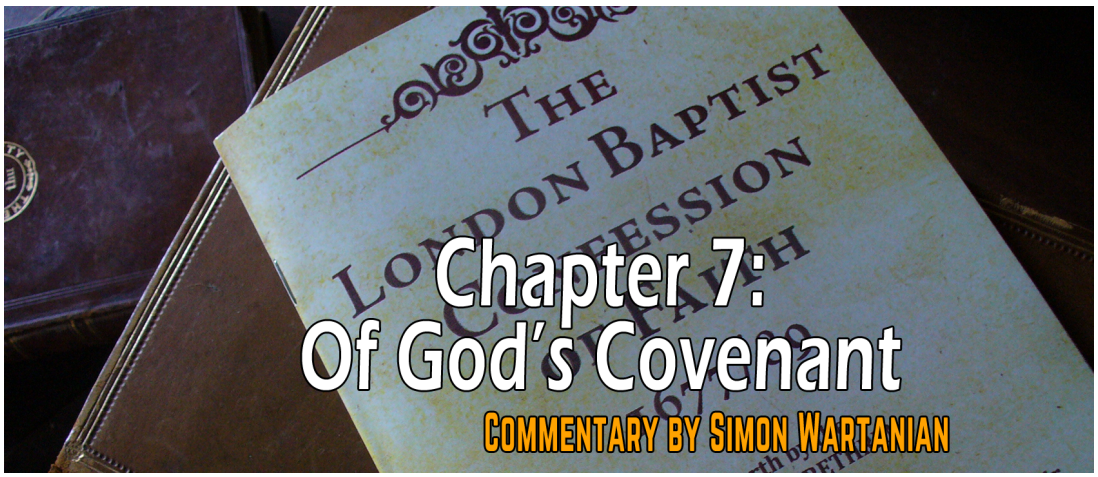
1689 Baptist Confession Chapter 7: Of God's Covenant - Commentary

Published: Wednesday 4th of March 2015 21:27 by Simon Wartanian
URL: https://www.thecalvinist.net/post/1689-Baptist-Confession-Chapter-7:-Of-Gods-Covenant-Commentary



Chapter 7: Of God's Covenant

What is Covenant Theology? How many covenants does the Bible have and which are these? What is the Reformed Baptist and Paedobaptist understanding of the covenants? What is 1689 Federalism? What are the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace? Is the New Covenant the Covenant of Grace? Was the Covenant of Grace established before the New Covenant? Were the Old Testament covenants administrations of the Covenant of Grace?

Here we come to a chapter that is different than the one in the Westminster and Savoy confessions (see the confessions side by side **here**). Were the Baptists trying to be original or were they trying to communicate something else? I and many others believe that the framers of the Confession were trying to communicate a different Covenant Theology than that of their Westminster and Savoy brethren. Let not the reader suppose that I will exhaustively deal with every point or seek to rebut oppositions and answer objections. My objective here is to lay an understanding of Covenant Theology as I see it in the Scripture, as I was helped by the books and men mentioned below and as the Confession conforms to the teaching of Holy Writ.

§1 The Covenant Of Works

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could **never have attained the reward of life** but by some **voluntary condescension on God's part,** which he hath been pleased to **express by way of covenant.1**
    1. Job 35:7-8; Ps. 113:5-6; Isa. 40:13-16; Luke 17:5-10; Acts 17:24-25[1]

This distance between God and the creature is not spatial distance, but the Creator-creature distinction. God is different in His being than man. Even before the Fall, this **distance** was **so great**. Paragraph 1 does not only speak of covenants in general but specifically of the first covenant—the Covenant of Works with Adam. All **reasonable creatures owe obedience to Him** because He is **their creator** (Luke 10:17; Rom. 1:23-25). They must honor and worship Him because He created them and caused them to be (**see chapter 2:2**). They owe Him obedience and worship, but even in their innocence, **they could never have attained the reward of life**. This is in reference to the Adamic Covenant of Works which promised life upon perfect obedience. Even in the original Covenant of Works, God promised this reward of life **by some voluntary condescension**. This **voluntary condescension** to communicate with man and promise Him rewards God has expressed **by way of covenant**. In other words, a covenant made by God is His way of communicating with us, giving us rewards for obedience and punishments for disobedience. We, by nature, owe Him obedience, therefore, there is no reason for Him to reward our obedience. If He rewards our obedience then it must be upon another ground. This other ground is **by way of covenant**.

Introduction to Covenant Theology

Covenant theology (also known as Covenantalism, Federal theology, or Federalism) is a Calvinist conceptual overview and interpretive framework for understanding the overall flow of the Bible. It uses the theological concept of covenant as an organizing principle for Christian theology. The standard description of covenant theology views the history of God's dealings with mankind, from Creation to Fall to Redemption to Consummation, under the framework of the three overarching theological covenants of redemption, works, and grace.[2]

Covenant Theology helps us to see the story of the whole Bible. Covenant Theology unites the people of God and their purpose. Covenant Theology believes that covenant is the framework by which the Bible is understood and which God has established to achieve His purpose with the world. Covenant Theology is opposed to Dispensationalism, which seeks to divide the people of God, their purpose and focuses on the discontinuity of the covenants (for Dispensationalism in connection with eschatology, **see here**). Dispensationalism teaches that redemptive history is divided by dispensations (times), while Covenant Theology believes that redemptive history is divided by covenants. In this chapter, I will try to lay out how I understand 1689 Baptist Covenant Theology and make a case for it from Holy Writ. I've been greatly helped by the following books and men:

- Pascal Denault - The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology: A Comparison Between Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist and Paedobaptist Federalism.
- Richard Barcellos – Recovering a Covenantal Heritage: Essays in Baptist Covenant Theology.
- A. W. Pink - The Divine Covenants (see my review).
- Recovering a Covenantal Heritage: Essays in Baptist Covenant Theology.
- Phillip D. R. Griffiths - Covenant Theology: A Reformed Baptist Perspective.
- Douglas Van Dorn - Covenant Theology: A Reformed Baptist Primer.
- Brandon Adams and his 1689 Federalism website.
- Samuel & Micah Renihan.
- Samuel Renihan – *From Shadow to Substance: The Federal Theology of the English Particular Baptists (1642-1704)* & *The Mystery of Christ, His Covenant, and His Kingdom*.
- Jeffrey D. Johnson - The Fatal Flaw (see my review) and the Kingdom of God.

I don't pretend to have an answer to every question or have all the details worked out, but Lord willing, I will update this commentary if I become persuaded of some things that I think are necessary to mention. It is a subject that has fascinated me and it's a subject I want to learn more about. In this chapter, I will try to lay out all the major covenants of the Bible and see how they are fulfilled or still await fulfillment in Christ and His people. The covenants that I would like to deal with are the following:

1. The Covenant of Redemption [§2] [**here**]
2. The Covenant of Grace [§3] [**here**]
3. The Covenant of Works [§1] [**here**]
4. The Covenant with Noah (Noahic Covenant) [§3] [**here**]
5. The Covenant with Abraham (Abrahamic Covenant) [§3] [**here**]
6. The Covenant with Israel through Moses (Mosaic Covenant) [§3] [**here**]
7. The Covenant with David (Davidic Covenant) [§3] [**here**]
8. The Covenant with the church (New Covenant) [§3] [**here**]

What Is A Covenant?

Before going into the specific covenants, let us define what a covenant actually is. A covenant may simply be defined as: **A commitment with divine sanctions.** To add more input, it may be said this way:

> In the general sense, a **covenant** is simply a binding agreement or compact between two or more parties; in legal terms, it is a formal sealed agreement or contract.[3]

Simply said, a covenant is the way that God communicates with man. It must be noted that the covenants made by God are

made up by God—what I mean is that God doesn't ask people's opinion about what they think of the covenant, blessings, and curses. It is something *imposed* by God. It is a *sovereign* arrangement. This is seen in Nehemiah Coxe's definition of Covenant, which is...

> "A declaration of **his sovereign pleasure** concerning the **benefits he will bestow** on them, the **communion they will have with him**, and the **way and means** by which this will be enjoyed by them."[4]

Walter Chantry defines a covenant as "a sovereignly given arrangement by which man may be blessed."[5] A. W. Pink defines it as:

> Briefly stated, any covenant is a **mutual agreement** entered into by two or more parties, whereby they stand solemnly **bound to each other** to **perform the conditions** contracted for.[6]

From these definitions, we observe that a covenant seeks to bring man to a better state of existence or being. It doesn't seek to leave man in the place he was prior to the covenant. Dr. Richard Barcellos observes:

> Think of the Noahic covenant. Prior to its revelation as found in Genesis 6-9, the earth was potentially subject to a universal flood due to the justice of God being executed on the earth against the wickedness of man. We know this for certain because that is exactly what happened. The Noahic covenant, which includes man (Noah and his descendants), also involves every living creature (Genesis 9:9-10, 15, 16). It embraces and benefits the earth as well (Genesis 8:22...Genesis 9:13...Jeremiah 33:20, 50...). That divine covenants are revealed to man for "the advancing and bettering of his state" [Nehemiah Coxe] can also be said of all other divine covenants with man throughout the Bible. Abraham (along with his carnal and spiritual seed) was better off for the covenant revealed to him. The Israelites were better off for the covenant revealed to them. It promised them blessings from God that were not promised to them prior to its promulgation. David and the Israelites were better off for the covenant revealed to them, and believers of all ages are much better off for the revelation of the new covenant in its promissory form in the Old Testament and in its concluded, or historically ratified, form in the New Testament.[7]

Nehemiah Coxe writes:

> The immediate and direct end therefore, of God's entering into covenant with man at any time (so far as concerns man himself) is **the advancing and bettering of his state**. **God never made a covenant with man in which his goodness to him was not abundantly manifest**. Yes, such is his infinite bounty that he has proposed no lower end to his covenant transactions with men than to bring them into a blessed state in the eternal enjoyment of himself. And therefore, when one covenant (through the weakness of man in his lapsed state) has been found weak and unprofitable as to this great end of a covenant because insufficient to accomplish it, God finds fault, abolishes it, and introduces another in which full provision is made for the perfect salvation of those that have interest in it (Hebrews 8:7, 8).[8]

Now that we know what a covenant is, let us delve into the covenants of which the Bible speaks.

The Covenant of Works



We begin our study of the covenants with the Covenant of Works because that is the way our Confession starts this chapter. Some may be searching for the phrase "Covenant of Works" in paragraph 1 or the whole chapter. You won't find it. But that does not mean that the *concept* of the Covenant of Works is not here. A few reasons may be given as to why the Confession does not use the phrase "covenant of works" in this chapter, while the sister confessions do. First of all, if we compare the title of the chapter, in the Westminster and Savoy confessions we have "Of God's Covenant with Man", while in the 1689 we have "Of God's Covenant." The 1689 focuses on the revelation and establishment of the Covenant of Grace, while the others treat God's covenants from the beginning and not only focusing upon the Covenant of Grace. The 1689 "concentrates on the covenant of grace and either assumes or implies the covenant of works, making its explicit mention superfluous."[9] The fact that the Confession, by its omission, is not denying the doctrine of the Covenant of Works is seen in that it is both explicitly (**19:6** [2x]; **20:1**) as well as implicitly (**6:1**; **19:1**) implied elsewhere:

> **19:6** Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, in that as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their natures, hearts, and lives, so as examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against, sin; together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his obedience; it is likewise of use to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin; and the threatenings of it serve to shew what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse and unallayed rigour thereof. The promises of it likewise shew them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, though not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works; so as man's doing good and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law and not under grace.
>
> **20:1** The covenant of works being broken by sin, and made unprofitable unto life, God was pleased to giveforththe promise of Christ, the seed of the woman, as the means of callingthe elect, and begetting in them faith and repentance; in this promise the gospel, as to the substance of it, was revealed, and[is]therein effectual for the conversion and salvation of sinners.

First of all, believers are subject to the law of God not as a covenant of works to earn righteousness and life by, but as a rule of life. What is, even more, is what is said in chapter 20. There, the doctrine of the Covenant of Works is clearly expressed. The Covenant of Works was broken by sin, the sin of Adam and Eve, and thereby "made unprofitable unto life". This means that before being broken by sin, *it was* profitable unto life. Because the Covenant of Works was broken, God decided to make and reveal the Covenant of Grace.

As to the implicit references to the Covenant of Works, 6:1 says, "Although God created man upright and perfect, and **gave**

him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and **threatened death upon the breach** thereof, yet he did not long abide in this honour". Man was given a law which would have led to life, but Adam transgressed it. This is in essence what the Covenant of Works teaches as we shall see below. So likewise the statement in 19:1:

> God gave to Adam a **law of universal obedience** written in his heart, and a particular precept of not eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; by which he **bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling**, and **threatened death upon the breach** of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

Therefore, there is no question that the Confession teaches and accepts the classic Reformed doctrine of the Covenant of Works. The reason for the omission is the focus of the chapter upon the Covenant of Grace and of the fact that the Confession had already said things concerning the Covenant of Works, while the sister confessions do not in the respective chapter (compare 6:1 **here**).

But **what is a covenant of works**? Simply said: a covenant wherein one needs to earn its blessings. Pascal Denault defines it thus:

> The Covenant of Works had a simple way of functioning: if Adam had obeyed, he and his posterity after him would have retained life and would have been sealed in justice; but his disobedience marked the entrance of death into the world. The fall placed Adam and all of his posterity under condemnation. The Covenant of Works was conditional and provided no way to expiate the offence in case of disobedience.[10]

Nehemiah Coxe, probably the chief editor of the Confession, defined it thus:

> If the **covenant be of works**, the restipulation [condition, requirement] must be by doing the things required in it, even by **fulfilling its condition in a perfect obedience to its law**. Suitably, the **reward is of debt** according the terms of such a covenant. (Do not understand it of debt absolutely but of debt by compact.)[11]

Dr. Richard Barcellos gives the following definition for the Covenant of Works:

> that **divinely sanctioned commitment or relationship God imposed upon Adam**, who was a **sinless representative of mankind** (or a public person), an image-bearing son of God, **conditioned upon his obedience**, with a **penalty for disobedience**, all for the **bettering of man's state**. Here we have the following: 1) sovereign, divine imposition; 2) representation by Adam (i.e., federal or covenantal headship), a sinless image-bearing son of God; 3) a conditional element (i.e., obedience); 4) a penalty for disobedience (i.e., death); and 5) a promise of reward (i.e., eschatological potentional or "betterment").[12]

When Adam, as a Federal Head (see **chapter 6**), was placed in the Garden, he was commanded to obey upon the threat of punishment. Life and blessing were not simply given to him; he had to earn the enjoyment of that which he had, and seek the higher blessing which awaited him by his obedience in his time of probation (which the Bible does not say how long it would have lasted). Simply said, Adam had to obey for the blessing; disobey for the curse.

As the Federal Head for the whole human race, his disobedience brought condemnation upon all men (Rom. 5:12-21). Had he obeyed and earned eternal life, his righteousness would have been credited to all his posterity, much like Christ's (see Rom. 5:12-21). The Covenant of Works does not imply that God treated Adam strictly according to his works. Our Confession declares that God *condescended* Himself, even before the Fall, to make a covenant with Adam. Every covenant of God is a condescension and seasoned with grace. God was far more gracious to Adam even in Adam's innocence than he deserved. Indeed, God has no obligation to bless man, but He condescends to do that for His glory and the joy of man. It was of grace that God walked with Adam in the Garden, that God revealed Himself to Adam and communed with him. Thus, a covenant of works or the Covenant of Works does not teach that every part of Adam's blessed life had to be earned. No, it has a specific point. Adam was given a command to obey for life. If he disobeyed he would've brought death—which he did. He had to obey to earn life for himself and for all his descendants after him, whom he represented as the Federal Head.

