

# Dr. Tiberius Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 3, God as Covenant Maker Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 3, God as Covenant Maker, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Rata's Old Testament Theology session explores the concept of God as a covenant maker, beginning with the initial appearance of the term "covenant" in Genesis. The session defines covenant as a solemn agreement, drawing parallels to ancient Near Eastern treaties. It then examines the key covenants in the Old Testament: Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic, highlighting their promises and obligations. The discussion emphasizes that while these covenants were made with Israel, they ultimately find their complete realization in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who inaugurated the New Covenant. This new covenant, promised in Jeremiah, features an internalized law and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, offering a superior and permanent relationship with God through Christ's sacrifice. The session underscores that God's desire has always been to be in a covenant relationship with humanity, fulfilled through Jesus.

2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → OT Theology, Rata).



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### 3. Briefing Document: Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 3, God as Covenant Maker

#### Briefing Document: God as Covenant Maker in Old Testament Theology

##### Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Tiberius Rata in Session 3 of his Old Testament Theology course, focusing on "God as Covenant Maker." The session explores the concept of covenant in the Old Testament, examining key covenants made by God with humanity and Israel (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and the promise of the New Covenant), and ultimately argues that these covenants find their ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

##### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. **God as Both Creator and Covenant Maker:** Dr. Rata establishes that while the Bible reveals God as the Creator, it also significantly portrays Him as a "covenant-making and a covenant-keeping God." This aspect of God's character is crucial for understanding His relationship with humanity.
2. **Definition and Context of Covenant:**
  - The term "covenant" (Hebrew: *berit*, Greek: *diatheke*) signifies a "solemn agreement between two or more parties made binding by some sort of oath."
  - Covenants were a common feature in the ancient Near East, resembling treaties and agreements between individuals and kings, including suzerain treaties where a superior party dictates the terms.
  - Biblical covenants made by God are often suzerain in nature, with God setting the terms, and humans responding. As Dr. Rata states, "we don't negotiate with God."
1. **Key Old Testament Covenants:**
  - **Noahic Covenant (Implied):** Although the word "covenant" first appears in Genesis 9 within the flood narrative, Dr. Rata directly moves to the Abrahamic covenant as the starting point for his detailed discussion of God's covenants with his people.
  - **Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12, 15, 17):** This covenant is foundational and "sets the trajectory for the entire scripture."

- It includes significant promises to Abraham: a great nation, a great name, and a great land.
- Chapter 12 contains the initial promises, chapter 15 the ratification through an oath, and chapter 17 the sign of the covenant (circumcision).
- The covenant formula appears in Genesis 17:7: "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your offspring after you." This formula, "I will be their God, and they will be my people," recurs throughout Scripture.
- The ratification ceremony in Genesis 15, where only God symbolically passes through the cut animals (smoking pot and flaming torch), suggests to some an unconditional aspect of God's promise. Dr. Rata explains, "The idea is that God says, look, no matter what, I'm going to keep the end of my bargain."
- Despite the unconditional nature of God's promise, there are obligations and conditions for *benefiting* from the covenant blessings, as seen in the example of circumcision. "If Abraham had not obeyed the covenant stipulations, God could have chosen someone else."
- The promises to Abraham were partially fulfilled historically with the growth of Israel in Egypt and their recognition by Pharaoh. However, the ultimate fulfillment lies in Christ.
- **Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19-24, Deuteronomy):** While building upon the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant is explicitly conditional, featuring clear "if-then language." "If you do this, you'll be blessed. If you don't, you will be cursed."
- The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5) are a central element of this covenant.
- Dr. Rata emphasizes that the Mosaic Law was not impossible to keep but rather a "minimum requirement," and Jesus, through grace, raises the bar, as seen in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5).
- The Mosaic covenant was temporary, as indicated in the book of Hebrews, awaiting the arrival of the New Covenant.

- **Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7):** The promises in this covenant shift to "perpetual love and perpetual kingship" for David's lineage. "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."
- While God's promise to raise up a descendant is unconditional, the continuation of an uninterrupted reign was dependent on Israel's obedience, which they ultimately failed to uphold, leading to the exile and lack of a king.
- Prophecies in Jeremiah (Jeremiah 33) connect a future righteous "branch" from David to both kingship and priesthood, pointing towards the ultimate fulfillment in Christ.
- Luke 1:32-33 foretells Jesus' eternal reign on David's throne, confirming the fulfillment of the Davidic promises.

