

The Old and New Covenant and the Mass Bible Study

Year of the Eucharist and St. Joseph 2021

What is a covenant (Hebrew *berit*)? – “A kinship bond between two parties, with conditions and obligations, established by an oath or its equivalent. Covenants were ubiquitous in the ancient Near East as well as Greco-Roman culture as a means to forge and maintain relationships between individuals, families, tribes, and even nations. Covenant is also the master-theme of the Bible, which records the various ways throughout history that God has drawn humanity into a familial relationship with himself through divine oaths.” -- *Catholic Bible Dictionary* by Dr. Scott Hahn

Features of a Covenant

Covenant	Genesis 31:43-54	Old/Mosaic Covenant	New Covenant
Oath			
Sign			
Sacrifice			
Priest			
Meal			
Sacred Place			
Law			

see also Genesis 21:22-32, 26:26-33

The Old/Mosaic Covenant – Exodus 19:1-20; 20:21-25; 24:4-12

As you read the passage, look for the features of the Covenant.

What is the purpose of the Mosaic Covenant?

The New Covenant – Matthew 26:28

Our Lord inaugurates the New Covenant at the Last Supper and seals it with His death on the Cross. Christ is the High Priest of the New Covenant (Hebrews 4:14), because He offered Himself on the Cross (Lk 23:46). No one had the power to take His life, but He offered it Himself (Jn 10:17-18).

A Covenant is sealed with an oath and a sacrifice. There are several possibilities for the oath, but the purpose of a covenant is to bring about Communion, so I would suggest John 13:20 and Matthew 28:20. The Sacrifice is the Lord Himself, Who said that He bring all souls to Himself when He was “lifted up,” are Crucified (Jn 12:32). However, we shouldn’t ignore that the Last Supper takes place in a Passover Meal (Mt. 26:19). The Passover Meal is what allows us to understand the Crucifixion a sacrifice and not just a common execution, because Christ had already offered His life in the Eucharist before He offered it on the Cross.

Covenant are usually made in a sacred place, which is often a mountain, and the New Covenant is formed on three mountains. The Last Supper takes place near the Temple (Acts 2), which is on Mt. Zion, then they went to the Garden of Gethsemane, which is on Mt. Olivet (Mk 14:32 and Mt 26:30), and the Crucifixion took place on Mt. Calvary (Jn 19:17).

The Law of the New Covenant can be seen in the “new commandment” that Jesus gives in John 13:34.

Finally, the sign of the Covenant can be seen in the washing of the disciples feet, which He commands them to do for others (Jn 13:15), and in the offering of the Eucharist itself, which He also commands them to do in commemoration of Him (Lk 22:19).

Last Supper - Matthew 26:19-30, Mark 14:16-32, Luke 22:13-39, and John 13-18

The Commemoration of the Covenant

The Mosaic Covenant has the feature that it should be remembered or renewed or celebrated, so that each generation is brought into the covenant, taught what it means to be part of the covenant people, and renewed in their dedication to God.

First, Moses commands the leaders of the people that on the Sabbath Year, which is every seven years, in the Feast of Tabernacles, since all of the people will be gathered for the feast, to read the Book of the Law to the people. See Deuteronomy 31:9-13.

Second, there were to observe every seventh day, the Sabbath Day, as a sign of the covenant, by not doing any work as a sign of the gift of creation and of the covenant. See Exodus 31:12-17.

Third, every day, at the third hour (9 AM) and the ninth hour (3 PM) the priests were to offer the daily offering (*Tamid*), of a year old lamb without blemish; however, on the Sabbath they were to offer bread and wine with the lamb. See Exodus 29:38-41 and Numbers 28:1-10.

Mosaic Covenant	New Covenant
Reading of the Book of the Law	Readings from Scripture at Mass
Keeping of the Sabbath Day	Sunday as the Sabbath of the New Covenant
Offering of a lamb without blemish	Offering of the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29)
Offering of bread and wine	Offering of bread and wine
Levitical Priesthood	Priesthood of Christ

Homework

Read and reflect on Hebrews 12:18-25 as a description of the Old and New Covenants.