Concerning this "reward of life," Dr. Renihan writes:

> Adam's obedience was not simply for the sake of obedience. After all, **a law is just a law, not a covenant**. But a law

that functions as a establishing a sanctioned commitment between two parties, *that* is a covenant. **Adam's obedience functioned within a covenantal arrangement that suspended promises on his obedience, i.e., he was in a covenant of works**. The **goal set before Adam was signified to him by the tree of life**.

If Adam obeyed his Creator, the tree of life stood before him as a pledge of life eternal. Geerhardus Vos said, "The **tree was associated with the higher, the unchangeable, the eternal life** to be secured by obedience throughout his probation." **Confirmed eternal life and immutable perfect communion** with God were not a part of Adams natural constitution. He was sinless and upright, but he was able to sin. "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4), meaning that sin is a violation of God's law. Adam was capable of violating God's law, and that is what he did.

The **tree of life was a covenantal symbol of what was promised to Adam** upon completion of his errand—**confirmed eternal life and communion with God in His presence**. This is established in Scripture by John's use of the tree of life in heaven in Revelation 2:7, promising its benefits to the one who conquers, i.e. the one who perseveres, trusting in Christ. It also appears in John's description of the consummation in Revelation 22 where God dwells with His people, and is equated with eternal life in that consummation. Further confirmation of this is the fact that **man's expulsion from the garden is specifically connected to a barring from the tree of life which offers eternal life** (Genesis 3:22-24).[13]

Furthermore, notice what the Confession says:

> although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could **never have attained the reward of life** but by some **voluntary condescension on God's part,** which he hath been pleased to **express by way of covenant.**

The Confession speaks of the reward of life, which in this case was what was promised to Adam had he obeyed. But notice that this reward of life is not due to man's obedience deserving that. But it is God's arrangement to bless and reward that obedience *because* of His promise and condescension. This condescension of God, which He expresses by way of covenant, is most voluntary and free. There is no obligation placed upon God to be gracious or to commune with man. It is His mere good pleasure and will to do so. Notice also the last part of Nehemiah Coxe's statement above, "Suitably, the reward is of debt according the terms of such a covenant. (Do not understand it of debt absolutely but of debt by compact.)" It was "of debt" exactly because of God's covenant with Adam ("by compact").

Concerning the blessings and obedience of and within the Covenant of Works, John Owen writes the following:

> The covenant of works had its promises, but they were **all remunerative** [profitable, rewarding], **respecting an antecedent obedience in us**; (so were all those which were peculiar to the covenant of Sinai). They were, indeed, **also of grace, in that the reward did infinitely exceed the merit of our obedience**; **but yet they all supposed it** [our obedience], and the subject of them was formally reward only.[14]

No covenant of God with man is ever strictly based on man's works alone. God is gracious in all of His works and dealings with man. But it is nonetheless true to categorize the Adamic Covenant as a covenant of works.

An aspect that makes the Covenant of Works with Adam different from all the rests is that it did not provide a way to return back to God because man had not been estranged from God. It provided no atonement, neither forgiveness of sins. This point is brought up by Coxe in this way:

> As to the terms and condition of this covenant that God made with Adam and all mankind in him, it was a **covenant of works**. With respect to immediate privilege and relationship it was a **covenant of friendship**. With regard to the promised reward it was a **covenant of rich bounty and goodness**. But it **did not include or intimate the least iota of pardoning mercy**. While its **law was perfectly observed it raised man within a degree of the blessed angels**. But the **breach of that law inevitably brought him under that curse** which sank him to the society of apostate devils and left him under a misery like theirs.[15]

While its blessings were greater than man could ever deserve, even in his sinless state, breaking the covenant had severe consequences. To summarize, Pink says it in this way:

> The compact which the Lord God entered into with Adam is appropriately termed "**the covenant of works**" not only to distinguish it from the covenant of grace, but also because **under it life was promised on condition of perfect**

obedience, which obedience was to be performed by man in his own creature strength.[16]

Disobedience to the Covenant of Works brought the whole human race into ruin and perdition, rendering them unable to attain and unfit for the life for which they were created.

Is It A Covenant?

Some may object to our categorization of the relation which Adam had with God as a covenant seeing that there is nothing in Genesis 1-3 said about a covenant. Well, if by that they mean that the word "covenant" is absent, they're right. But that's not satisfying. The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, but all its elements are taught in the Bible (see **chapter 2**). We have the same in Genesis 1-3 about the Adamic Covenant of Works. There are the covenant people (Adam and Eve) and the covenant God (Yahweh). There are the blessings (to eat of the Tree of Life, Gen. 3:22, which he would have done had he obeyed). There are the curses (death for eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Gen. 2:16-17). There are the "symbols" (if they may be called thus) of the covenant, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for disobedience; the tree of life for obedience. These are the necessary elements for a covenant and there we have them. Since the elements of a covenant are present in the text, the covenant must also be there. Like the Trinity, while the word is not in the Bible, the concept is certainly there. But it is also nice that there is a place in Holy Writ where this relationship is called a covenant:

> Hos. 6:7 But like Adam they transgressed **the covenant**; there they dealt faithlessly with me.

What covenant did Adam transgress? Well, we're aware of one relationship and agreement (covenant) that God had with Adam. This cannot refer to anything other than the Covenant of Works found in Genesis 1-3. Thus we have direct confirmation that it is rightly called a **covenant**. Subsequent revelation looks back at the account of Adam and Eve and says that there was a covenant that has been transgressed and broken. It doesn't matter that Genesis 1-3 doesn't call that relationship a "covenant" if that relation is called a covenant elsewhere in the Bible. **Isaiah 24:5-6** could also be noted here which says:

> Isa. 24:5-6 The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for **they have transgressed the laws**, violated the **statutes**, **broken the everlasting covenant**. 6 **Therefore a curse devours the earth**, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left

The "everlasting covenant" here is probably a reference to the Covenant of Works in Eden. All people in Adam have transgressed the Covenant of Works and broken it. And thanks to that, the Lord cursed the ground/earth (Gen. 3:17). The phrase "everlasting covenant" probably denotes the everlasting effects of the curses of the covenant. Alternatively, this could refer to the Noahic Covenant, which is called "everlasting covenant" in Genesis 9:16.

If some are having difficulty with this concept that a word may be missing from the text while the concept is there, observe the interpretation of Psalm 16:10-11 in Acts 2:30-31:

> Ps. 16:10-11 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. 11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
>
> Acts 2:30-31 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he foresaw and **spoke about the resurrection of the Christ**, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption

You will search in vain for the word "resurrection" or its synonyms in Psalm 16. But the fact remains, Peter looks back to Psalm 16 in light of Christ and says that David both *foresaw* and *spoke* of Christ's resurrection in Psalm 16. While the word is absent, the concept of Christ's resurrection was not absent from Psalm 16. Examples could be multiplied of this. In Romans 5:14, Adam is said to be a type of Christ. But you will search in vain for the word or concept of type in Genesis 1-3. Yet, the same Holy Spirit Who inspired the words in Genesis inspired Romans 5:14. Luke 3:38 calls Adam "the son of God", but you will search in vain for that phrase in connection with Adam in the Old Testament. The point is, it doesn't matter if the word is absent. What matters is if the concept is present and the way that subsequent revelation speaks of this account, which it calls a covenant as we have seen from Hosea 6:7 and perhaps Isaiah 24:5.

But why go to these instances when we could refer the reader to the promulgation of the Davidic Covenant? The revelation of the Davidic Covenant is in 2 Samuel 7. You will search in vain for the word "covenant" there. But all elements of a covenant are present. Furthermore, subsequent revelation sees this arrangement as a covenant. Psalm 89:3, e.g., says:

> Ps. 89:3-4 You have said, “I have **made a covenant** with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: 4 ‘I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.’” — Selah

While the word *covenant* was absent from 2 Samuel 7 (and also the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 17). But it was nonetheless a covenant because it contained all the elements of a covenant and furthermore, it was referred to as a *covenant* by subsequent revelation.

A. W. Pink calls our attention to **Genesis 2:16-17** and how it contains all the necessary elements of a covenant, writing:

> “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Here are all the **constituent elements of a covenant**: (1) there are the **contracting parties**, the Lord God and man; (2) there is a **stipulation** enjoined, which man (as he was duty bound) engaged to perform; (3) there was a **penalty** prescribed, which would be incurred in case of failure; (4) there was by clear and necessary implication a **reward** promised, to which Adam would be entitled by his fulfillment of the condition; (5) the “tree of life” was the divine **seal or ratification of the covenant**, as the rainbow was the seal of the covenant which God made with Noah.[17]

The whole arrangement is set up in a covenantal context. To insist that there is no covenant because the word is absent from the account is simply silly. Furthermore, another argument that the relationship which Adam had with God was covenantal is the way in which Adam and Christ relate. We know that the Lord Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant and that He represents His people before God (e.g., 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15, 24; 12:24). His relationship with His people is covenantal. More than that, He is the federal head of His people. He represents them by a covenant (the New Covenant) before God. His obedience and righteousness are His people’s by faith. But what do we do with Adam’s disobedience and our fall in consequence of that? Romans 5:12-21 clearly draws a parallel between the first Adam and the last Adam, placing them as federal heads of two humanities—fallen and redeemed. If Adam was not in a covenantal relationship with God, why was then all humanity fallen because of his disobedience? How is he able to represent his posterity if there was no covenantal agreement between him and God? All these things make no sense if Adam was not in a covenant with God. Moreover, not only a covenant but specifically a covenant *of works* because by a single disobedience he brought the whole into condemnation and his enjoyment of blessing and eternal life was dependent upon his obedience. If Adam had obeyed, he would have brought the human race to a better state and to blessedness by his obedience. In other words, by his *works*, therefore, the designation the Covenant *of* Works. Romans 5:19 says, “For as by the **one man’s disobedience** the many were made sinners, so by the **one man’s obedience** the many will be made righteous.” The implication is clear: had Adam obeyed, we would have been made and remain righteous thanks to his obedience. But since he disobeyed, we were made sinners thanks to his disobedience. We may not only learn about the antitype from the type but likewise, learn more about the function and work of the type through the antitype.

Typology

Typology is a very important aspect of theology, especially of Covenant Theology. Therefore, it is beneficial for us to discuss typology (especially in relation to the Covenant of Works).

A “type is an historical person, place, institution, or event designed by God to point to a future historical person, place, institution, or event.”[18] Like Christ, Adam was “the son of God” (Luke 3:38). But he was “the son of God” in a different sense than Christ as God the Son. Nonetheless, Scripture calls Adam “the son of God”. So likewise, Scripture says that he was created as a type of Christ (Rom. 5:14). There is both similarity and dissimilarity between Christ and Adam, obviously. Yet the type is not disconnected from the *antitype* (the fulfillment of the type). We do not only learn more about the antitype from the type (the sacrificial system, the temple, the people of God), but we may also learn about the type from the fulfillment. The parallels between Adam and Christ in Romans 15:12ff strongly point us to the direction that had Adam obeyed he would have eternal life and blessings thanks to *his obedience and works*. But that is not the case. Adam brought us to ruin and misery and the Lord Christ by *His* obedience and works takes us where the first Adam failed to take us.

The Bible contrasts types and antitypes, but at the same time, says that there is some similarity between the type and the antitype. Adam and Christ are contrasted, but at the same time, their status as covenant heads and their obedience or lack thereof, is highlighted. Christ is not just another Adam. Christ is the better Adam. Christ is not merely a temple, He is something greater than the temple (Matt. 12:6). The antitype is not merely quantitatively, but especially, qualitatively better.

The type is not useless. The type has its redemptive-historical function. The temple in Jerusalem was not useless. It was used as the center for the acceptable worship of the true God, but it also pointed beyond itself to Christ. The Land of Canaan was likewise a type of heaven (e.g., Heb. 10:10, 16), but functioned as the holy land and the place of Yahweh’s special presence

under the Old Covenant. Circumcision pointed to heart-circumcision (e.g., Rom. 2:25-29; Col. 2:11-12), but it was not useless by itself because it distinguished the covenant people of God. So likewise, forgiveness under the Old Covenant could never bring redemption whereby we are cleansed from our sins, but did provide earthly and temporary forgiveness in the Land of Canaan. It is important to realize this aspect so that we would pay attention to the types in their own specific context and not immediately jump to the antitype.

Dr. Renihan explains the vital importance of understanding two-level typology, saying:

> The **blood of goats and bulls took away sins only on the level of the purification of the flesh**. But it could not purify the conscience. **Animal blood was a way to satisfy the demands of the Mosaic covenant in order to remain in Canaan**. But it could never satisfy the demands of the covenant of works in order to escape Hell. The beauty of typology is that at the same time, this entire system was designed to teach the Israelites about substitutionary atonement and remission of sins through blood.
>
> This is **typology functioning on two levels**. On an earthly level, **animal sacrifices had a real function and purpose and meaning**. And that **meaning was substantially distinct from its antitypical meaning**. The blood of goats and bulls is not the blood of Christ, and their forgiveness was not the forgiveness that Christ's blood affords. Nevertheless, **they made Christ's forgiveness known**.
>
> This is a vital point of typology. And it is the case in every example of typology. **All typology functions on two levels**. For instance, the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness, the provision of the wilderness manna, or the tabernacle and temple sacrifices, **each had an initial and provisional meaning in their own original context**. At the same time, **they all point to a secondary referent and meaning in a Messianic kingdom context**.[19]

Dr. Renihan summarizes that "types reveal that which is greater and other than themselves. They have a purpose and meaning in their own contexts, and when their fulfillment arrives, they are removed."[20]

The Law of Creation

It is important to mention something about that which is called the Law of Creation or the Moral Law here. What I mean by that is the Moral Law of God that is put in us by virtue of us being in His image (**see chapter 4:2 on the image of God**). This Law of Creation was given to Adam and Eve from their creation. The Lord put into their minds and hearts certain basic laws which all humans have. This basic Law was summarized in the Ten Commandments and given at Sinai. You don't have to know the Ten Commandments to know, for example, that stealing, coveting, lying, murdering and dishonoring God are wrong. You know it intuitively. You know it by virtue of the fact that you are a creature of God, in covenant with Him either in Adam or in Christ. All that this means is that the Ten Commandments were not new commandments, but were a summary of the basic moral law which is on the mind and heart of every image-bearer of God. Of the fact that everyone has the basic moral law, we read in Romans 1-2. I would like to look at Romans 2:12-16:

> For all who have sinned **without the law will also perish without the law**, and all who have **sinned under the law will be judged by the law**. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, **by nature do what the law requires**, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 **They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts**, while **their conscience also bears witness**, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

We could go all ways into this passage, but let me focus on what I want to prove, namely, that every human has the basic moral law stamped upon them. This is clear from reading the passage. What we must realize is the two-fold way that Paul is using the word *law*. When in reference to Jews, he's using it as the complete revelation of God's Law given under Moses, the *written* law of God. But when speaking of the Gentiles, they do not have such a revelation of God, but they sure know Him and His Law (Rom. 1:18ff, 32). Gentiles do not have the written law, but they, by nature, do what the law requires. Why? Because the law contains the basic moral precepts for all humans and everyone knows right from wrong. Obviously, let us not suppose that this means that everyone *does* what is right because men are sinful and our consciences can be weakened. The work of the Law, or the summary of the Law, is written on their hearts and in their consciences. From there they also know the God they deny and that is the basis of their condemnation.

To not go more than necessary, I summarize, every image-bearer knows the Law of God and the Lawgiver and they are obligated to obey, their disobedience and rejection of the true God lead to their demise. The Ten Commandments sealed and made sure the Law that was given in the Garden to man. It did not leave "maybes" and "ifs." It made certain what the Law of Creation was by summarizing it for us in stone. Because our nature is sinful, our conscience could at times approve of that which is wicked and condemn that which is good. But God left no "maybes" when He gave the Law on Sinai. For more see

chapter 19 on God's Law generally and **this section**, specifically.

