

The School of Biblical Law

Covenant and Law

Lesson Eleven: “The Covenant Model: Succession, Part 2”

The idea of continuity is tied to the concept of covenant. A man leaves an inheritance to his family – his heirs – in an effort to make sure that the fruit of his labors endure beyond his life span and in an attempt to insure that the lives and labors of his heirs can benefit from what is inherited. The family inheritance process is reflective of God’s inheritance process. Father to son guarantees continuity. Just as a natural father identifies his heirs for the continuation of family name and fortune, so does God the Father seek to pass down assets to His heirs to guarantee the continuity of His work in the earth.

1. Covenantal continuity guarantees progress, whereas breaking with the past yields discontinuity.

All of life advances when one generation builds upon the inheritance of the former generation (sciences, technology advances, assets, family size).

Discontinuity yields loss and requires starting again, thus it forfeits the gains achieved in the past.

2. Permanence is ultimately covenantal and is, therefore, governed by the ethical terms of the covenant.

Permanence is mythical unless it is God-centered.

- The serpent promised Adam and Eve a future outside of covenantal faithfulness (Gen. 3:4-5).
- Moses instructed Israel to secure their future through covenantal faithfulness (Deut. 8).

3. Scripture uses the symbol of leaven to communicate the concepts of continuity and discontinuity.

Leaven is that which has influence over time to cause growth in the medium in which it is introduced.

Leaven can be good or evil.

- All things that could act as leaven were required to be removed before Passover because Passover would create a radical break from Israel’s captors and all Egyptian ideologies (Ex. 12:8).
- Israel was instructed to celebrate Pentecost with leavened bread (Lev. 23:15-17) because a new leaven – the law of God – had been introduced and would give rise to a new culture.
- Jesus warned his followers to be cautious about the leaven of the Pharisees (Mk.8:15); but at the same time, Jesus stated that His kingdom was like leaven (Mt. 13:33).

Leaven is the symbol of the maturation of ideas or beliefs , thus it represents time, continuity, growth, and dominion.

4. For generational continuity to be guaranteed, each consecutive generation must participate in covenantal renewal.

The covenant that Abraham cut with God was confirmed by the act of circumcision, but all his heirs were also required to be circumcised (Gen. 17:9-14).

- Moses was required to circumcise his son (Ex. 4:19-26).
- Joshua could not enter the Promised Land with until his generation participated in covenant renewal by way of circumcision (Josh. 5:2-10).
- Circumcision testified that man’s hope for generational continuity did not, ultimately, rest in natural father to son inheritance but in covenantal faithfulness with God.

Jesus cut covenant with His disciples when he celebrated the Passover meal with them (Lk. 22:14-20), and then the church was commissioned to continue covenant renewal through celebration of the Eucharist (I Cor. 11:23-30).

Future orientation not only requires that the heir of be identified but also that the heir be instructed in covenant renewal. Natural heirs must be spiritual heirs who renew covenant and live faithfully to the covenant. If not, they are in danger of being disinherited – thus discontinuity. Israel experienced discontinuity through the Babylonian captivity and again in 70 AD.