#### 1. **The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31):**

- The concept and promise of a "new covenant" appear in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (the expression itself appears only here in the Old Testament). Ezekiel 36 also speaks to similar concepts.
- The New Covenant is not entirely "brand new" but rather a renewal of old covenant promises with significant new elements.
- Key features include the "interiorization of the law": "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts."
- Universal knowledge of God: "they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest."
- Complete forgiveness of sin: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
- The means for this transformation is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Dr. Rata notes, "what's new is the fact that the spirit now indwells the believer, which is something they did not have in the Old Testament."
- Jesus institutes the New Covenant at the Last Supper (Luke 22:20): "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."
- The New Covenant is inaugurated through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

- Paul (2 Corinthians 3) and the author of Hebrews (Hebrews 8 & 10, quoting Jeremiah 31) highlight the superiority and finality of the New Covenant over the Old (Mosaic) Covenant.

#### 1. **Ultimate Fulfillment in Jesus Christ:**

- Dr. Rata consistently emphasizes that the promises of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants, as well as the inauguration of the New Covenant, find their ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- In Christ, believers receive a "great name" as children of God (1 John 3:1).
- Their inheritance is not merely earthly land but something far better, including the Holy Spirit and heaven (Galatians 3:13-14).
- Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Law (Matthew 5:17).
- Jesus is the promised eternal King from David's lineage (Luke 1:32-33, Acts 2:29-36).
- Jesus' sacrifice is the once-for-all atonement for sin, establishing the New Covenant (Hebrews 10). As Dr. Rata concludes, "Jesus is the fulfillment of the covenants and the covenant promises."

#### **Key Quotes:**

- "So the Bible reveals God as the Creator, who created everything, who created us in his image. But then he is described as a covenant-making and a covenant-keeping God."
- "A covenant is a solemn agreement between two or more parties made binding by some sort of oath."
- "God is the suzerain, and we are his followers. You know, we don't negotiate with God."
- "The idea is that God says, look, no matter what, I'm going to keep the end of my bargain." (Regarding the ratification of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 15).
- "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your offspring after you." (The covenant formula, Genesis 17:7).
- "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts,

and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33, the promise of the New Covenant).

- "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:20, Jesus instituting the New Covenant).
- "Jesus is the fulfillment of the covenants and the covenant promises."

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Rata's session provides a comprehensive overview of God as the Covenant Maker in the Old Testament. He traces the development of God's covenantal relationship with humanity through the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants, highlighting the promises and obligations associated with each. Crucially, he emphasizes that while these covenants were significant for Israel, they ultimately point forward to their complete and ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the New Covenant, characterized by the indwelling Spirit, internalized law, universal knowledge of God, and complete forgiveness of sins through Christ's sacrifice.

## 4. Study Guide: Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 3, God as Covenant Maker

### God as Covenant Maker: A Study Guide

#### Quiz:

1. According to the text, when and where does the word "covenant" (Hebrew: *berit*) first appear in the Bible? Briefly describe the context of this first appearance.
2. What are the two main definitions of a covenant provided in the lecture? In what ancient Near Eastern practice were biblical covenants rooted?
3. Explain the difference between suzerain treaties and covenants made between equals. Which type best describes the covenants God makes with humanity, and why?
4. Describe the three key components of the Abrahamic Covenant as presented in Genesis 12, 15, and 17. What significant event occurs in each of these chapters related to the covenant?
5. What is the covenant formula, and where does it first appear in the text? Why is this formula significant in understanding God's relationship with his people?
6. Explain the unusual ratification ceremony described in Genesis 15. What does the lecturer suggest is the meaning of God alone passing through the divided animals?
7. While the Abrahamic covenant's promises are reiterated in the Mosaic covenant, what is the key difference highlighted between these two covenants regarding conditionality? Provide an example from the Mosaic covenant.
8. In what ways does the lecturer argue that the promises of the Old Testament covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic) find their ultimate fulfillment? Provide a specific New Testament example related to one of these covenants.
9. What are the key new elements of the New Covenant as promised in Jeremiah 31, according to the lecture? How does the concept in Ezekiel 36 explain the interiorization of the law?
10. How and when did Jesus institute and inaugurate the New Covenant? What does the book of Hebrews emphasize about the significance of Jesus' sacrifice in relation to this covenant?