Shadows & Types

One important aspect of Covenant Theology is the Christ-centered interpretation of Scripture, both in the Old and the New Testaments. If we believe that the whole Scripture testifies of Christ (Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:45; 5:39, 45-47; Acts 3:22-24; 10:43; 13:27-29) and His work, we must look for shadows and types (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 10:1). I want to provide such a section on all the covenants, answering the question: What does this covenant reveal about the New Covenant/Covenant of Grace, about Christ our Lord and about His people?

God Living With Man

In this covenant, we learn of the Creator God, Who is also the covenant Lord, committed to having a relationship with His image-bearers. But His image-bearers, after some time, chose to rebel rather than obey Him. This pictures every one of us and what we, even believers, so often do. This harmonious relationship, in which God walked among man (Gen. 3:8) in the Garden, was hindered by the Fall. Still, God was and is committed to living with man and we see the realization of this plan in the New Heavens and New Earth:

> Rev. 21:1-3 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, **the dwelling place of God is with man**. He will dwell with them, and **they will be his people**, and **God himself will be with them as their God**.

The harmony that existed before the Fall between God and man dwelling together is restored in the New Earth never to be broken again. What man ruined, God has renewed, restored and perfected.

Federal Headship

In this covenant, we also learn about Federal Headship, Adam's representations of all his descendants. He stands in the place of all his posterity. His obedience and disobedience affect the whole race, not only himself. In the New Testament, especially in Romans 5:12-21, this subject of the Federal Headship is taken up by Paul (as we briefly touched the subject). He not only speaks of Adam's headship but also of Christ's. Christ is the Head of the new humanity–the redeemed humanity in Him. We have received grace upon grace because of Him. Because of His obedience, because of His perfect work on our behalf. Because we are in Him, we, therefore share in His blessings. Read and study Romans 5:12-21. It's deep. Read more about Adam's Federal Headship in **chapter 6**.

The Seed

Right after the Fall, God displays awesome grace in not destroying and sending Adam and Eve straight to Hell for their rebellion, but in promising a Seed who would crush the serpent's head. Genesis 3:15 is what is called the *proto-Evangelium.* It is the first telling of the gospel. It was promised by God to Adam and Eve. God promised that the Seed will destroy the one who destroyed the relationship that God had with man. Who but our awesome Savior is the Seed? It is He who has destroyed the works of the Devil and who will put him under our feet (1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14; Rom. 16:20).

This revelation is not obvious at first sight, but *progressively,* the Bible goes on to explain who the Seed is. In Genesis 3:15, it could be anyone coming from the line of Adam. In fact, perhaps Eve expected him to be one of her sons (Gen. 4:1, 25). But then you begin to see from Genesis 12 and the Abrahamic Covenant the limitation placed by God concerning from whose line the Seed will come (Gen. 17:7-8). At the end of Genesis, the Seed is placed in the line of Judah (Gen. 49:10). Centuries later in Israel's history, God reveals that He has particularly chosen the line of David of whom the King, Who is also the Offspring/Seed, will come (2 Sam. 7). From this and other instances we learn about *progressive revelation.* We could not have known all these things simply from reading Genesis 3:15, but as we move in redemptive history, the Bible reveals more and more about the character and nature of the Offspring.

The Shedding Of Blood

> Gen. 3:21 And the **LORD God made** for Adam and for his wife **garments of skins** and clothed them.

While it is not explicitly mentioned, it is not to be doubted and is to be assumed that when God made for Adam and Eve clothing from animal skins, God *slaughtered* the animals. This shows the sinfulness of sin in requiring a sinless, spotless and innocent substitute to die in our place. The Bible teaches that the shedding of blood is necessary for the forgiveness of sins

(Heb. 9:22), but we must not suppose that the animal sacrifices provided forgiveness of sin. They merely pictured the Sinless Savior Who was to come (Heb. 10:4). But we will discuss the sacrifices more when we come to the Mosaic Covenant. Christ's precious blood was shed for us for the forgiveness of sin. He covered our sin and cleansed us and we have received His perfectly pure and white clothes which symbolize His purity. In Adam and Eve's case, the shedding of the animal blood provides a physical covering for them; the same is true for what Christ the Lord did for us on the cross and provided us with spiritual covering. By the shedding of His blood and faith in His name, we are clothed in His perfect righteousness and our sins are covered. All this was necessary because the covenant in which Adam and Eve were brought in was transgressed and broken.

At the entrance of sin, God slaughtered animals to cover Adam and Eve; in Jesus Christ, God slaughtered His Son to cover us in His perfect righteousness!

Federal headship and Covenant theology

In discussing Covenant Theology, it is essential to be clear about what federal headship is and what its consequences are for Covenant Theology. Federal headship literally means covenantal headship. Therefore, it has *everything* to do with Covenant Theology. God usually contracts covenants through a covenant head. As we already pointed out, God made the Covenant of Works with all humanity, through Adam. Adam was the representative of his posterity who were all included in the covenant. God covenants with the whole creation through Noah. God covenants with Israel through Abraham. God covenants with the kings of Israel through David. God covenants with the elect through Jesus Christ. In all of these instances, the people who were covenanted through functioned as representatives.

How do we know who is included in each covenant? By their relation to the covenant head. Who is included in the Adamic Covenant? All who are naturally descended from Adam and remain living in his sin (Rom. 5:12-14). Who is included in the Noahic Covenant? All who are related to Noah and the whole earth (Gen. 9:9, 12). Who are included in the Abrahamic Covenant? All those who are related to Abraham either by birth or adoption (as belonging to his household, also slaves) (Gen. 17:12-14). The Mosaic Covenant is made with the same people as the Abrahamic Covenant. The Davidic Covenant belongs to the sons of David (2Sam. 7:12-15; Ps. 132:11). Who are included in the New Covenant? All those united to Jesus Christ.

Someone who does not belong to Abraham, cannot lay a claim to Abraham's covenant. Someone who does not belong to David's line, cannot lay a claim to David's covenant. It is essential to understand Federal Headship as it relates to covenant membership, which is very important.

For example, the promise to Noah was, "I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you" (Gen. 9:9). The claim to this covenant is directly related to Noah. The question is, "Am I related to Noah?" Therefore, Nehemiah Coxe says, "Future generations to the end of the world are as much involved in this covenant as their immediate offspring with whom it was first made. They have equal claim with them to its blessings without any consideration of their immediate parents."[21]

As it concerns the Abrahamic Covenant, relation to Abraham defines everything. The promise to him was, "And 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" (Gen. 17:7). To lay a claim upon this covenant, you have to be related to Abraham. Furthermore, this promise concerns *everyone* related to Abraham. This is so since it was made with all his "offspring after [him] in all their generations for an everlasting covenant". The participation of the Israelites in this covenant did not depend upon their parents' obedience or piety, but whether they were related to Abraham. Dr. Renihan explains:

> God made a covenant with Abraham as a federal head over his natural posterity. Genesis 12:2, 3, 7 make this clear. God tells Abram that he will become the father of a great nation and that *his* descendants will inherit Canaan. Abram is the federal head of this covenant. God said, '*To your offspring* I will give this land.' Participation in these promises depends on **whether you are encompassed by the federal headship of Abraham**. The **blessings and curses of the covenant flow through the federal head**.[22]

Relation to the covenant head determines covenant membership. This point is essential in our discussions of covenant membership in the New Covenant. As it relates to the Abrahamic, Coxe explains:

> The promises previously given to Abraham for his natural offspring involve those in **remote generations as much as those immediately descended from him**. And in some respects they were made good more fully to them than to the others. For it was not until the fourth generation that God was known to them by his name Jehovah (Exodus 6) in the actual accomplishment of his word. The fathers only had his all-sufficiency engaged for the later fulfilling of the promise in its proper season. It was not Abraham's immediate seed, but his mediate, that became as numerous as the

dust of the earth and took possession of the land flowing with milk and honey.[23]

§2 The Covenant Of Redemption

2. Moreover, **man having brought himself under the curse of the law** by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make **a covenant of grace**, **1** wherein he freely offereth unto sinners **life and salvation by Jesus Christ**, **requiring of them faith in him,** that they may be saved; **2** and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, his **Holy Spirit**, **to make them willing and able to believe.** **3**
    1. Gal. 3:10; Gen. 2:17; 3:15; Ps. 110:4 (with Heb. 7:18-22; 10:12-18); Eph. 2:12 (with Rom. 4:13-17 and Gal. 3:18-22); Heb. 9:15
    2. John 3:16; Rom. 10:6, 9; Gal. 3:11
    3. Ezek. 36:26-27; John 6:44-45

Thanks to the Fall, whereby **man…brought himself under the curse of the law…it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace** (e.g., Gen. 3:15; Eph. 2:12; Gal. 3:15-22; Heb. 9:15). This is the central covenant of this chapter. The focus of this chapter is upon the revelation and establishment of this covenant. This covenant was made after the Fall and its promise was first given in Genesis 3:15. Although this **covenant of grace** was made in time after the Fall, its basis was laid in that eternal covenant called the Covenant of Redemption as paragraph 3 goes on to explain. How is this covenant of grace described or what is it? It is the covenant wherein God **freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ**. This **covenant of grace** contains the same promises as the New Covenant, for it is the New Covenant before and after it was established (more on this below). Salvation is offered **freely**, i.e., by grace alone. Furthermore, this salvation is **by Jesus Christ** even before the Incarnation. What does God require of us in this covenant? **Faith in him** so that **we may be saved**. This paragraph teaches that salvation, even before Christ, was by Jesus Christ and by grace through faith. What are the promises of this covenant? God promises the elect, **those ordained unto eternal life**, **His Holy Spirit** so that they would meet the requirement of this covenant, which is faith. God requires of us faith to partake of the covenant of grace, yet the promise of the covenant is the giving of the Holy Spirit Who will supply that which God requires! What an amazing covenant *of grace*. Truly, all is of grace in this covenant!

The Curse Of The Law

After Adam and Eve rebelled against God, they were cast off from His sight and out of the Garden. They lost the amazing fellowship which they enjoyed with God. Their disobedience brought the sentence of death upon them and all creation:

> Gen. 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall surely die**."
>
> 1 Cor. 15:21 For as **by a man came death**, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.
>
> Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so **death spread to all men because all sinned**—

The Holy God cannot stand in the presence of sinners, they will be consumed if He did. Yet for the glory of His grace, He had, in Christ, foreordained the salvation of a particular people. He had even in some way foreordained the Fall (see **chapter 3** on God's sovereignty over evil). The means of restoring that relationship was for the Son of God to come down and bear the curse of the law on behalf of sinners.

> Gal. 3:10-14 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." 12 But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." 13 **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us**—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Paul teaches us in this passage that the way we came free from the curse of the law is because the Lord Christ Himself became a curse for us. God cursed Him as if he was Someone who did not “abide by all things written in the Book of the Law” while we know that the contrary is the case! But for our sake, He became a curse (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

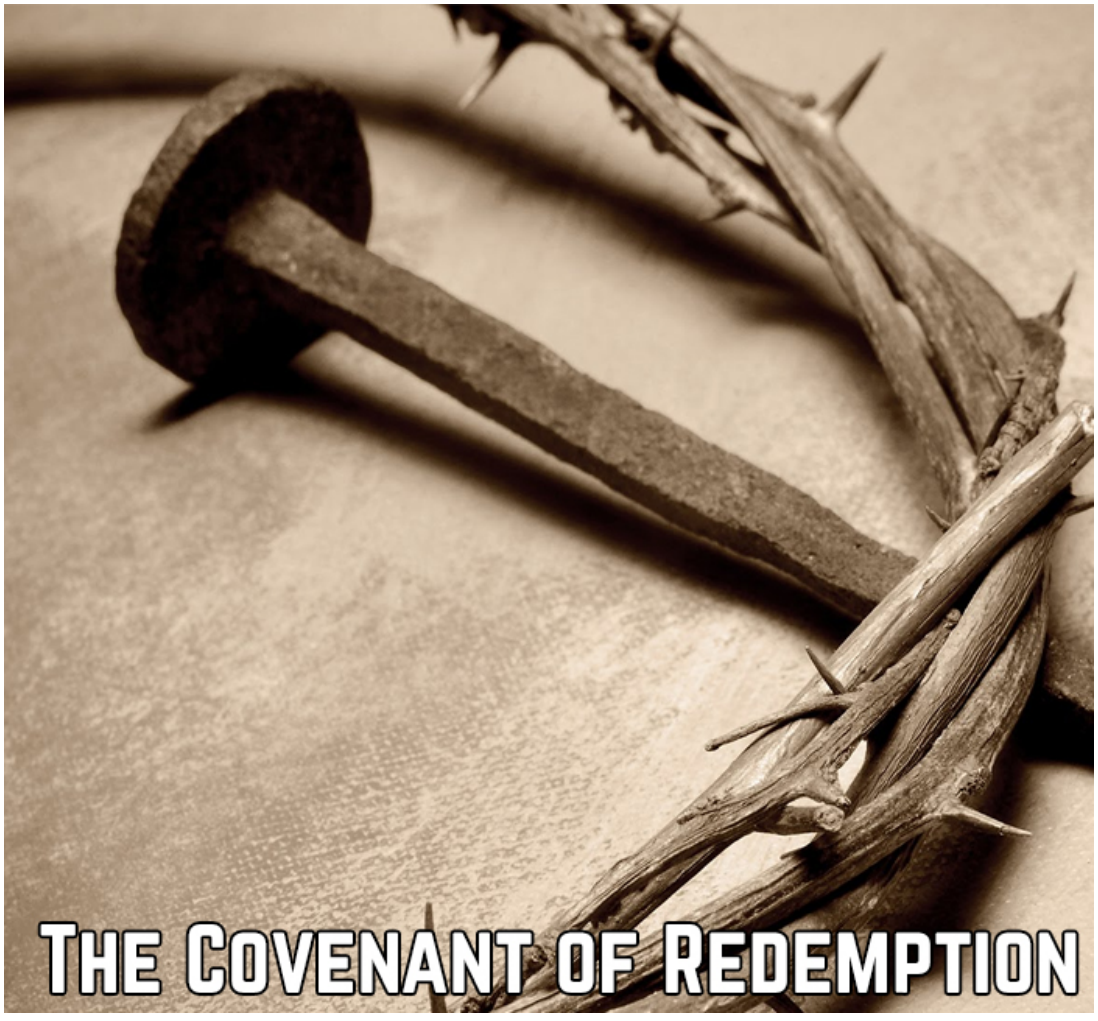
The Condemning Adamic Covenant

The Adamic Covenant of Works has no more the capacity to offer eternal life to those who obey it since only its condemning power is exercised now. The covenant is broken and what it now administers is the curse of the covenant. Furthermore, the Covenant of Works has no option of reparations or atonement. The Bible credits the existence of death and sin back to the disobedience of Adam (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21). That was the punishment for disobedience of the Adamic Covenant (Gen. 2:17). Therefore, since only the condemning power of the covenant was in work and not the life-giving power, the Lord had to make another covenant if He wanted people to have fellowship with Him. Dr. Samuel Renihan explains:

> Adam’s breach of the covenant activated its curses, expelled him from the temple of God’s presence, and condemned him to death. This means that the **covenant remains in force today in that its curse continues to apply to all of Adam’s offspring**. But, the **covenant does not remain in force today in the sense of promising life** to those who obey its commands. The Covenant of Works depends on positive laws. It is much more than the moral law. And with **no more Eden and no more sacramental trees, there are no more positive commands to obey**. Furthermore, **the Covenant of Works was made with a federal head, Adam, not his descendants.** Therefore, the promise of the Covenant of Works is permanently shut up and abrogated.[24]

This is where we come to the discussion of the **Covenant of Grace**, which will be taken in paragraph 3. The Covenant of Redemption is that to which we now turn, which is the basis for the Covenant of Grace.

