

Salvation History

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MY FATHER'S HOUSE

From God's perspective, human history, *or what is called Salvation History*, can be divided into the time before Christ--the time of preparation, and the time after Christ--the time of fulfillment.

God the Father, has a plan to incorporate the whole world into Christ, His Son, by the power of their Spirit -- the Holy Spirit. In the old covenants, the Spirit of God worked to form ever far-reaching covenants -- six of them in all. In the new covenant, God formed a universal or Catholic covenant with His Incarnate Son, Jesus.

So Salvation History is a theological category originally formulated in the 19th century to express the Biblical teaching that God acted in the history of divinely covenanted communities to bring salvation to the entire world. The key events recounted in the Old Testament include the six covenants to Israel, as well as the building of the tabernacle and later, the temple, which would sacramentally express God's way of sanctifying His sinful people.

The New Testament sees this history as culminating in the new covenant and in the person of Jesus whose life, death and Resurrection constitute God's definitive act of salvation. In the scriptures, the believing community expresses these basic contents of faith precisely by remembering the mighty covenants, oaths, sacraments and deeds of God. (cf. Deut 26:5-9, Ps 105; Acts 10:36-43).

Time of Preparation.

After Adam and Eve sinned, God made an oath or promise. Surprisingly, He made it with Satan - "I will bring (total) enmity between you and THE Woman, between your offspring and her offspring. You shall strike at their heel, but they shall crush your head" (Gen 3:15).

A New Adam, a New Eve

God's plan was to send a new Adam (Jesus) and a new Eve (Mary) to form a new people, a new family of man renewed by and energized by His Spirit.

Preparation Through Oaths and Covenants

In order to do this, God began to prepare a people who would be His very own. He did this by means of promises (oaths) and covenants.

First Covenant With Adam

God made a covenant with Adam, a marriage covenant. To Adam and Eve, He promised to be their God, if they would submit and be His people. He gave them a test of

obedience and they failed by committing the first or original human sin. Nevertheless, God had made an oath. Adam and Eve were punished, but God still worked with them.

The Covenant sign of this first covenant (the Adamic Covenant) was the Sabbath. To Adam and Eve, the first day of the week was a day of rest - of resting in God. In Hebrew, the word for "oath swearing" (sheba) is the word for seven. To swear an oath is "to seven oneself." The Sabbath was, therefore, understood as the day for Israel to *remember* God's covenant at creation.

Second Covenant With Noah - 2500BC

Events after the Fall became progressively worse, so God made a second covenant with Noah. Although God wanted everyone to be saved, only Noah and his household were saved through the ark. As a sign of this covenant, God set a "rainbow" in the sky. The ark was to be a foretype of the Church, the bark of Peter.

Third Covenant, Abramic - 2000BC

The third covenant that God formed was with Abraham. This was a tribal covenant and the sign of the covenant would be circumcision. God told Abraham, "Go to the land that I will show you" (Gn 11:26). God promised to bless all the nations through Him. The seeds of Catholicity are contained already in these first three covenants -- in Adam God promised a family bond, in Noah God promised a deliverance through an Ark, and in Abraham He promised to bless all nations.

**God's Threefold Blessing to Abram
Genesis 12:2-3**

Promises	Nationhood	"Name" (dynasty)	Worldwide Blessing
Covenants	Genesis 15	Genesis 17	Genesis 22
Fulfillments	Mosaic Covenant	Davidic Covenant	New Covenant

The Patriarchs - Abraham, Israel and Jacob

Abraham and Sarah finally had a faith child, Isaac. Isaac had twins, Esau and Jacob. Jacob wrestled with the angel of God and was re-named Israel. Israel, in turn, had twelve sons, one of whom Joseph, who was sold as captive to the Egyptians. Then during the seven years of famine, Israel and his other eleven sons joined Joseph in Egypt, since Joseph was now the prime minister of the Pharaoh and had food for them.

Mosaic Covenant - 1500BC

The Fourth Covenant was with Moses, one of Abraham's descendants born in Egypt where the twelve tribes of Israel (Abraham's grandsons) sojourned for 400 years. Moses was chosen to lead the chosen people, the Israelites, out of Egypt where they became captive. After a series of promises and plagues, Pharaoh released the Israelites so that

they could travel to the land God had promised. Before they left, God gave them detailed instructions concerning the Passover Lamb and the Passover Meal, that was to commemorate their *passing over* into the Promised Land. The Passover, thus, became the symbol of the Mosaic Covenant, which now included the whole nation of Israel.