### Answer Key:

1. The word "covenant" (*berit*) first appears in Genesis in the flood narrative, specifically in verses six through nine. In this context, God establishes a covenant with Noah and his descendants, promising never again to destroy all flesh by the waters of a flood.
2. A covenant is defined as an agreement enacted between two parties where one or both make promises on their oath to perform or refrain from certain actions, and as a solemn agreement between two or more parties made binding by some sort of oath. Biblical covenants are rooted in the ancient Near Eastern practice of treaties and agreements.
3. Suzerain treaties are agreements where one party (the suzerain) is in charge and dictates the terms to a lesser power. Covenants between equals involve mutual agreement and obligations between parties of similar standing. The covenants God makes are described as suzerain treaties because God, as the superior party, sets the terms and conditions, and humans do not negotiate with Him.
4. The Abrahamic Covenant includes the promises of a great nation, a great name, and a great land. In Genesis 12, God initially makes these promises to Abraham. In Genesis 15, the covenant is ratified through an oath ceremony. In Genesis 17, the sign of the covenant is given through circumcision.
5. The covenant formula is "I will be their God, and they will be my people," and it first appears in Genesis 17:7 in the context of the Abrahamic Covenant. This formula is significant because it encapsulates God's desire for a close and enduring relationship with his people, a theme that runs throughout Scripture.
6. In Genesis 15, God instructs Abraham to prepare animals and cut them in half, laying the halves opposite each other. Uniquely, only a smoking pot and a flaming torch (representing God) pass between these pieces. The lecturer suggests this indicates that God is unilaterally committing to the covenant promises, regardless of human faithfulness.
7. The key difference lies in the clarity of conditionality. While the Abrahamic covenant has obligations, the Mosaic covenant explicitly uses "if-then" language, clearly stating that blessings are contingent upon obedience and curses upon disobedience, as seen in Deuteronomy's blessings and curses.
8. The lecturer argues that the promises of the Old Testament covenants ultimately find their fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. For example, in 1



John 3:1, believers are called children of God, signifying a great name. Galatians 3:13-14 explains how the blessing of Abraham comes to the Gentiles through Christ, and believers receive the Spirit.

9. The new elements of the New Covenant include the interiorization of the law ("I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts") and a universal knowledge of God ("they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest") coupled with the complete forgiveness of sins ("I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"). Ezekiel 36 explains the interiorization of the law as God giving a new heart and spirit, and putting His Spirit within believers to enable obedience.
10. Jesus instituted the New Covenant at the Last Supper, as recorded in Luke 22:20, when he said the cup was the new covenant in his blood. He inaugurated it when he shed his blood on the cross. The book of Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus' sacrifice is a once-for-all offering, fulfilling the need for repeated sacrifices under the old covenants and establishing a permanent atonement for sin.

### **Essay Format Questions:**

1. Discuss the significance of understanding God as a "covenant maker" in Old Testament theology. How does this concept shape our understanding of God's character and his relationship with humanity?
2. Compare and contrast the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, focusing on their similarities in promises and their key differences in conditionality. How do these covenants build upon each other in the narrative of the Old Testament?
3. Analyze the Davidic Covenant and its promise of perpetual kingship. How does the Old Testament narrative demonstrate both the conditional and unconditional aspects of this covenant? How is this covenant ultimately fulfilled in the New Testament?
4. Explore the nature of the New Covenant as presented in Jeremiah and explained in the New Testament (especially Hebrews). What are the defining characteristics of this covenant, and how does it differ from the preceding covenants?
5. Critically evaluate the argument that the Old Testament covenants are ultimately fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Provide specific examples from the lecture to support your analysis.

## Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Covenant (Berit - Hebrew):** A solemn agreement between two or more parties, often involving oaths and stipulations, establishing a binding relationship.
- **Covenant (Diatheke - Greek):** The New Testament term for covenant, which can also be translated as testament or will.
- **Suzerain Treaty:** An agreement between a dominant king or power (the suzerain) and a lesser king or people, where the suzerain dictates the terms.
- **Unilateral Covenant:** A covenant in which one party (in the biblical context, typically God) primarily sets the terms and conditions, although obligations may still exist for the other party.
- **Conditionality:** The idea that the blessings or curses of a covenant are dependent upon the obedience or disobedience of the covenant partners.
- **Ratification:** The act of formally confirming or establishing a covenant, often through a symbolic ceremony or oath.
- **Covenant Formula:** A recurring statement in Scripture, particularly "I will be their God, and they will be my people," expressing the essence of the covenant relationship.
- **Fulfillment:** The idea that the promises and intentions of earlier covenants find their ultimate realization in later events or in a specific person, such as Jesus Christ.
- **Interiorization of the Law:** A key aspect of the New Covenant where God's law is not merely external but is written on the hearts and minds of believers, influencing their inner being.
- **Inauguration:** The formal beginning or establishment of something new, such as the New Covenant through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