The Covenant of Redemption



The Covenant of Redemption is basically the agreement between the Persons of the Blessed Trinity concerning the salvation of the elect. It is defined thus by Theopedia:

> This Covenant of Redemption refers to the covenant within the Trinity which established the plan of salvation, i.e. the agreement within the Godhead that the Father would appoint the Son to give up his life for mankind and that Jesus would do so (cf. Titus 1:1-3).[25]

While it is true that the phrase "Covenant of Redemption" is not found in the Bible, that, of course, does not mean that the doctrine is not there. Just like the word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible, yet the Bible does, in fact, teach the doctrine from Genesis to Revelation (**see chapter 2:3**). This consideration makes the Covenant of Redemption one of the *theological* covenants. Theological covenants are defined thus:

> ...the Covenant of Redemption, the Covenant of Works, and the Covenant of Grace. These three are called "theological covenants" because although not explicitly presented as covenants, they are, according to covenant theologians, implicit in the Bible.[26]

Samuel and Micah Renihan define the Covenant of Redemption in this way:

> The *pactum salutis* establishes the **redemption of the elect through Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension** as that which is the driving purpose of history. God's decree is that from fallen humanity, the **Son, empowered by the Spirit, should redeem the people given him by the Father** as a reward.[27]

The Covenant of Redemption is strongly implied when we consider the following points:

- Believers are described as having been predestined and chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).
    - Why "in Christ" and not in someone else? When was there an agreement that He would be the Savior of His people?
- Many passages speak of our Lord being *sent* by the Father (e.g., John 3:17; 8:42).
    - Sent for what purpose? When was it decided that He would be sent instead of the Spirit, for example?
- The Son obeys the Father in what He commands (John 4:34; 7:38; 8:29; 15:10).
    - Obey what commands? When were these commands given and for what purpose?
- The Son is given a specific people by the Father in order to save them (John 6:38-39; 10:29; 17:2, 6, 9, 24).
    - When was He given these people? When had the Persons of the Trinity agreed to save them?
- The Son has accomplished the work that the Father had given Him (John 17:4; 4:34).
    - What was His commission and when was it given?

All these points and others that may be added imply the necessity of an eternal *agreement* or *covenant* within the Trinity concerning the salvation of the elect.

The Covenant of Redemption is the archetypical covenant for all the other covenants of God. All the other covenants in history flow out of the Covenant of Redemption made in eternity past within the Trinity. Douglas Van Dorn expresses it in this way:

> In fact, the **Covenant of Redemption is prerequisite for the main categories of covenants found in history** and the various administrations of those covenants in time. **Without this covenant, the other covenants do not exist or make sense**, either separately or in conjunction with one another. This covenant undergirds them; the **fullness of each covenant flows out of the plans, performances, and purposes of the Godhead in the Covenant of Redemption**.[28]

The Godhead planned the redemption of the elect by the blood of Christ and this came about through the different covenants that were made by God with man. Our Confession, in paragraph 3, says that the Covenant of Grace was "founded

in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect". Dr. Sam Renihan points us to the arrangement of this covenant as revealed in Isaiah's Servant songs:

> In the Servant Songs of Isaiah [Isa. 42:1-7; 49:8-9; 50:4-9; Luke 4:17-21], **God the Father gave a mission to His Servant**. In fact, the very name the Servant of Jehovah is an indicator of this fact. The **Father laid the Son under certain obligations** or commitments. He commanded Him to become incarnate, to obey the law perfectly, and to offer Himself up as a substitutionary sacrifice for a special people. God the Father gave work to God the Son. **The Covenant of Redemption was a covenant of works**. God the Son had to fulfill commands to obtain the blessings of the covenant.
>
> The mission of the Son and its effects will extend to a **people represented by the Son**. He is appointed a **federal head in this covenant**. Jesus Himself spoke of this in John 10:17-18. He said, "17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. *This charge I have received from my Father*." And later in the same chapter, in verses 27-29 Jesus said, "27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 *My Father, who has given them to me*, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." The Father gave a people to the Son. And the **Son was commanded to lay down His life for that people as their federal head**.
>
> God the Son was sent to die for a people. But His mission included much more than simply His death. He was appointed by the Father to be a Mediator for His people, and as that Mediator to be the King, Priest, and Prophet of God's elect.[29]

Notice how Dr. Renihan speaks of the Covenant of Redemption as a covenant of works. Not for us. For us it is the foundation of a pure covenant of grace. But for Christ, it was a covenant whose blessings He had to earn for His people by obeying His Father.

It is interesting to note that only the 1689 speaks of the Covenant of Redemption in this chapter (also **chapter 7**). The sister confessions concern themselves only with the Covenant of Works and the different administrations of the Covenant of Grace.

---

§3 The Covenant of Grace is revealed by farther steps

3. **This covenant is revealed in the gospel;** first of all to Adam in the **promise of salvation by the seed of the woman,** and afterwards **by farther steps,** until the **full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament;** **1** and it is founded in that **eternal covenant** transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; **2** and **it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life** and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency. **3**
    1. Gen. 3:15; Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:5; Titus 1:2; Heb. 1:1-2
    2. Ps. 110:4; Eph. 1:3-11; 2 Tim. 1:9
    3. John 8:56; Acts 4:12; Rom. 4:1-25; Gal. 3:18-22; Heb. 11:6, 13,39-40

This covenant of grace is **revealed in the gospel**, beginning in the Protoevangelium (Gen. 3:15) and beyond. It was **revealed…by farther steps**. In other words, it was *progressively* revealed and not revealed completely at once as it was in the New Testament. The **full discovery** and revelation was made **in the New Testament** and there it was **completed**. It no longer needs revelation by farther steps. The covenant of grace has its basis in that **eternal covenant** commonly called the Covenant of Redemption wherein the Father gives a people to the Son to be saved and the Spirit comes to apply the work of the Son to the elect. Election is grounded in that eternal covenant.

As paragraph 2 declared that this covenant is a covenant of salvation by Jesus Christ, so in this paragraph, it is explicitly said that **all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved**, were saved by **the grace of this covenant** (Heb. 9:15). We cannot gain **acceptance with God** upon the terms of the Covenant of Works when **Adam stood in the state of innocency**. We are no longer innocent and therefore are in need of another covenant. We are in need of the covenant of grace. Therefore, all the elect are in and were saved by the covenant of grace.

The Covenant of Grace



We cannot answer the question "what does Covenant of Grace mean" if we do not know what the Covenant of Redemption is (**see above**). Most concisely put: **the Covenant of Grace is the historical outworking of the Covenant of Redemption.** The Triune God has decreed from all eternity the salvation of His elect. In the Covenant of Grace, He calls them into fellowship with Him and realizes His plan by bringing them to saving faith. One of the glories of Covenant Theology is its clear doctrine of salvation in all of redemptive history. As our Confession says in this paragraph: "it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace, wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him…" We know that the Patriarchs did not have so much knowledge of the Lord Jesus as we now do. But the point is clear that salvation is and was by grace through faith in both testaments (Heb. 11; Rom. 3:20-4:12). See **below** and chapter 8 on the **Retroactive Blood of Christ**. The saints of the Old Testament did not trust upon their own works and their righteousness as the basis of their right-standing before God. They were hoping and waiting for the Serpent-Crushing-Offspring of Genesis 3:15 and of Abraham (Acts 3:25). As time went on (and as noted above about the Covenant of Works under the section "**Shadows and Types**"), the knowledge about the Offspring increased. It becomes clear from Abraham onward that it will be a lamb that has to be offered for our sins (Gen. 22:7-8, 14; John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7). So the people hoped in and for the lamb that was to be provided by God as atonement for their sin. As taught in the Catechism of Benjamin Keach, one of the signers of the 1689:

> Q. 24. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?
>
> A. God, out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, having chosen a people to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation, by a Redeemer.
>
> (Eph. 1:3,4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Rom. 5:21; Acts 13:8; Jer. 31:33)[30]

From the Catechism, we see that the Covenant of Grace is the historical outworking of the Covenant of Redemption, wherein God chose people and gave them to Christ for salvation from every tribe, language, people, and nation. It seems also that both the Confession and the Catechism teach that it is with the elect alone that God enters into a covenant of grace. This is a very important distinction between the Baptists and their Paedobaptist (Presbyterian) brethren. According to Presbyterians, both believers and their natural offspring (children) are part of the Covenant of Grace (though in different senses, see below). In Reformed Baptist thought, the Covenant of Grace is made with the elect and elect believers alone.

Administration?

One difference that has been made clear to me between the Baptists and the Presbyterians in the 17th century is their idea or absence of the administration of the Covenant of Grace. What did they mean by "administration"? The Westminster Confession 7:5 lays it out:

> This covenant [the Covenant of Grace] was **differently administered in the time of the law**, and in the time of the gospel: under the law **it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances** delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation, and is called the Old Testament.

What they meant by "administration" is that the *substance* of all the covenants in the Old Testament are the same, namely, the Covenant of Grace, but the *administration* of the particular covenants is different. The substance is the same, but the (outward) form is different. This distinction justifies the practice of infant baptism when understanding their position on the Covenant of Grace...it kind of makes sense. If the Abrahamic Covenant was an administration of the Covenant of Grace and it had the sign of circumcision, which was administered to both Jacob and Esau when they were infants (i.e., believer and unbeliever), then it makes sense that if the New Covenant has the same substance as the Abrahamic Covenant to baptize infants. This point would be carried over to the New Covenant and there we would also baptize our infants since they are part of the covenant just like in Abraham's time. Circumcision is replaced by baptism in the New Covenant administrations of the Covenant of Grace. The outward form is different, but the substance is still the same. Therefore, the promise of "you and your seed" applies to believers in the New Covenant and their natural offspring (as they interpret Acts 2:39). Such is the reasoning of our Presbyterian brethren. With such thinking, I can see some possibility of infant baptism being right, but there is more that needs to be examined before declaring infant baptism biblical. **See chapter 29** for more on baptism and the Covenant of Grace.

This is not only the Presbyterian understanding but even some Reformed Baptists' understanding. I think Richard Barcellos was right in observing that many Reformed Baptists assumed a Covenant Theology like their Presbyterian brethren, while not looking at the distinct Covenant Theology of our Baptist forefathers. In a recent Reformed Baptist book, this idea was promoted:

> It is absolutely imperative to understand that while there is just *one* Covenant of Grace, there are *different methods* of administrating it; each being of gracious promise serving the *first* manifestation of the Covenant of Grace (Genesis 3:15), culminating in the New Covenant, and enjoyed in eternal glory. This is not a flattening of Scripture nor is it "a reductionism which has the tendency of fitting Scripture into our theological system rather than the other way around." On the contrary, the one Covenant of Grace exponentially builds, increases, and heightens throughout redemptive history until it crescendos in heaven.[31]

Other Reformed Baptists contend that this view of "a single covenant, multiple administrations" is not the view of the signers of the 1689 Confession, but the Westminster Confession. There is a lot of similarity between the two Confessions, therefore, it is not strange for some Reformed Baptists to believe that our Confession (whether they've compared the two chapters or not, I do not know) must probably say the same thing as the Westminster Confession minus infant baptism. Therefore, they still operate according to the "one covenant, multiple administrations" model of Covenant Theology and not what we will now discuss, which we believe is the actual view of the Particular Baptists in the 17th century, but more importantly, a more biblical view.

1689 Federalism

Works like Pascal Denault's have raised doubts about the idea that our Baptist forefathers shared the same idea of administration in Covenant Theology with our Presbyterian brethren. In his work, Denault argues that for what has come to be known as **1689 Federalism**. He goes back to the sources from the 17th century, the same period when the 1689 (which was actually written in 1677), the Savoy Declaration of Faith (1658) and the Westminster (1646) were written to see what the framers of the confessions actually believed. It appears from his research that many Baptists did not actually share the same understanding of Covenant Theology with their Paedobaptist brethren. There were some who did share the Presbyterian covenantal view, no doubt. 1689 Federalism teaches that the Confession is not teaching the "one covenant, different administrations" model of Covenant Theology of Paedobaptists. But as it is obvious from the Westminster that it does teach the "one covenant, different administrations" (by their admission, see Westminster 7:5), likewise it is likewise clear from this chapter that the idea of administration is absent. The framers of the Confession were not trying to be original in wording, rather they were trying to communicate a point of difference with their Paedobaptist brethren. The framers were not ashamed to take long portions from the Westminster and Savoy with little or no textual change (**see here the three**

confessions side by side). But since it is clear that the Westminster is not articulating the same thing about the Covenant of Grace as the 1689 is, therefore we must assume that they are trying to convey a different or a modified form of Covenant Theology.

Reading And Comparing The Paragraphs Carefully

1689 7:3	Westminster 7:5
This covenant is **revealed** in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards **by farther steps**, until the **full discovery** thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; and **it is alone by the grace of this covenant** that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency.	This covenant was **differently administered** in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation, and is called the Old Testament.

Notice that the 1689 Baptists confess that the Covenant of Grace ("this covenant") was fully revealed in the gospel, in the New Covenant. The Covenant of Grace was indeed revealed and I would say, promised, to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, to Moses and to David. But notice the difference between the Westminster and the 1689. The Westminster confesses that the Covenant of Grace was already being *administered* under the Law of Moses and I assume also under Adam and the promise of Genesis 3:15, which some of them would take as the first administration of the Covenant of Grace. This is different from what the 1689 says concerning the Covenant of Grace, about which it does not say a syllable on administration. Rather, the 1689 teaches that the Covenant of Grace was progressively *revealed,* not administered, in the covenants from the Fall to the Cross.

The framers of the 1689 apparently did not believe in what their Paedobaptist brethren did about the Covenant of Grace. They believed that the Covenant of Grace was *revealed* and *promised* to Adam and the covenants after Adam (Noah, Abraham, Moses, Levi, David). If the Presbyterian position may be summarized as "one covenant under different administrations", the 1689 position may be summarized as "**one covenant revealed progressively** and **concluded formally under the New Covenant**."[32] Pascal Denault writes:

> This distinction: (revealed/concluded) summarized the difference between the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament and the Covenant of Grace in the New Testament. In the Old, it was revealed, in the New, it was concluded (fully revealed according to the expression of the 1689).[33]

What if the objection comes up that the phrase "covenant of works" nowhere appears in this chapter, while the 2nd paragraphs of both the Westminster and Savoy mention these. Does this omission mean rejection? No, it does not. Why does the omission of "covenant of works" does not imply rejection, but the omission of "administration" does? That is a very good question. The simple answer is that the Confession, **as observed above**, does speak of the Covenant of Works elsewhere (**19:6**; **20:1**), but nowhere speaks of administrations of the Covenant of Grace, which would strengthen our case that the Confession is denying the idea of administration. Furthermore, they set themselves against the doctrines in chapter 7 of the Westminster and Savoy in speaking about the Covenant of Grace being *revealed* instead of being *administered, by farther steps.* The revelation of the Covenant of Grace was progressive until the establishment of the New Covenant in Christ's blood. What follows is the belief that **the New Covenant is the Covenant of Grace established in time.** 1689 Federalism is in disagreement that any covenant before the New Covenant was, in fact, the Covenant of Grace or an administration thereof. We believe that the Covenant of Grace was in **a state of promise** under the Old Testament and was formally established in the blood of Christ in the New Covenant alone. "Why?", you may be asking? Well, we'll discuss the reasons for this, below.

