

Understanding End Times Prophecy - Paul Benware Chapter Two, Part One - Contracts and Covenants

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Why engage in contracts and covenants?

To frame the outcome & behavior of participants with freedom in will and action. Man's personal autonomy is the only thing in God's Creation allowed to oppose Him. While still under His Sovereignty, Man, as an aspect of His Image, is allowed autonomy. This allows for our meritorious judgement for our obedience to His expectations and commands.

How is behavior/performance/outcome ensured between sovereign individuals?

All human individuals, within the scope of their mental capacity, are generally free to do as they choose. The governance over one's actions can be imposed upon oneself, by another individual, by governance, or by God (and 'natural' circumstance). A total lack of any sort of governance would result in chaos. However, the universal awareness of God, and more so an awareness of His Word and expectations - including an understanding of reward and loss - offers the beginnings toward self-governance in agreement with our perfect and wise Creator. The levels of governance over our behavior, from lesser to best, are: Governance - An outside force that gives us no choice but to comply; Another individual - A robber with a weapon, a peer with a request, a loved one with a need, a stranger with an plea; Oneself - acting on conscience or disposition; Holy Spirit - Of those in Christ, possessed by the Spirit of God, Who if allowed offers God's guidance and attributes. The overlay of His attributes governs the Saved to reply as He would.

Why are controlling agreements needed?

The governance by the indwelling Spirit of God is the closest to being in concert with Him, and as He is Perfect, is the best avenue towards ensuring a good outcome between autonomous individuals. However, the surrender of our autonomy to another, or to God, goes against our fallen nature. Therefore, we employ agreements - Contracts and Covenants - to assist in our governance in order to assure an outcome.

Some contrasts between contracts and covenants

Contract	Covenant
Legal arena, settled by law in the court	Relational or spiritual arena, settled between participants
An agreement held in place by law and consequence	An agreement held in place by a pledge and the willful intent
Requires consideration, the exchange of something of value from the parties to the contract	Represents something participants fulfill
Parties cannot be forced to enter the agreement	Includes the committing and giving of oneself to the other
Is an exchange of goods, or what each will do or not do for/to the other	Intends to employ the strengths of each participant to help the other
Is mutually beneficial to the participants	
Either party can opt out by agreement or default on the terms	

Are there any Covenants or Contracts within the Godhead?

Since controlling agreements are required to hold autonomous individuals with differing goals and mindsets, it can be supposed there is no reason for Covenants or Contracts within the Godhead. All three Persons are of the same perfect mind.

Is either of the two agreements superior?

A Contract is a rigid agreement that relies upon the completeness of the terms to foresee and address all issues related to the desired outcome. All circumstances and challenges must be anticipated and answered. On the other hand, a Covenant is much more fluid and flexible in navigating challenges to the desired outcome. A failure of a participating party to a contract would find himself in default and the contract possibly broken. The same failure of a participant of a Covenant could expect the other party to lend his help to keep the agreement intact. Both Contracts and Covenants seek an end goal. The difference lies in the degree of the participants' reliance on relationship and aid when the agreement is threatened by failure to meet the terms.

A Covenant is far superior, but comes at a higher personal cost to the participants. Failure in a contract results in the parties walking away, perhaps with penalties. A Covenant is as robust as the participating individuals.

God employed both Contract and Covenant in Man's Salvation. The Law was fully satisfied in Christ's perfect execution of the terms. He alone has fulfilled the Contract without any failure. In turn, Christ simultaneously offers/commands the ability to enter into the new Covenant, while relieving us of our obligation to the Contract through the fulfillment of the terms we are held to. He paid the price of our obligation; He brought us into Covenant with Him to see us Saved; We are possessed of His Spirit to teach us governance; We are no longer parties to the Law/Contract and therefore have died to the sin it's terms declare.

Some Other Notes

- Duration - All covenants have terms of duration through the end of their intended outcome. Abraham's is in force as long as the heavens and earth remain; marriage is until the death of one of the spouses; a short term covenant (more likely could be termed as a vow?) could be until the conclusion of something like a battle. Covenants are typically fully binding and cannot be broken. One exception is in marriage, where God has allowed certain circumstances, perhaps due to His mercy for our inability to forgive.
- Terms of Fulfillment
 - Parties (engaged in the covenant)

- Seed of Abraham
 - Physical Descendants - Abraham's physical and inherited line. Inherited is demonstrated in the case of Jacob and Esau (Gen 25.24-34). Though Esau was first in line by birthright, he surrendered it for a meal, and Jacob deceived Isaac into conferring his paternal blessing - thus assigning Jacob to the inherited line of Abraham.
 - Genuine Israel - The remnant, and those referred to by Paul; genuine believers and followers of God, not simply those born to the Nation and religion.
 - Gentile/Nations - Christ following, non-Jewish believers, as well as the benefits of Jewish contributions conferred to all people in the world.
- No Transfers - This is akin to "God has no grandchildren". Our covenant through Christ is ours individually. Our children must have their own covenant with Him, for while they benefit under our households, they cannot be adopted through ours.
- Not all yet fulfilled - As we await the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant - the rescue of those belonging to God, the defeat and removal of God's enemies, the establishment of Christ's governance on Earth, the elevation of true Israel over the saved Nations - we have already seen most, but not all, of the terms of the Covenant fulfilled.