## 5. FAQs on Rata, Old Testament Theology, Session 3, God as Covenant Maker, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: God as Covenant Maker

#### 1. What is a covenant in the biblical context?

In the Bible, a covenant is a solemn agreement between two parties, often formalized with an oath. One or both parties make promises to perform or refrain from specific actions. In the ancient Near East, covenants were common, resembling treaties and agreements between individuals, kings, and between a suzerain (a greater power) and a lesser power or individuals. Biblical covenants, particularly those made by God, are often unilateral, meaning God sets the terms, and they establish a binding relationship.

#### 2. When and with whom does the concept of covenant first appear in the Bible, and what major covenants follow?

The word "covenant" (Hebrew: *berit*) first appears in the flood narrative in Genesis 6-9, where God makes a covenant with Noah. Following this, the foundational covenant in Scripture is the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12, 15, 17), which sets the trajectory for the rest of the Bible. Subsequent major covenants include the Mosaic Covenant (established with Moses at Sinai), the Davidic Covenant (with King David in 2 Samuel 7), and the New Covenant (promised by Jeremiah and inaugurated by Jesus).

#### 3. What are the key promises of the Abrahamic Covenant and how are they both historically and ultimately fulfilled?

The Abrahamic Covenant includes promises of a great nation, a great name, and a great land (Canaan). Historically, the descendants of Abraham grew into a large nation in Egypt and eventually possessed the land of Canaan. However, the ultimate fulfillment of these promises is found in Jesus Christ. Believers in Christ are considered the children of God (a great name and family), and their inheritance is not merely earthly land but the kingdom of heaven (a greater promised land), received through the Holy Spirit and redemption from the curse of the law.

#### **4. How does the Mosaic Covenant relate to the Abrahamic Covenant, and what is its defining characteristic?**

The Mosaic Covenant, established with the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt, does not introduce entirely new promises but reiterates and builds upon the promises given to Abraham, including being God's people and inheriting the land. The key difference lies in its clear conditionality, expressed through "if-then" language. Blessings are tied to obedience to God's laws, including the Ten Commandments, while disobedience leads to curses. This covenant highlights the obligations of God's people in a way that the Abrahamic Covenant initially emphasizes God's promises.

#### **5. What are the central promises of the Davidic Covenant, and how are they fulfilled despite the eventual lack of an earthly Davidic king?**

The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7) promises King David perpetual love and an enduring dynasty, ensuring he would never lack a descendant on the throne. While the earthly kingdom of David eventually fell, leading to periods without a king, this covenant finds its ultimate and eternal fulfillment in Jesus Christ. As a descendant of David, Jesus is the promised king who reigns forever over the house of Israel (spiritually understood as all believers), fulfilling the promise of a perpetual kingship.

#### **6. What necessitates the New Covenant, and what are its key characteristics as prophesied in Jeremiah?**

The need for a New Covenant arose not because the previous covenants were flawed, but because the people consistently failed to uphold their obligations. The New Covenant, prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34, is characterized by an "interiorization" of God's law, which will be written on people's hearts rather than on external tablets. It also promises a universal knowledge of God ("they shall all know me") and complete forgiveness of sins ("I will remember their sin no more").

#### **7. How is the New Covenant inaugurated and made effective, and what role does the Holy Spirit play?**

Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant at the Last Supper, stating that the cup was the "new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20). It was made effective through his sacrificial death on the cross. A key aspect of the New Covenant, further explained in Ezekiel 36, is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God promises to give a new heart and spirit, enabling believers to walk in his statutes and obey his rules. This indwelling of the Spirit distinguishes the New Covenant from the Old, where the Spirit came upon specific individuals for particular tasks.

**8. How do the Old Testament covenants relate to and find their ultimate purpose in Jesus Christ?**

The Old Testament covenants, including the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants, serve as a progressive revelation of God's plan for humanity and his desire for a relationship with his people. While each covenant had its immediate historical context and fulfillment, they all ultimately point forward to and find their complete fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He embodies the promises, fulfills the law perfectly, and establishes the eternal kingdom promised to David, inaugurating the New Covenant through his sacrifice and the gift of the Holy Spirit.