The New Covenant Is The Covenant of Grace

First, let us start by laying out what we mean when we use the words *New Covenant* and *Covenant of Grace*. John Owen is helpful in laying the difference very briefly:

> So that although by "**the covenant of grace**," we ofttimes understand no more but the **way of life, grace, mercy, and salvation by Christ**; yet by "**the new covenant**," we intend **its actual establishment in the death of Christ, with that blessed way of worship which by it is settled in the church**.[34]

Therefore, the covenant of grace, or as I like to capitalize it and speak of it definitely—the Covenant of Grace—is the transtemporal *promise* of salvation through Jesus Christ for all the elect. The New Covenant is the *accomplishment* of all that is necessary for that salvation to be affected and enjoyed. The difference between the Covenant of Grace and the New Covenant is that the New Covenant is the establishment of the Covenant of Grace in Christ's blood. All the promises are one and the same and the substance is the same. The Covenant of Grace is a theological covenant, meaning, it is a covenant necessitated by our understanding and reading of Scripture and of Redemptive History, but it is not explicitly mentioned in Scripture. It is implied throughout Scripture, but it is not a historical and definite covenant like the New Covenant or the Abrahamic or the Mosaic.

> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to **the covenants of promise**, having no hope and without God in the world.

This verse fits well with the 1689 Federalist position that all the preceding covenants were not the Covenant of Grace or administrations thereof, but they had in the types, shadows, and aspects which did reveal things pertaining to the Covenant of Grace established in Christ's blood. It is interesting to note the fact that the word "covenants" is plural, while "promise" is singular, pointing to the fact that there were many covenants which were pointing in the direction of the one promise. But what promise? It seems to me more probable that Paul has in mind the covenant with Abraham than the promised Offspring in Genesis 3:15 given the fact that he is speaking of the Gentiles who were separated from Israel's blessings, whose root was Abraham. Abraham was given a promise that through him all the earth would be blessed, including Gentiles (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Both promises, either the one given to Adam or to Abraham, point to Christ as their fulfillment. The essence of these promises was the Covenant of Grace, in which the glory of Christ is revealed and given for the enjoyment of the elect. The Covenant of Grace and all that it stands for was promised to them. The texts for consideration about this promise are:

> Gen. 22:17-18 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and **in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed**, because you have obeyed my voice."
>
> > Acts 3:25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'
> >
> > Luke 1:72-73 to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us
> >
> > Rom. 9:4-5 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. 5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.
> >
> > Gal. 3:16-17 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. 17 This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.
>
> Gen. 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and **her offspring**; **he shall bruise your head,** and you shall bruise his heel."

Dr. Sam Waldron, in his commentary on chapter 7 of the 1689, notes the unity of the covenants in light of Ephesians 2:12:

> The *thematic unity* of the covenants means that they have a **single ultimate theme or purpose**. The text that epitomizes and summarizes this point is Ephesians 2:12, which literally translated speaks of 'the covenants of the promise'. What specific promise Paul has in mind may not be clear, but it is clear that **all the covenants were the development of one single promise**, not many promises. This thematic unity can be seen in a key recurring phrase or theme that occurs in the divine covenants: '**I will be your God and you shall be my people**' (Gen. 17:7-8; Exod. 25:8; 6:6-7; 2 Sam. 7:14; 2 Chron. 23:16; Jer. 31:33; Rev. 21:3). The great promise of all the covenants is fulfilled in Christ and in the New Covenant (John 1:14; Matt. 1:22-23). Now emphatically God is with man.
>
> The reference in Ephesians 2:12 to 'the covenants of the promise' is crucial. It asserts that **all the divine covenants relate to the unfolding of the single promise of salvation**. If Paul is referring specifically to the promise of a Redeemer initially given in Genesis 3:15, then the following (very brief) survey of the divine covenants manifests their relation to this promise. The covenant with Noah is given as a framework in which creation will be preserved by common grace until the fulfilment of the promise. The covenant with Abraham formally initiates that community through which the promised Redeemer will come. The Mosaic covenant provides the necessary regulation and legislation for that community at the time when it has ceased to be a family and has become a nation. In so doing God also provides a full revelation of the nature and necessity of the response owed to his covenant grace. In the Davidic covenant God's rule over his people is given concrete manifestation. In so doing the line through which the Redeemer would come is specified. In the New Covenant the Redeemer appears and accomplishes redemption, thus bringing to fruition all the types and predictions of the earlier covenants. He inaugurates the final form of the covenant community.
>
> The crucial point in all of this for us is that the promise of a Redeemer is intimately related to the way or scheme of salvation. **Salvation is by the promise**. That is to say, it is by grace through faith in a coming Redeemer (note the exposition of chapter 20:1). This single way of salvation has operated in and been progressively revealed in every age

of human history (Rom. 4:13-17; Gal. 3:18-22). All the preceding covenants were typical and preparatory. Their efficacy to save came only through the anticipated work of Christ (Heb. 9:15).[35]

In short, the promise was the Covenant of Grace, i.e., the New Covenant, through which salvation is offered to sinners. Denault helps us here again:

> The Baptists believed that no covenant preceding the New Covenant was the Covenant of Grace. Before the arrival of the New Covenant, the **Covenant of Grace was at the stage of promise**. According to Benjamin Keach, the expression "the covenants of the promise" that can be found in Ephesians 2.12 refers back to the Covenant of Grace. The **promise in question was the Covenant of Grace**. If we are talking about **a promise, this implies that it was not yet accomplished and was not yet in the form of a testament or a covenant**. The Baptists believed that **the New Covenant was the accomplishment of the promise, or in other words, the accomplishment of the Covenant of Grace**. This doctrine is expressed in the following way in the 1689: "This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam […] and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament." The New Testament brings the full revelation of the Covenant of Grace since the New Covenant is its accomplishment. The Baptists considered that the **New Covenant and it alone was the Covenant of Grace**.[36]

As to the question in which way the covenants were progressively revealing the Covenant of Grace/New Covenant, we will see under the heading "Shadows and Types" of each covenant.

νενομοθέτηται (Hebrews 8:6)

This argument for the establishment of the Covenant of Grace at no other point other than the New Covenant is credited to John Owen's exposition of Hebrews 8:6-13. I was mindblown by reading Owen's massive commentary on Hebrews 8:6. I found it to be both biblically faithful as well as compelling. I found the **collapsible outline** made by Brandon Adams very helpful in understanding his commentary and argument. This long quotation from Denault and Owen should suffice:

> John Owen comes to exactly the same understanding in his exegesis of Hebrews 8.6 where we read: "But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the New Covenant is established on better promises." Owen concentrates on the verb νομοθετέω (established) to explain the difference between the Covenant of Grace before and after Jesus Christ.
>
> > This is the meaning of the word νενομοθέτηται: […] "**reduced into a fixed state of a law or ordinance**." All the obedience required in it, all the worship appointed by it, all the privileges exhibited in it, and the grace administered with them, are all given for a statute, law, and ordinance to the church. That which **before lay hid in promises, in many things obscure**, […] was now brought to light; and **that covenant which had invisibly, in the way of promise**, put forth its efficacy under types and shadows, was **now solemnly sealed, ratified, and confirmed, in the death and resurrection of Christ**. It had before the **confirmation of promise, which is an oath**; it had now the **confirmation of a covenant, which is blood**. That which before had **no visible, outward worship, proper and peculiar to it**, is now made **the only rule and instrument of worship to the whole church**, nothing being to be admitted in that respect but what belongs to it, and is appointed by it. The apostle intends this by the **"legal establishment' of the New Covenant**, with all the ordinances of its worship. On this the other covenant was disannulled and removed; and not only the covenant itself, but all that system of sacred worship in accordance with which it was administered. […] When the **New Covenant was given out only in the way of a promise**, it was consistent with a form of worship, rites and ceremonies, and those composed into a yoke of bondage which belonged not to it. And as these, they were inconsistent with it when it was completed as a covenant; for then all the worship of the church was to proceed from it, and to be conformed to it.
>
> Before the establishment (νενομοθέτηται) of the New Covenant, the Covenant of Grace did not have a concrete manifestation, any cultus or ceremony; **it was not a covenant, but a promise revealed in an obscure manner under temporary types and shadows**: "These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ." (Col 2.17). **Before Christ, the Covenant of Grace was announced**; **after Christ, it was decreed** (νενομοθέτηται).
>
> Owen adds to this by saying that the Covenant of Grace, as a formal covenant, exists only in the New Covenant. The Covenant of Grace, in this specific sense, was not given to Adam or to Abraham: "[…] this covenant, as here considered, is not understood the promise of grace given to Adam absolutely; nor that to Abraham, which contained

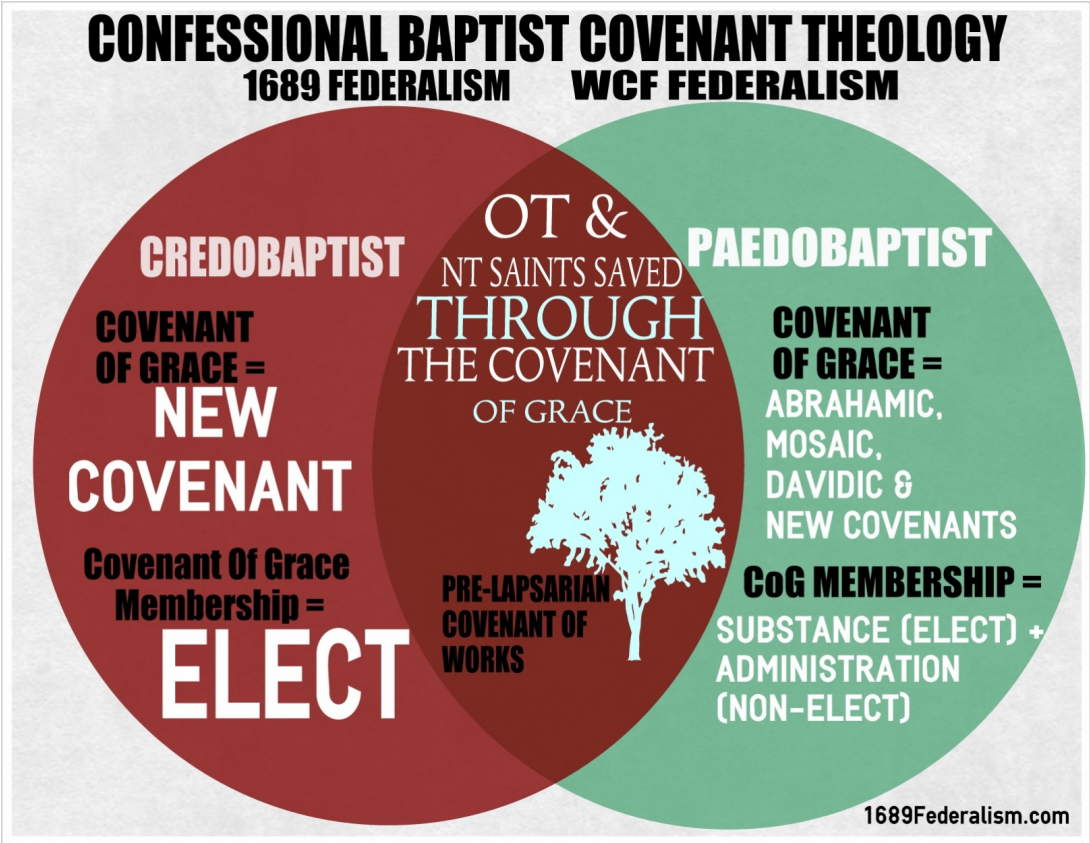
the substance and matter of it, the grace exhibited in it, but not the complete form of it as a covenant." God did not conclude the Covenant of Grace with Adam any more than He did with Abraham; **he revealed the substance of the covenant to them**, but **it was only concluded through Jesus Christ, in his sacrifice**...

Benjamin Keach, one of the main Baptist theologians of the second half of the seventeenth century, ratifies this view of the Covenant of Grace when he describes its four sequences: 1. It was first decreed in past eternity, 2. It was secondly revealed to man after the Fall of Adam and Eve, 3. It was executed and confirmed by Christ in his death and resurrection, 4. It becomes effective for its members when they are joined to Christ through faith. The particularity of this ordo salutis is the distinction between the revelation and the execution of the Covenant of Grace. Those who were saved before Christ were saved because of an oath; those who were saved after Him were saved because of a covenant. The Epistle to the Hebrews makes this distinction when it bases the faith of believers of the Old Covenant on the oath that God made to Abraham (He. 5.17-18). However, the assurance of the believers of the New Covenant rests on a testament that is the achieved work of Christ (He. 7-9).[37]

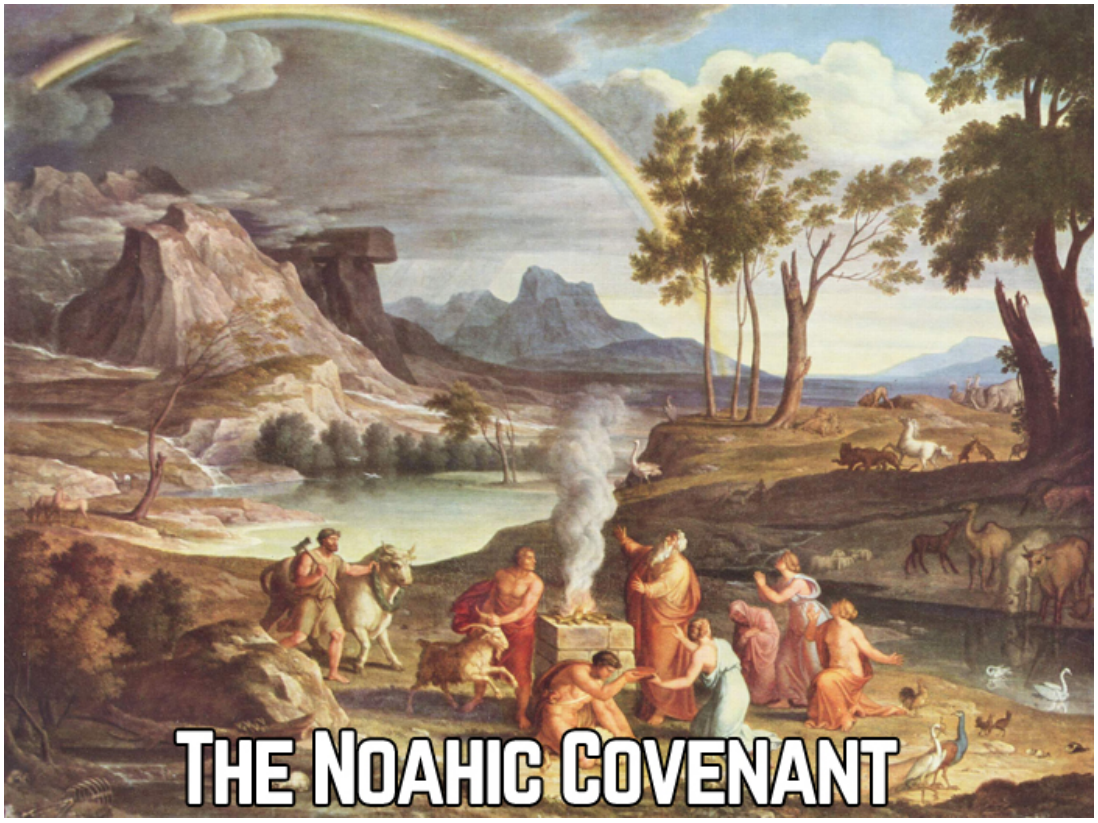
The *Covenant* of Grace did not exist as an established covenant under the Old Testament era, but it existed in the form of a promise. This is also how they were saved and received God's blessings. Paul says about this time that "if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise" (Gal. 3:18). This inheritance includes the typical land of Canaan, the promise of the gospel (Gal. 3:8-9, 14). The Covenant of Grace/New Covenant being retroactive (influencing or applying to a period prior to enactment) had in it all the faithful before Christ (see for example Heb. 9:15; Rom. 3:25-26 about the retroactive aspect of the New Covenant) or **see below**. As to questions about covenant membership, people and the like, these will be discussed under the section for the **New Covenant**.

