The Bible's Big Picture (Part II)

Covenant: At the Heart of the Bible's Big Picture

When someone promises you something, how important is it that he or she keeps it? Promises are important because they are at the heart of our most important relationships. All covenants are open-ended promises between two parties in which both vow to remain faithful to each other, no matter what adversity may come along.

Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition reveal that God has entered into covenant relationships with people over and over again throughout human history. God promised the Jewish people the security of possessions or a home, the help of companionship, the satisfaction of a long life, and the joy of heirs who will continue an important legacy. God offered his Chosen People all of these wonderful gifts and promised he would remain with them in return for their faithfulness. God is always faithful to his promise, even when humans fail. In Scripture and Tradition, this faithful relationship is a *covenant*.

Sacred Scripture also reveals that God's covenant with humans culminates with Jesus, who is the New Covenant. Jesus, paradoxically, does not promise any of the blessings mentioned in previous covenants. Entering into the New Covenant does not guarantee possessions, security, companionship, a long life, or heirs. We may, in fact, struggle and suffer, or we may enjoy health and success. We may appear to the world to be blessed, or we may appear to be unlucky or cursed. Despite appearances, however, the covenant in Jesus is unique in that Jesus promises to send his Holy Spirit to remain within us in the joys and struggles of life.

	1.	In the S	cripture	reading	you chose,	what s	pecifically	/ does	God	promise'
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2. What does God expect the person or community with whom he makes a promise to do in response?

3. Is this promise for the good of an individual alone, or is it something that will help the entire community? Explain.

4. Describe the covenant you read about in the Scripture passage you were assigned. This description will be shared with the larger class, so make sure to be clear about the circumstances surrounding this covenant as well as what the covenant involved.