Moses framed the Deuteronomic Covenant with various concessions--polygamy, concubinage, divorce, remarriage, slavery, usury, and harem warfare. He also introduced two additional laws: the law of king and the central sanctuary--the tabernacle, both important sacramental keys eventually fulfilled by Jesus. God's plan was to build an earthly temple, His tabernacle, as a dwelling place on earth. This was to be His one, holy Church. Moses also gave three warnigs to future kings: they were not to accumulate weapons (chariots), wives or wealth. Saul somewhat, David somewhat, and Solomon gravely would break all three commandments. From marriage, to household, to tribe, to nation -- the people of God grew.

Time of Judges

During the time of the judges, 1500BC to 1000BC, the nation of Israel rebelled, then was captured, then cried out to God, then was liberated only to once again become unfaithful, be captured and be liberated. This happened over and again. It's a pattern of salvation history: *sin to slavery, to supplication, to salvation, to surplus, and to sin again.*

After the last of the judges, Israel had only sinful priests to lead them. They cried out to God for a king. God punished them by giving them what they wanted. And the chain of twelve judges eventually waned both because of the rebellion of the Israelites and the corruption of the Levites (Jgs 17-19). So at God's command, Samuel the prophet anointed Saul to reign as a father figure over his unruly family and gave to Saul a spirit of prophecy and a new heart (cf 1 Sam 10:6). Saul broke the covenant with God (cf 1 Sam 13, 14), and God punished him not by deposing him immediately, but by not allowing his son to succeed him.

Fifth Covenant with David - 1000BC - Davidic Covenant

So God made a covenant with David. The sign of this covenant was the throne. God had sent Samuel to Bethlehem and to Jesse where one by one, his first seven sons were rejected, and Samuel anointed the youngest, David (1 Sam 16:1). David was basically a man after God's own heart, since David continually sought the Lord by searching out the high priests for discernment, and since, on his lyre he continually sought to praise the Lord, (by writing the 150 psalms), Israel under David prospered.

David made Jerusalem his capital, for it was here that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, priest-king of Salem, who blessed Abraham and fed him with bread and wine (cf Gn 14). Here also, Abraham offered Isaac, and then heard God's oath to bless all the nations (see Genesis 22). Then Moses had commanded that a central sanctuary be built here after Israel's conquest of the promised land. David was not only a king but a priest-king (cf 2 Sam 6:5). In Jerusalem, he pitched a tent and brought up the ark of the

covenant. In short, David came to Jeru-Salem dressed as a priest-king, blessed the people and gave them bread and wine.

Time for a Temple

David wanted to build a temple. But because he had too much blood on his hands, God promised that his son would establish the kingdom and build the temple. Solomon was the son he promised. In the beginning, Solomon clearly prefigured Christ, the eternal prince of peace, Son of David, King of Israel, temple builder and teacher of wisdom. Solomon later would be corrupted by accumulating too many weapons in the form of chariots, too many wives (900 in all), and too much wealth in the form of taxes. The tax he levied against his own people was 666, which has come to be known as the symbol of evil.

Two Nations Under God

Rehoboan, Solomon's son, taxed the people even more than his father (cf 1 Kings 12:10-11). Civil war ensued. Ten tribes split away, never to be reunited. Only the tribe of Benjamin was left with David's House. The *Northern Kingdom*, now called Israel, dwarfed the *Southern Kingdom* of Judah, where Rehoboan was still king. The short-lived golden age of a united Davidic kingdom, an earthly prototype of God's heavenly kingdom, was now over. The millennium prior to Christ proved to be a crucible of purification and refinement for God's family. After revolting politically, the ten renegade tribes rebelled spiritually. The idolatrous stage was set by King Jeroboam, who reigned in the 10th century AD. One of the first official acts of King Jeroboam was to erect two golden calves to be worshipped, one at Bethel and one at Dan. He also expelled all the Levites. He undid the Sinai covenant that God made with Moses.

Prophets and Losses

God's response was to send prophets to warn the Northern Kingdom -- mighty prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, and Amos. In 722BC, the Northern tribes were completely overrun by Assyria, the worst terrorist nation of antiquity. Hezekiah and Josiah did issue much-needed reforms. Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, not only rebelled against God's covenants, but perfected evil in Jerusalem as never before, even sacrificing his own children on the fiery altar of the pagan god, Molech, and ordering the deaths of thousands of Jewish children on altars outside of Jerusalem. Jerusalem's fate was thus sealed, for God had sworn an oath to punish Jerusalem.

A century later, the best efforts of good king, Josiah, were not enough to undo the damage that Manasseh did. Babylonian oppression began around 600BC and in 586BC. Their king, Nebuchadnezzar, burned Jerusalem and carried the Jews away into captivity for 70 years. The temple was destroyed, the priesthood decimated and the sacrifices stopped. God's covenant family appeared to have been extinguished. However, prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel saw the Babylonian exile as God's appointed period for purging and penance. It came to a partial close when the Medo-Persians overran Babylon. Their ruler, Cyrus, allowed the Jews to return home to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple) see Is 44-45).