1689 Federalism vs Westminster Federalism

A very helpful diagram that I found which demonstrates the understanding of Covenant Theology from the perspective of a 1689 Federalist can be found **here**. The commonalities and differences between 1689 and Westminster Federalism may be illustrated by a helpful diagram which Brandon Adams has made for **1689Federalism.com**.



The Noahic Covenant



For many, when the question “which is the first covenant that the Bible mentions” is asked, the answer which is given is the Noahic Covenant. In a way, this is understandable, since the first mention of the word “covenant” is found in Genesis 6:18, though I have argued for the Covenant of Works being the first covenant established in time **above**.

God’s Story

After our first parents disobeyed and broke the Lord’s covenant, they were severed from the fellowship of God and all that is good. God, being merciful and gracious in nature, *promised* to them salvation in the Offspring from Eve (Gen. 3:15). Now man, being severed from fellowship with His good Creator, has become opposed to Him and to what He represents and has sided with the one who questioned the Lord’s authority in the first place (see **chapter 6** on Total Depravity). Man has become totally opposed to God and has become wholly evil by rebelling against their good Creator. About the condition of man, Genesis 6:5 is very negative:

> The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

The Lord was sorry that He made man on the earth and that man had become so wicked. The Lord wanted to blot out mankind which He had created as very good, but which has sought out many wicked and sinful ways away from God (Eccl. 7:29).

> Gen. 6:7 So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, **man** and **animals** and **creeping** things and **birds** of the heavens, for **I am sorry** that I have made them.”

The Fall affected much more than Adam and Eve alone. The Fall affected not only the whole human race but the whole creation itself. Indeed, Paul says that “the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth” (Rom. 8:22) and that “the creation was subjected to futility” (Rom. 8:20). This would include all animals, creeping things, birds and fish. The impact of the Fall was so great that even the non-human creation was affected and corrupted by it and therefore, it had to be destroyed. God wanted to destroy all. We rejoice when reading about God’s judgment and then encounter the word “but.” We are thankful for the “but’s” in the Bible. Notice, for example, the “but” in Genesis 50:20 and Ephesians 2:3-5. Likewise, in this case, we see that the Lord’s intention is not to destroy all life and thus undo His creation. Rather, His purpose is to start all over again—with Noah. But a question may be raised about what excluded Noah from the people in Genesis 6:5? Well, Genesis 6:8 (KJV) puts it in this way:

> But **Noah found grace** in the eyes of the LORD.

It pleased the Lord to grant mercy to Noah and his family and to start over with them. In the midst of God's terrible decree of destruction overflowing with righteousness (a phrase borrowed from Isa. 10:22), God decided, out of mere grace, to persevere Noah and his family. Now it is true that the Bible describes Noah as "a righteous man, blameless in his generation" (Gen. 6:9), but it would be a great error, opposing the Bible's doctrine of justification by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9; **see chapter 11**), to ascribe the cause of the Lord's choice to Noah's *intrinsic* (an intrinsic property is an essential or inherent property of a system or of a material itself or within) righteousness. Noah was righteous and blameless *because* he had found grace in the eyes of the Lord. The grace of God was the cause of his righteousness, not the other way around. Otherwise, it would contradict the very meaning of *grace*, which is *unmerited favor*.

But I Will Establish My Covenant With You

Now that God's plan to "clean" the planet is in place, He commands Noah to build an ark wherein he, his family and the animals can survive God's decree of destruction (Gen. 6:18-22). The Lord first promises the covenant before He establishes it (in a way like the Covenant of Grace and the New Covenant with a much shorter time in between). We read:

> Gen. 6:17-18 For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to **destroy all flesh** in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But **I will establish my covenant with you**, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

Yet another "but." God will destroy all life upon the earth, ***but*** He will spare the lives of Noah and his family. Out of millions (billions?) of people, the Lord chose to display amazing grace to eight people—Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. This is the main point of the Covenant of Grace/New Covenant: redemption by grace, not merit. Not that the Covenant of Grace was formally established, but it was in a state of promise and was retroactive. Not only does God care about the man that He has made, but also about the animals that He has made. That is why He commands Noah and He brings into the Ark two of every sort of animal having the breath of life in it (Gen. 7:8-9).

God Remembered

In passing, we note Genesis 8:1 –

> But **God remembered Noah** and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And **God made a wind blow over the earth**, and the waters subsided.

Oh, so God was so busy that He had forgotten about the Flood that He had brought upon the face of the earth? That is so stupid that it cannot be imagined. Rather, as the ESV Study Bible rightly notes, when the Bible uses this expression, it refers to God's promises and covenants. In this case, the promise of a covenant with Noah.

> **Gen. 8:1 God remembered Noah.** This marks the turning point in the flood story. When the Bible says that God "remembers" someone or his covenant with someone, it indicates that he is about to take action for that person's welfare (cf. 9:15; 19:29; 30:22; Ex. 2:24; 32:13; Ps. 25:6–7; 74:2). All life on the land having been destroyed, God now proceeds to renew everything, echoing what he did in Genesis 1. **God made a wind blow over the earth.** The Hebrew word for wind, *ruakh*, is also sometimes translated "Spirit" (e.g., 1:2; 6:3). While the context normally enables the reader to distinguish *ruakh* meaning "wind" from *ruakh* meaning "Spirit," the present verse intentionally echoes 1:2.[38]

The re-creational aspect, as noted by the ESV Study Bible, is surely interesting given the fact that the Lord gives the same commission of being fruitful both to Adam (Gen. 1:28) and to Noah (Gen. 9:1). This indicates that God is starting out again with Noah as a new Adam. The parallels between Adam and Noah are brought up by Douglas Van Dorn:

> The second instance of "covenant" with Noah occurs after the flood, after Noah has been saved. Curiously—and this is important for enriching an understanding of the earliest biblical covenant—**this covenant repeats ideas found not in Genesis 6, but in Genesis 1**. "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen 9:1; cf. 1:28). There are also references to the created animals,[71: Compare Gen 8:17 and 1:22, 24] the day and night,[72: Compare Gen 8:22 and

1:5] the image of God,[73: Compare Gen 9:6 and 1:26-27] and Noah's dominion.[74: Compare Gen 9:2-5 and 1:26, 28.] In this way, **Noah is a new Adam starting on a new earth** that was completely covered by water (see Gen 1:2).

The Establishment Of The Covenant

It is only after coming out of the Ark that the Lord *establishes* the promised covenant (Gen. 6:18) with Noah. What is the main point of this covenant? It is mentioned in Genesis 9:15–

> I will remember **my covenant** that is between **me** and **you** and **every living creature of all flesh**. And the waters shall **never again become a flood to destroy all flesh**.

God will never again destroy all life by water; the second time it will be by fire, but that is another subject (2 Pet. 3:10; **see here**). When speaking of covenants, we assume that the members are either God and man or man and man. But in this covenant, even the animals are included. As the reminder and sign of the covenant, the rainbow was put by God in the sky (Gen. 9:12-13) to remind man that God will never again destroy the whole earth by water (Gen. 9:14-15). The Lord even calls this covenant an "everlasting" covenant (Gen. 9:16). This covenant secures against the destruction of all flesh by water.

What is promised or given?

First of all, as already noted, God promises that He will **never again destroy all flesh** by water (Gen. 8:21; 9:11, 15). And therefore, God will preserve life upon the earth. This does not mean that God will not allow the extinction of animals, but He will not allow the cessation of life upon earth. God promises the *uniformity of nature*. God promises that as long as the earth will remain, regular things as planting (seedtime), harvest, summer, and heat; winter and cold; day and light; night and darkness will continue and will not cease. God promises here that He will preserve the earth. He promises that He will preserve the natural world, as He has promised in the Noahic Covenant to preserve life on earth.

> Gen. 8:22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

God gives the animals as food to man. Formerly, man was vegetarian, but now he was given animals as food (Gen. 9:3-4). The **death penalty** is officially established here. We read–

> Gen. 9:4-6 But you shall not eat flesh with **its life, that is, its blood**. 5 And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast **I will require it** and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. 6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, **by man shall his blood be shed**, for God made man in his own image.

This is also what is called the *law of retaliation* or in Latin the *lex talion.* It is mentioned in Exodus 21:23, "But if there is harm, then you shall pay **life for life**". Let us, in closing, note what the ESV Study Bible notes on Genesis 9:5-6:

> **Gen. 9:5–6** Following his comments about the killing of animals, God addresses the issue of homicide. Violence by "all flesh" (v. 11), i.e., by man and animals, prompted God to send the flood (6:11, 13). If human nature has not improved after the flood (6:5; 8:21), how is violence to be prevented in the future? This legal enactment is the answer: **From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man**. This means that any animal or person that takes a human life will be held accountable by God, working through human representatives (e.g., Ex. 20:13; 21:28). **Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed**. Here the principle of *talion*, a life for a life, is applied (see Ex. 21:23). This measured response is preferable to Lamech's seventy-sevenfold vengeance (Gen. 4:24). Human life is to be valued so highly that it is protected by this system of punishment because **God made man in his own image**, and so to murder another human being is to murder what is most like God, and is thus implicitly an attack on God himself. Many would see this statement as establishing the moral principle permitting the death penalty in cases of murder—with the understanding that the person charged would have been justly tried and his guilt established beyond any reasonable doubt (cf. the OT requirement of two or three witnesses, Deut. 19:15; repeated in the NT, e.g., Matt. 18:16; Heb. 10:28). A further requirement is that such a death-penalty verdict must always be carried out under the jurisdiction of the established authorities (cf. Deut. 19:15–21; Rom. 13:1–5). The difficulty of establishing guilt beyond any reasonable doubt and the difficulty of ensuring justice in a modern, complex urban society (as compared to an ancient village-based society) underscore the great care and caution that must be taken in applying this principle today.[38]

These are the promises/establishments that I can find in Genesis 6-9.

A Covenant Of Common Grace

It is not a covenant of works because there is nothing intrinsically that caused God to enter into a covenant with Noah. Nor is there anything in Noah or man or animals that would cause God to keep the covenant and bless them because of their obedience. This is a one-sided promise given to all creation. Nor is it an administration of the Covenant of Grace, because, first, it does not say anything about salvation and the Savior like the other covenants do. Second, it is a covenant made with all flesh. One enters the Covenant of Grace by faith, but in this covenant, everyone is a member by virtue of the promise given by God to Noah and all flesh. Third, it is not an administration of the Covenant of Grace because of the reasons given that the New Covenant is the Covenant of Grace established in time above (i.e., Heb. 8:6; **see here**). It is rather, as does Sam Waldron notes, a covenant of common grace:

> The covenant with Noah is given as a framework in which creation will be preserved by common grace until the fulfilment of the promise [Gen. 3:15].[35]

On this point, we are even in agreement with Dr. John Frame–

> The Noachic covenant, embracing all flesh, certainly embraces all human beings as well, whether believers or not. In that sense it is a *covenant of common grace*. But it is not indifferent as to how they respond to God. Even Noah's grandson Canaan receives a curse for the lack of respect shown to Noah by Canaan's father Ham (Gen. 9:20–27). Unbelievers within the covenant are called to become believers and to walk by faith as Noah did. And the passage never mentions natural law or natural revelation, though we may assume that these continue to convey the same moral content as they do in the universal covenant. In the Noachic covenant, God sets the standards of the covenant by his own words, his "special revelation."[39]

Nehemiah Coxe explains the relationship between the Covenant of Grace and the Noahic Covenant in this way:

> Although the **grace of the new covenant was spiritually held out in this covenant** with Noah (which was struck with him for all his posterity) **yet the grace and blessing were not by this means bestowed on all mankind**. They surely all have an interest in that covenant that signified, and in some ways included, spiritual blessings but **those blessings do not pertain to all who have their signs**. Instead **they remain the peculiar right of those who by faith receive them**, "who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).[40]

The Noahic Covenant revealed the Covenant of Grace and its blessings, but the blessings of the Covenant of Grace were not bestowed through the Noahic, but only through faith and the Covenant of Grace.

Worship In The Noahic Covenant And Sacrifices

I want to take notice of the fact of how early animal sacrifices were involved and how a central role they played in the worship of God. Actually, the first animal sacrifice was made by God Himself when He provided clothes for Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21 after their rebellion. Then we have the account of Cain and Abel who brought offerings to the Lord in Genesis 4:4-5. They already knew that they had to bring offerings although there was no mention of a command given *in the Bible.* The Lord tells Noah to take seven pairs of clean animals, while from the unclean animals he may take a couple (Gen. 7:2-3). Why would that be? Well, first of all, for the offerings and second, for food as it was permitted for man to eat the animals after the Flood. In fact, once Noah got out of the ark, he made an altar (something common in Genesis 12:7-8; 13:4; 22:9, 26:25; 33:20; 35:1, 7) and offered burnt offerings on it. In Genesis 8:20-21, we read–

> Then Noah **built an altar** to the LORD and took **some of every clean animal** and some of every clean bird and offered **burnt offerings** on the altar. 21 And when the LORD smelled the **pleasing aroma**, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

To close this section, we note John Gill's comments on Genesis 8:20–

And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord,.... Not an house for himself and his family, but an altar for God; his first and greatest concern being for the glory of God, and not for the temporal good of himself and his: this altar was erected, and devoted to the service of God; it was built according to his will, and by his direction: Noah's view was to renew the worship of God, preserve and propagate it by his example; and this was done by way of thanksgiving to God for his wonderful preservation of him, and was also propitiatory and typical of Christ: the Jewish writers {d} say, this was the altar on which Adam sacrificed, when expelled the garden of Eden, and on which Cain and Abel offered; and being demolished by the flood, was rebuilt by Noah, which is not at all probable; it is much more likely what Aben Ezra says, that it was built on one of the mountains of Ararat, and that as Noah took the first opportunity, so he built it in the first place he came to, or at least not far from the place where he came out of the ark:

and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar; the clean beasts were the bullock, the sheep, and goat, and the clean fowl, the turtle and young pigeon, one of each sort at least was taken. The Targum of Jonathan says, he offered four upon the altar: these were typical of Christ; the bullock or heifer might denote his strength, the sheep or lamb his patience and harmlessness, the turtle or dove his meekness; and being burnt offerings, may signify the painful and dolorous sufferings of Christ, when the wrath of God was poured on him like fire.[41]

The Covenant of Works and the Noahic Covenant

As we have noted above, there is a re-creation in the account of the Flood and coming out of the flood. The post-flood world is painted as a new world. Noah is painted to us as a new Adam, with a commission identical to that of the first Adam. Therefore, it should not surprise us if there is a connection between the covenants that these two men represent. The Covenant of Works, after the Fall, could no longer provide blessings, but only executed the sentence of death upon sinners. Yet now, after the Flood and this re-creation, God initiates a new covenant that should govern life in a renewed world. Neither the Noahic nor the Adamic offers eternal life. But they are the covenants which govern all people. All unredeemed persons are still under the broken Adamic Covenant. But the whole earth, men and beasts, are still under the Noahic Covenant because it was a covenant made with all flesh. These two covenants are not opposed. In this regard, Dr. Renihan is very helpful:

The Noahic Covenant and the Covenant of Works are not at odds with each other. They simply have different purposes. The **Covenant of Works curses and condemns**. The **Noahic Covenant dictates how to live in that world**. Both are **active covenants by which God governs mankind** and grants authority to mankind. Adam forfeited his authority, but we have seen that **in Noah all are called to build culture, to be fruitful and multiply.**

This kingdom of creation is **the common kingdom in which mankind lives today**, and in which all human societies exist. Its curses apply to all mankind, and its promises and blessings apply to all mankind. **This kingdom does not offer salvation, or saving grace**, but **it is pure kindness from God** to pour out rain and sunshine on all mankind, commonly, rather than curse and death. Thus, we can speak of this **kingdom existing in the realm of common grace**. God is preserving the world with everyone in it, and the unbeliever has just as much a right to the promise of common kindness as the believer because we are both citizens of a **common cursed kingdom of common grace**.[42]

Shadows & Types

The Scriptures are numerous which mention Noah and allude to the account of the global Flood. We will consider the aspect of judgment here.

