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Covenantal Language and the Fulfilled Kingdom



By Dan Maines

Covenantal Language and the Fulfilled Kingdom

Introduction

The Scriptures speak in a covenantal vocabulary that runs from Genesis to Revelation. Understanding this language is essential for grasping how the Bible describes God's dealings with His people and the passing of one covenant age to another. The prophets used symbols, heavens, earth, sun, moon, stars, mountains, seas, to portray national judgment, covenant blessings, or covenant curses. Jesus and the apostles drew on the same imagery to show that the promises and warnings of

the Old Testament were being fulfilled in their own generation.

Isaiah's Cosmic Imagery

† Isaiah 13 speaks of the fall of Babylon with the sun darkened and the stars not giving their light. Yet the literal sun and stars continued to shine. This language describes the fall of a nation. "For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light" (Isaiah 13:10). Babylon's political powers, symbolized by heavenly lights, were extinguished.

† Similar language appears in Isaiah 34 regarding Edom and in Ezekiel 32 concerning Egypt. Nations are portrayed as the heavens and the earth, and rulers as the sun, moon, and stars. When God judged these nations, their "heavens" fell.

† Early Jewish writings and historians such as Josephus describe Jerusalem's fall with cosmic and temple imagery, showing how first-century audiences understood such language.

Why I Call It "Covenantal Language"

† I use the term "Covenantal Language" because the symbols are not random metaphors or mere hyperbole. They are tied directly to God's covenant with His people. Heavens and earth, sun and moon, stars and seas, are covenant markers showing the relationship between God and Israel.

† When prophets speak of the heavens shaking or the earth melting, they are announcing a covenant change or judgment. The language is drawn from the covenant blessings and curses of the Law (Deuteronomy 28-32). It is not just poetic exaggeration, it is the vocabulary of covenant administration.

† Jesus and the apostles inherit this covenantal framework. When they speak of a new heavens and new earth, they are declaring the end of the old covenant order and the arrival of the new covenant through Christ. This is why the plain "symbol" or "metaphor" category is too shallow. It misses that these images carry legal, covenantal meaning grounded in God's promises to Abraham, Moses, and David.

† This does **not** mean the physical creation itself was covenantal. Genesis 1 records God's literal creation of the heavens, the earth, and all life. Later, Scripture borrows that same phrase "heaven and earth" and applies it covenantally when speaking about Israel. Deuteronomy 31:28 shows this when Moses calls "heaven and earth" to witness Israel's covenant. Isaiah 51:15-16 also uses creation language to describe God forming Israel as a people. These passages demonstrate that the words can function as legal witnesses or covenant terms without denying the historical reality of physical creation.

Jesus and the Apostles Continue the Pattern

† In Matthew 24:29 Jesus declared, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky." He was not predicting the end of the physical universe, but the end of the Old Covenant world of Israel.

† Peter echoed this in Acts 2:16-21, citing Joel's prophecy about the sun turned to darkness and the moon to blood as fulfilled in the first-century events surrounding Christ's death, resurrection, and the outpouring of the Spirit.

† Matthew 5:17-18 shows that not one jot or tittle of the Law would pass until all was fulfilled, reinforcing the covenant transition Jesus proclaimed.

New Heavens and New Earth

† "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind" (Isaiah 65:17). Isaiah described a covenantal renewal where God's people dwell securely.

† Hebrews 8:13 confirms that the Old Covenant was becoming obsolete and ready to vanish away. Revelation 21 presents the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride. John identifies this city as the people of God, not a geographic location. The "new heavens and new earth" represent the new covenant order where Christ reigns and God

dwells with His people.

† Second Peter 3:10-13 uses fire and dissolving elements to describe the passing of the old order, echoing Isaiah's covenantal fire language rather than predicting the destruction of the physical planet.

Symbols of Covenant Blessing and Judgment

† Rain and water often signify blessing. Deuteronomy 28 links rain to obedience and drought to disobedience. Jesus speaks of living water as the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39), the true covenant blessing.

† Marriage symbolizes covenant. God calls Israel His wife in Hosea. Jesus calls the church His bride. Revelation 21 shows the bride adorned for her husband, the fullness of God's covenant with His people.

How to Read the Symbols

† Let Scripture interpret Scripture. The prophets define their own imagery. When Jesus and the apostles quote those passages, they expect us to recall their Old Testament meaning.

† Compare Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel with the Gospels and Revelation. You will see the same symbolic patterns: cosmic signs for national judgment, marriage for covenant relationship, water for blessing or its absence for curse.

† Hebrews 12:26-28 explains the shaking of heaven and earth as the removal of what can be shaken so that the unshakable kingdom remains, showing covenant transition rather than planetary destruction.

Application for Us Today

† The covenantal language assures believers that God's promises are sure. The old world of temple sacrifices and Levitical priesthood has passed away. We live in the new creation where Christ is our temple and His Spirit dwells within us.

† The shaking of heaven and earth in Scripture is not about the

destruction of the physical planet, but the unshakable kingdom of God (Hebrews 12:26-28). This gives us confidence when earthly nations rise and fall.

† **This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

Source Index

† Genesis 1; Deuteronomy 28; Deuteronomy 31:28; Isaiah 13; 34; 51:15-16; Ezekiel 32; Joel 2; Matthew 5:17-18; Matthew 24:29; Acts 2:16-21; Hebrews 8:13; 12:26-28; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21

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