The Land Covenant
d. The Davidic Covenant
e. The New Covenant