Judgment and Salvation

While speaking of His awesome second coming, our Lord compares it to the days of Noah–

Matt. 24:37-39 For as were the **days of Noah**, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they were **unaware until the flood came and swept them all away**, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

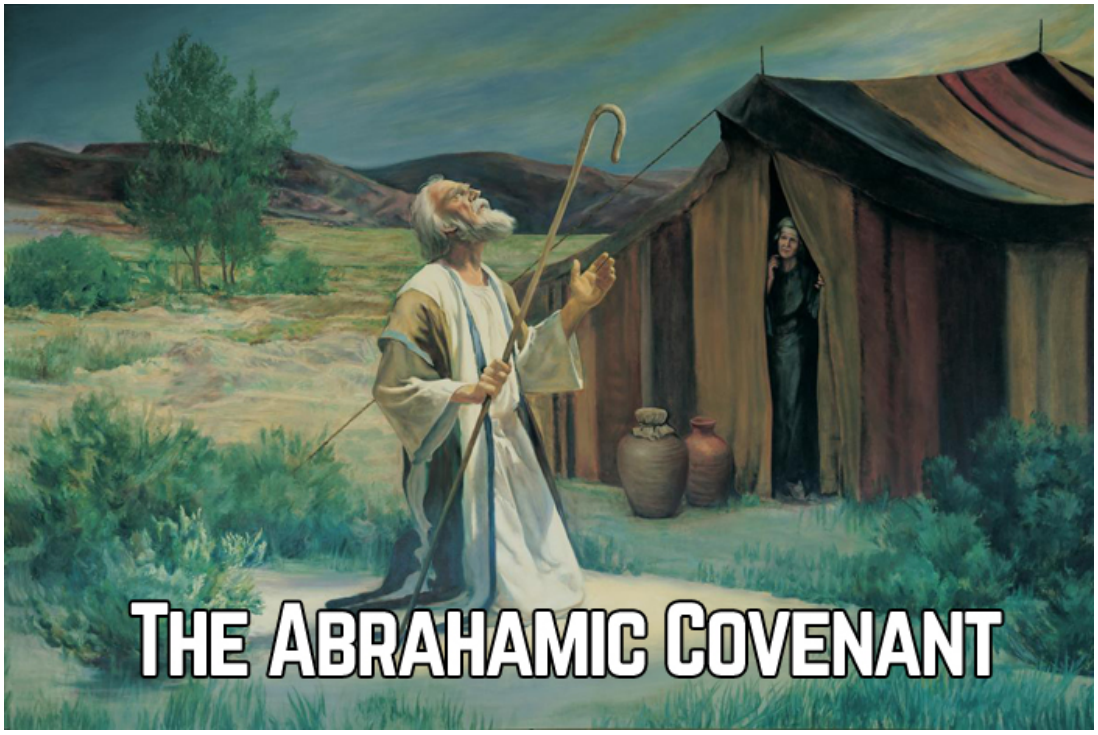
Just like in the time of Noah, daily life was "normal" until that moment when he entered the ark and the Lord brought rain upon the earth and broke the fountains of the deep. There are two groups of people: those who were outside of the ark and thus were destroyed, and those who were in the ark and were saved from destruction. This is a glorious picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone who is in Him will be saved from God's wrath. There is no more condemnation for them who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1). But anyone who is not in Christ, God's wrath burns hot against them. Destruction and the Second Coming will come suddenly, at a time when people don't expect them, just like the Flood did. Jesus Christ is the Ark of Salvation.

The Flood should function as a clear sign that God is not kidding when He says that He will come and He will bring judgment upon the ungodly. Indeed, read what Peter says–

> 2 Pet. 2:5-6 if he **did not spare the ancient world**, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, **making them an example** of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

The Lord's great judgments when He cast the fallen angels to hell when He brought the Flood to destroy the godless world, when He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness function as *types and shadows* of the greater destruction that is to come. These events assure us that God will judge the world in righteousness. Let us also not forget the important aspect of salvation by grace as we noted above. It was not because Noah was good that He was saved. It was because he found grace in the eyes of the LORD (Gen. 6:8 KJV). In short, anyone who is not hidden in Christ will face the wrath of God. Therefore, come and take shelter in Christ as your Ark of Salvation.

The Abrahamic Covenant



The next revelation of the Covenant of Grace is the Abrahamic Covenant. Certainly, the Abrahamic Covenant is one of the most important covenants in the Bible. There are many questions that need to be answered when dealing with the Abrahamic Covenant.

God's Story

After flooding the world, "the greatest story ever told" continues. The earth is populated by the descendants of Noah, but mankind has not become better. Sin was still rampant among them. God commanded Noah and his descendants to fill and subdue the earth, but people wanted to stay in one place and thereby disobey God's commission. Therefore, they wanted to build a tower which reached to heaven to make a name for themselves. God was not pleased. At that time, the Lord caused the division of the languages and scattered the people over the face of the planet. When reading the list of Shem's descendants we are being prepared to meet a person who will be remembered for the rest of history and who will be called the father of the faithful. From Genesis 12 onward, the story told in the Bible is that of Abraham's physical and spiritual offspring.

The Call of Abram

Out of mere grace and mercy, God calls Abram out from a life of idolatry to walk before Him (Josh. 24:2). God promised him great blessings, which he could not have deserved or imagined. We already know about Abraham and his call, how he received great promises from God and how he almost offered his son Isaac up. But I'll be content to give a summary here. The Lord Almighty calls Abram to go out from the Ur of the Chaldeans to the land of Canaan (Gen. 11:31). The blessings

were:

1. Making him a great nation (Gen. 12:2);
2. Blessing him so that he would be a blessing (Gen. 12:2);
3. Blessing those who bless him, cursing those who curse him (Gen. 12:3);
4. In him will all the families of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12:3);
5. The land of Canaan will be his offspring's (Gen. 12:7; 15:18-19).

These blessings and promises, he received and they are repeated often to him, to Isaac and to Jacob. Reminding them of the goodness and love of God toward His people. So, as Hebrews says:

> Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

He went and followed God's command, but at the same time, he did not exactly know where he was going. As time went by, God made it clear both to Abram and to the people who were with and against him that the God Almighty is with him (as with the case of Pharaoh's house in Gen. 12:10-20). God has blessed those who have blessed him and cursed those who have cursed him according to His promise. The Lord visibly appeared to Abram a few times in his life (Gen. 12:7; 17:1; 18:1) and has made clear that He loves Abram and is set to fulfill His promises to him. But now you may be wondering and asking yourself, "his name was Abraham, not Abram, right?" And here comes our story. The Lord promised that Abram would be made a great nation. There was only one problem: Sarai, his wife, was barren. It was not possible for them to have children. But the Lord, Who is sovereign over life and death, had promised Abram that he would give him a child. When he got the promises, he thought that a servant of his would be counted as his offspring and get the promises since he is childless. But this is the Lord's reply:

> Gen. 15:4-6 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man [Eliezer of Damascus, v. 2] shall not be your heir; **your very own son shall be your heir**." 5 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 6 And **he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness**.

None other than a child from his own seed will be the child of the promise. Well, if you know the story, you know that Sarai took things into her hand and gave him her maid Hagar who bore him Ishmael whom he thought to be the child of promise (Gen. 16). This was brought about by natural power, but the Lord wanted to confirm His promise to Abram by giving him a child supernaturally from Sarai. In time, the Lord gave them a child, Isaac. Hebrews 11 summarizes it thus:

> Heb. 11:11-12 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was **past the age**, since she considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were **born descendants as many as the stars of heaven** and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

Here comes the meaning of Abraham's name and Sarah's name. Both were changed. Abram means "exalted father," but sadly he had no child. His name was changed to Abraham after the Lord made a covenant with him and told him that he will be a "father of a multitude," the meaning of his new name (Gen. 17:5). Sarai means "my princess," but God changed it to Sarah which means "princess" (Gen. 17:15-16).

Genesis 15

Genesis 15 contains the verse that is quoted four times in the New Testament about justification by faith (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:9, 22; Gal. 3:6; Jas. 2:23). It starts with Abram's hopelessness of having offspring and God's promise that he will have an offspring for the fulfillment of the promise. Not only will he have an offspring, but their number will be as many as the stars (Gen. 15:5). The Lord promises that he (his offspring) will possess the land of promise. But the obvious question is, "but how, Lord?" The next scene is a very dramatic display of God's faithfulness to His promise and word.

> Gen. 15:9-10 He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 And he brought him all these, **cut them in half**, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half.

What this dramatic picture shows is the fact that when in ancient times people would make covenants, animals would be cut in half and that would symbolize and say, "let this be done to me if I break the covenant." God was very serious about making His covenant promises come to pass to Abram. This was the way to make very clear to Abram that He was set on blessing him and making him a blessing to the whole world. Out of mere mercy and love, God promises to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's offspring:

> Gen. 15:18 On that day **the LORD made a covenant with Abram**, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

The land promise was solely of grace. There was nothing that Abram had done to deserve such a blessing. But as the Law of Moses makes clear, *remaining* in the land for the people was based on their obedience and was not of grace, strictly speaking (e.g., Deut. 28; Lev. 18:24-28; 26). See "**The Promises Fulfilled to the Natural Seed**" for the fulfillment of the land promise in biblical history.

Genesis 17

One other thing people may know about Abraham is that it was to him that God gave circumcision. Of this, we read in chapter 17. The Lord appears to Abram to confirm His promises and changes his name. Let us first read what the Lord promises to do:

> Gen. 17:6-8 **I will** make you exceedingly fruitful, and **I will** make you into **nations**, and **kings** shall come from you. 7 And **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**. 8 And **I will** give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the **land of Canaan**, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

We see in this portion the Lord promising great blessings upon His servant Abraham and his offspring which is yet to come. He is promised to be a father of a multitude, the meaning of his new name (Gen. 17:5). Nations and even kings will come out of him. We can at least name two nations which came out of him: from Ishmael, the Arabs; from Isaac, the Israelites. He will give his offspring the land which Abraham saw but had no possession in it but a burial place (Acts 7:5). What is amazing about this text is that we get the basic promise of God in His covenants, in which He promises to be a God to us. Nehemiah Coxe points out that this promise does not have the same meaning in every covenant. Of this he writes and quotes Joseph Whiston:

> It is evident that this promise, "I will be their God," and the earlier one found in Genesis 17:7 give a **general assurance of some good to the people in covenant**. But it should not be supposed that they are promises of some particular good or blessing that is of a higher nature than is comprehended in any other promises of the covenant. For the true import of this general promise is "that **God has engaged himself and all the properties of his nature for the exact fulfilling of all the promises of the covenant** now made with them, according to the true character and conditions of a said covenant." All the divine perfections are laid in as pledges that the promises will not fail on God's part since they will be all exerted, as the need requires, for the good and advantage of this people in fulfilling the promises given to them. But still **God's communications to them and acts for them**, both in regard to the blessings he will bestow and the terms and conditions on which they will be bestowed, **are limited by the covenant he has made with them and the nature and extent of the promises of it**.[43]

The Lord gives these promises to Abraham and his offspring unilaterally (one way), but there are conditions to the receiving of those blessings. This is not a covenant solely on grace in which the Lord promises to do what He requires of us, as the New Covenant is, for example (Jer. 31:31-34). The second half of the covenant text says:

> Gen. 17:9-14 And God said to Abraham, "**As for you**, **you shall keep my covenant**, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which **you shall keep**, between me and you and your offspring after you: **Every male among you shall be circumcised**. 11 You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a **sign of the covenant** between me and you. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, 13 both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, **shall surely be circumcised**. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has **broken my covenant**."

For the fulfillment of what God promised Abraham, his offspring had to obey God and the demands of His covenant. The demands of God were to circumcise all males among the people. But after having done this, circumcision should be practiced on male infants when they're eight days old. This was the sign and the requirement of entering this covenant. Furthermore, the New Testament clearly teaches that circumcision placed an obligation of obedience upon the person circumcised (e.g., Gal. 5:3). Anyone who would not be circumcised was cut off from the covenant people. He has broken God's covenant. This is a **breakable covenant**. To this painful command, Abraham paid direct obedience displaying his great faith (Gen. 17:23).

The passage begins first with what God promises to do ("I will") and moves on to what God requires of the covenant members ("As for you"). There is no promise given that God Himself will supply the conditions of this covenant, as He does for the New Covenant (e.g., Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27).

Circumcision, A Sign For Abraham

Circumcision was given by God as a sign to His covenant people; to the men who were to be the leaders of their households. It was to be something private that would identify them as the people of God. But for Abraham, it meant something else. The New Testament Scriptures, looking back at the circumcision of Abraham, say the following:

> Rom. 4:10-12 How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but **before he was circumcised**. 11 He received the **sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith** while he was still uncircumcised. The **purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised**, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, 12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

In the time Paul was writing, there were a lot of heresies and false teaching about circumcision. Some were saying that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be saved (e.g., Acts 15:5). The Jews believed they were special because of their identity with Abraham and circumcision. Against those who claim that circumcision is necessary for salvation, Paul demonstrates that the Scriptures record the justification of Abraham by faith when he believed God's promise, not when or after he was circumcised. Thus making clear that justification is by faith and not works even for the father of the faithful. Paul furthermore says that the purpose of Abraham (not everyone) receiving circumcision was "as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised." What does this "seal" thing mean? John Gill is able to help us out:

> **a seal of the righteousness of faith**; or which "sign" was "a seal"; and so it signifies the same as before; σημεια ουτω λεγουσι τας σφραγιδας, "signs, so they call seals", says Harpocratian {f}, and "to be signed", he says, is used, "instead of being sealed": or it may be expressive of something else, as that circumcision was a seal, not for secrecy, but for certainty; it being a confirmation, not merely of the sincerity of Abraham's faith, but of his justifying righteousness, which was not his faith, but that which his faith looked to; and
>
> **which he had**, both faith and righteousness,[41]

A seal *protects* or *confirms* something which already exists ("the righteousness that he had by faith"). A seal does not seal something which is hoped for (e.g., faith in an infant or that God would fulfill His promises), but something which already exists. A. W. Pink adds his thoughts to the use of Romans 4:11 in this regard:

> The next thing we would observe is that circumcision was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had." Again we would say, Let us be on our guard against adding to God's Word, for **nowhere does Scripture say that circumcision was a seal to anyone but to Abraham himself**; and even in his case, so far was it from communicating any spiritual blessing, it simply confirmed what was already promised to him. As a seal from God, **circumcision was a divine pledge or guaranty that from him should issue that seed which would bring blessing to all nations**, and that, on the same terms as justifying righteousness had become his—by faith alone. **It was not a seal of his faith, but of that righteousness which, in due time, was to be wrought out by the Messiah and Mediator**.[44]

Concerning the aspect of a seal, Nehemiah Coxe writes:

> "A seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised…" A **seal is for confirmation and assurance**. In this notion of a seal there may be some reference to that visible mark and character which remained in the flesh of the one who was circumcised. For **we do not read that any other ordinance (not even baptism) is called this in Scripture**. But in the New Testament the **sealing of believers is attributed to the Holy Spirit**.[45]

It is simply not justified to apply that which is specifically and explicitly said of Abraham to all of Abraham's natural offspring. The fact is that circumcision functioned as a seal *for Abraham*. Otherwise, we should also say every Christian father is also "the father of all who believe without being circumcised", for that is the purpose for the circumcision of Abraham (Rom. 4:11). Let us be careful to say no more than what Scripture says. Benjamin Keach speaks of the use of Romans 4:11 in relation to baptism:

> *Quest.* But was not Circumcision a Seal of the Covenant of Grace under that Dispensation, as Baptism is now a Seal of the same Covenant under this Dispensation?
>
> *Answer.* No, for **Circumcision was only a Seal to *Abraham's* Faith, or a Confirmation of that Faith he had long before he was Circumcised**; but so it could not be said to be to any Infant that had no Faith. It was indeed a **Sign put into the Flesh of Infants**; but **a Sign, and Seal too only to *Abraham,* witnessing to him that he had a Justifying Faith**…You ought not therefore to call **Circumcision a Seal to any but to *Abraham,*** neither ought you to call it a **Seal of any other thing to him than what the Scripture calls it a Seal of**, *viz.* "*And he received Circumcision a Seal of the Righteousness of the Faith which he had being yet uncircumcised*" (Rom. 4:11).[46]

For more on seals and Romans 4:11, **see chapter 29**.