The Sixth Covenant - the Priestly Covenant with Ezra 500BC

With the restoration of the temple came Ezra, the high priest. He renewed the covenant, forced Jewish men to get rid of their foreign wives, republished the law, and oversaw the completion of the temple. Without kings or prophets, even the priestly line became riddled with corruption and weakness. Yet during this time period of suffering, the Jews experienced a profoundly deep conversion to the Lord. Prayer was cultivated, worship was refined and allegiance to God's law flourished as never before. And, for the first time in Israel's history, many Jews were awarded the crown of martyrdom (cf 1 and 2 Maccabees).

Irenaeus' Summary

St. Irenaeus, one of the great Fathers of the Church, said, "Understanding ... consists in showing why there are a number of covenants with mankind and in teaching what is the character of these covenants." *Against Heresies*, Bk 1, Ch X, No 3. Wisdom 12:21 states, "With what exactitude you judged your sons, to whose fathers you gave sworn covenants of Godly promises."

The Seventh Covenant - in Jesus - 3BC - 33AD

Now was the time for God to fulfill all of His oaths and promises. He did this through His Son, Jesus who established a new covenant in his blood. This was to be the final and Catholic covenant. All of the old covenant was to be fulfilled in him. Because God is one, this new covenant that Jesus established by forming His church would be one. Because God is holy, this Church would have all of the means and sacraments to make people holy. Because God's intention and love was always meant to embrace all men, this Church would be Catholic. And because God is love diffusive of itself, this Church would be Apostolic. This new covenant would fulfill the old (cf Ez 16:59; Hos 1-3). This new covenant would be everlasting (cf Hos 2:14-20; Is 54, Ez 16:60). God had promised to tabernacle (to make his dwelling place) among His people (Ez 37:26-27).

The Emmanuel

All this was done through Christ who dwelt among us, who is the Emmanuel, *God within us* (Jn 1:14). Through Him we are God's covenanted people. In the old covenants, God's spirit worked primarily externally through oaths, sacraments, covenants, prophets, and priests. Now in the new covenant beginning at Pentecost, God's Spirit enters within us, transforming us so that we can think, love and act like Jesus. In Christ, we are a kingdom of priests and a royal nation, a people God sets apart to be His very own and a light of revelation to a dark and broken world. Through Christ, the veil over the holy of holies has been rent, and the divisions of the old covenant had been destroyed. Now the entire Church is the dwelling place of God. All of Her children can enjoy face to face fellowship with God Most High. His saints become living sacraments, that is outward signs created by Christ to give forth grace.

In the old covenant, the sacraments, such as the golden lampstand, the burning bush, the table of shewbread, animal sacrifice, and so forth were many, difficult and weak. In the new covenant, Christ's sacraments are few, easy, and powerfully efficacious.

A Summary

Covenant Time-Line/Salvation History

Time-Era:	???	c.2500BC	c.2000BC	c.1500BC	c.1000BC	c.500BC	3BC - 30AD
Mediator:	Adam	Noah	Abraham	Moses	David	Ezra	Christ
Covenant Role	Husband	Father	Chieftan	Judge	King	Priest	Royal High Priest/King
Structure:	Marriage	Household	Tribe	Nation	Kingdom	Priesthood	Church
Covenant Sign	Sabbath	Rainbow	Circumcision	Passover	Throne	Temple	Eucharist

We can see how God has always been preparing a people among whom He could dwell. In the old covenants, we see the new covenant promised and foretold. In the new covenant, we can see the old covenant fulfilled in such a way that each of the patriarchs, prophets and kings in a certain sense prefigured Christ. Also, each article of furniture in the tabernacle was symbolic of some Christian sacrament.

In the tabernacle there was one door called the *way* door. Jesus would later exclaim, "I am the way," the only entrance into the manifest presence of God. There was the brazen altar that symbolized the consecration that we, as Christians, are to make to Christ (cf Rom 12:22). The blood of the lamb put upon the mercy seat of the high priest was the forerunner of the sacrament of reconciliation. The golden lampstand was a symbol of revelation knowledge fully revealed to us in the gospels. The table of shewbread was to be a type of the Eucharist, our daily bread. The ark of the covenant was to be a foreshadowing of Mary, our Mother. And the holy of holies was to foreshadow the Church, the dwelling place of God.

Jesus would be the new prophet like Moses, the new king like David, the new priest like Melchizedek, the new victim sold into slavery like Joseph, the new passover lamb by whose blood we pass over from the slavery of sin to the freedom of being God's children. The ones who sit upon the thrones of the twelve tribes of Israel would be his twelve apostles. And the new priestly people would be His Church. Working in and through them, Christ would save the world. His followers would be inspired to think as He thinks, to love as He loves and to act as He acts. As the Father sent Him, He would send us as a light to a dark and broken world. We are to be His eyes, His hands, His eyes, His body.