Not All Members Enjoy The Covenant Blessings

Being a member of this covenant did not mean that you would enjoy its blessings. This is made clear even in the lifetime of Abraham. He circumcised his son Ishmael when he was 13 years old, which was the requirement to enter the covenant and not breaking it (Gen. 17:10). But God tells Abraham to send Ishmael away when troubles arise between Sarah and Hagar:

> Gen. 21:9-13 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. 10 So she said to Abraham, "**Cast out this slave woman with her son**, for the **son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac**." 11 And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. 12 But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for **through Isaac shall your offspring be named**. 13 And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring."

The Lord tells Abraham that Ishmael is not the child of promise, but Isaac is, although both were equally in the covenant through circumcision yet only one receives the blessings of the covenant. Nevertheless, the Lord of mercy, because of His great love for Abraham, chose to bless Ishmael, but not on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant. Examples could be multiplied of those who were physically in the covenant but did not share the blessings of the covenant because they did not walk in Abraham's footsteps in faith (Jacob and Esau). I believe that this point is also stressed in Romans 9 when the apostle makes a case that the promises of God given to the Old Covenant people of God were not meant to be fulfilled in all of its members, but in the true people of God alone, i.e., the true Israel of God. Galatians 4 makes an allegory of the account of Isaac and Ishmael and quotes Genesis 21:10 (Gal. 4:30) to the effect that natural Israel will not inherit the promises, but only the believers will.

The Purpose and Conditionality of the Covenant

Scripture gives us the goal of this covenant:

> Gen. 18:19 For I have **chosen him, that he may command** his children and his household after him to **keep the way of the LORD** by doing righteousness and justice, **so that** the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."

This Scripture not only declares that the Lord chose Abraham for a reason (that reason was not in Abraham himself), but it also tells us that there is a certain conditionality involved in this covenant relationship. As we noted above concerning Genesis 17:6-8 about God's sovereignty and will in the matter of the covenant and the promises, so we noted the

conditionality of the fulfillment of these promises upon Abraham's and his posterity's obedience to the Lord's command (Gen. 17:9-14). So here also we meet the same thing. God has chosen Abraham for the purpose that Abraham may teach his posterity about the way of God in doing what is good and righteous before the sight of God so that the Lord will bring His promises to pass. What if Israel remained hardhearted and disobedient? Will God honor those who despise Him (1 Sam 2:30)? Certainly not and we know of the many judgments that fell upon Israel for their disobedience. But the inheritance of the promises is dependent upon them doing that which is righteous and just before God according to His way. The same idea is also given to the child of the promise, Isaac –

> Gen. 26:4-5 **I will** multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, 5 **because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge**, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

God will fulfill the promise because there was a condition met. This is not an unconditional covenant like the Covenant of Grace. Among other things, we see that the Abrahamic Covenant cannot be an administration of the Covenant of Grace, although it is gracious, as all the Lord's covenants are. Even the covenant with Adam has grace in it as God is under no obligation to enter into a relationship with man and promise him great blessings. Yet this cannot properly be called an administration of the Covenant of Grace, at least not in 1689 Federalism. Furthermore, it is a **breakable covenant** and it administers curses to covenant breakers (Gen. 17:14), which the New Covenant is not and does not. All those belonging to Abraham who are not circumcised, have broken this covenant and fall under its curse, i.e., they are cut off from the covenant people of God. We do not believe that the Covenant of Grace or the New Covenant is a breakable covenant. It is an unbreakable covenant because God will ensure that all of its members persevere until the end. See also under "**The Law and the Promise**" for our exposition of Galatians 3:17-18, which is relevant here.

Nehemiah Coxe explains it in this way:

> This was **a covenant of grace and mercy, originating from the mere goodness and undeserved favor** of God toward Israel (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8). In it many **excellent privileges** were given to them which no other nation under heaven had a right in except themselves. These were conferred on them in pursuit of the great design of God's grace in the covenant of redemption by Christ. Yet **it was not that covenant of grace which God made with Abraham for all his spiritual seed**, which was earlier confirmed of God in Christ, and through which all nations (that is, true believers in every nation) have been ever since, now are, and will be, blessed with the spiritual and eternal blessing of Abraham.[47]

What Coxe here means by "that covenant of grace which God made with Abraham for all his spiritual seed" is not that there was another covenant made with Abraham, which was the Covenant of Grace and which he was the head thereof. No. What he means is that God made the Covenant of Grace with him *personally* as He does with us, through faith. He is not considered as a covenant head for the Covenant of Grace. The only covenant head of the Covenant of Grace is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Covenant of Grace was made with Abraham personally. He was a member of the Covenant of Grace by faith. Furthermore, as we will dive more into the twofold seed of Abraham later on, let it be noted that this covenant with Abraham contained principles both of works and grace. Jeffrey Johnson explains it in this way:

> Historically, the early Baptists of the seventeenth century understood that *both* the covenant of **grace** *and* the covenant of **works** were **exhibited in the Abrahamic Covenant**. The principle of **works was manifested in Abraham's physical seed** while the **covenant of grace was made known to and through Abraham's spiritual seed**.[48]

Furthermore, something that could be clearly seen in the purpose of the Abrahamic Covenant is the creation of a people from which the Savior of the world would come. The Abrahamic Covenant creates a visible and a covenant people for God through their identification with Abraham and circumcision. To this people will come God's prophet and the promises of God will mainly be declared to them. It is from them that the Messiah would come. This covenant ensures that God has a people from which His Messiah would spring up.

God's Oath

The Bible many times remembers the Abrahamic Covenant as a promise and an oath that God made to Abraham (Gen. 26:3; Deut. 4:31; 8:18; Luke 1:72-73). An oath is a sworn promise that a thing will happen. This is made most clear in the epistle to the Hebrews:

Heb. 6:13-17 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, **he swore by himself**, 14 saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” 15 And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. 16 For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes **an oath is final for confirmation**. 17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, **he guaranteed it with an oath**,

The fact that God made an oath to Abraham about the fulfillment of the promises did not diminish from the obligation of Abraham and his posterity to obey and uphold the covenant of the Lord. But it did mean that God was set to fulfill His promises to Abraham. He swore by Himself and there was no way that He, as the Sovereign ruler of all, could let His promises fall to the ground. Even when Israel was unfaithful, God would punish them and then restore them because of His promise to Abraham.

Two Covenants?

Are the covenants in Genesis 15 and 17 two different covenants? The short answer is no. Let us first remind ourselves of what Genesis 15 promised. Genesis 15 promises offspring numerous as the stars (Gen. 15:5) and the land of Canaan (Gen. 15:18). But in Genesis 17, God gives Abraham what Stephen called “the covenant of circumcision”, which identified the offspring of Abraham. Genesis 15 gave Abraham the promise of the land and the people; Genesis 17 gave him the sign to identify the covenant people and the offspring. I do not think that they were separate covenants, but both constitute the revelation of a single covenant. In Genesis 15, the covenant is “cut” and promises are given, but in Genesis 17, Abraham receives the other half of the covenant, which is called the “covenant of circumcision.” This addition, or the completion of the covenant, identifies the covenant community. Those who refuse to bear the sign, have broken the covenant and despised God. This is an example of progressive revelation. As time goes on, the Lord reveals more about His covenant to His people. Genesis 15 and Genesis 17 are the two sides of one coin.

The Abrahamic and the Mosaic Covenants Dependent on Each Other

The Bible does not allow us to divorce the Abrahamic Covenant from other covenants made in the Scripture and that is especially true of the Mosaic. The two are interconnected. The one is dependent upon the other. Without the Abrahamic, there would be no covenant people who need to be rescued and set free from bondage. But without the Mosaic, there would be no fulfillment and taking over of the Promised Land according to the promises made to Abraham. The two cannot be separated. The Abrahamic Covenant promises the land of Canaan to Israel, but its enjoyment is *conditioned* by the Mosaic Covenant (e.g., Lev. 26; Deut. 28). Since the Scripture is clear that the Mosaic Covenant has passed away, it, therefore, follows that the promise of a land in the Middle East has likewise passed away. Israel did not go into the land without first making the Mosaic Covenant. Both covenants are so connected that the apostle Paul, in very strong terms, rejects the idea that you can accept circumcision and reject justification by the law. The one who accepts and requires circumcision as a condition of being justified is obliged to keep the whole “613” commandments of the Law.

Gal. 5:2-4 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, **Christ will be of no advantage** to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that **he is obligated to keep the whole law.** 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be **justified by the law**; you have fallen away from grace.

Those who accept circumcision as a condition of our Christianity are seeking to be justified by the law of Moses. In fact, our beloved Lord Jesus said:

John 7:22 **Moses gave you circumcision** (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.

The Lord Jesus says and knows that circumcision was given to Abraham, but He also sees it as interconnected with Moses and the Law that God delivered through him. The last text is found in Romans 2.

Rom. 2:25 For **circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law**, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

It doesn’t matter if you are circumcised and don’t care about God and His Law. It is as if you were not circumcised. Circumcision only matters if you keep the law, which is impossible for fallen man to do. Even in the text of the Old

Testament in some instances, we see a connection between these two covenants (e.g., Deut. 7:11-12). The promises which Israel in the Exodus inherited were given by the Abrahamic Covenant, but the Mosaic Covenant conditioned the enjoyment of these promises upon the obedience of Israel as a people.

Galatians 3 – The Interpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant

The go-to text for understanding the higher purpose and the typological nature of the Abrahamic Covenant is Galatians 3. There, we learn very important things about interpreting and understanding the Abrahamic Covenant in light of Christ's coming.

> Gal. 3:13-19 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— 14 so that in Christ Jesus the **blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles**, so that we might **receive the promised Spirit** through faith. 15 To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. 16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but **referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.** 17 This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. 18 For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. 19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

Let's try to unpack and understand what Paul is saying here.

The Blessing of Abraham

Christ has freed, purchased and redeemed us from the curse of the law, for the purpose that the blessing of Abraham might come to us. What is the blessing of Abraham? The blessing of Abraham has been mentioned above and that is, justification by faith:

> Gal. 3:5-9 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— 6 just as **Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness**"? 7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." 9 So then, **those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham**, the man of faith.

The blessing of Abraham is that in him and most importantly, in and through his Offspring, the blessing of justification by faith might come to the Gentiles also. That they would not seek to be justified by law, which actually leads to condemnation if merely one point was not perfectly obeyed. The blessing of Abraham, which is justification and imputed righteousness, comes by faith, just like it did for Abraham.

The Offspring

Paul makes a big deal of the fact that Moses used the singular "offspring" referring to one seed/offspring, rather than "to offsprings" referring to many. The Greek phrase quoted here is "καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου" (*kai to spermatai sou*), which is found in 9 places in the LXX (Gen. 13:15; 17:8; 24:7; 26:3; 28:4, 13; 35:12; 48:4; Num. 18:19). This limits the place where Paul's gets this from to Genesis 13:15 and 17:8. The latter seems more probable as that is also the time when God made the Covenant of Circumcision with Abraham.

The point that Paul is making is that the promises that we read about in Genesis about Abraham's offspring, actually refer to the greater fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises in the Lord Jesus Christ. By seeing the fulfillment in Christ, we see the types that the Abrahamic Covenant and promises were. The fulfillment in Christ and the New Covenant is the anti-type of and the fulfillment of the shadows. Therefore, Paul is arguing that we should see the Abrahamic Covenant and the Abrahamic promises, as he here clearly does not call the promises made "to [the] offspring" *covenant*, but *promises*, meaning that they were still awaiting fulfillment. The Lord Jesus in the flesh is truly the offspring of Abraham (Matt. 1:1). Plus, it was to Him and to Abraham that God made the promises, as Paul says. Nehemiah Coxe was right in saying that the best interpreter of the Old Testament is the Spirit speaking in the New. Johnson writes in this way concerning the promised Offspring:

> "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many,

but referring to one, '**And to your offspring,' who is Christ**" (Gal. 3:16). In another words, God *did not* promise Abraham that every physical descendant of his (i.e., Ishmael, Esau, and all his children from his second wife—Keturah) would be counted among the children of promise. Rather, the **promised seed was in reference to one child in particular – Jesus Christ**. Other than Jesus Christ, the rest of **Abraham's physical descendants *were not given* any unconditional guarantee that they would not be "cut off" from the covenant**.[49]

This promised offspring is the Lord Jesus Christ and all whom He represents. It is like Romans 16:20 and Genesis 3:15. The promise of Genesis 3:15 is about the Lord Christ as the Serpent-Crusher, but Paul applies this promise concerning the Redeemer to His followers. That is because they are comprehended in Him. A. W. Pink has brought this point to my attention. He wrote:

> "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" (v. 16). Now in the light of "the children of Abraham" (v. 7), "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (v. 9), and "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ" (v. 14), **"to Abraham and his seed" must mean "to Abraham and his spiritual seed** were the promises made." Collateral proof of this is supplied by Romans 4:16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the **promise might be sure to all the seed**; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all"; for it is **only all of his spiritual seed who are assured of the blessings promised**.[50]

He then quotes MacGregor saying:

> "The force of his reasoning here depends not on the mere dictionary word 'seed,' but upon the great scriptural idea which, more and more clearly in Old Testament revelation, becomes manifested through that word—the idea of **an individual person, who should sum up in Himself the covenant people as well as (for them) the covenant blessings, that is, the promised Messiah, Christ**" (Jas. MacGregor, on Galatians, 1879). This is the only writer we are acquainted with who has indicated the direction in which we must look for the true explanation of the apostle's terms, namely, not in their merely literal signification, but in the spiritual concept which they embodied—just as the term "christ" literally signifies "anointed," but is employed as the special title of the Savior, and is given to Him not as a private but public person, including both the Head and members of the church (1 Cor. 12:12).[51]

The Law and the Promise

> Gal. 3:17-18 This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make **the promise** void. 18 For if the **inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise**; but **God gave it to Abraham by a promise**.

Now we come to a very important text, vv. 17-18. The Law of Moses, which came 430 years after the Covenant of Circumcision, does not and cannot, annul, revoke and cancel the covenant made with Abraham, so as to cancel the promises made in the covenant to Abraham and his Seed. Now let us note something about the promise. I believe that Paul here distinguishes between the Covenant of Circumcision, or covenant for short and the promise. Those are not of the same things. Although the Covenant of Circumcision contained the promises and the 1689 Federalists would say *revealed* the promise of the New Covenant, yet we believe that the Covenant of Grace was revealed to Abraham, but not *ratified* or *established* formally until in Christ's blood. Throughout the Old Testament, the Covenant of Grace existed in the form of promise as this text shows. Pascal Denault notes:

> The Baptists were partially in agreement with the Presbyterian interpretation of this passage. They recognized that Paul exposed the legalistic error of the Judiazers by basing his argument on the fact that the promised inheritance was only granted by the grace of God and that this grace was given to Abraham when God made a covenant with him; the Law which had come into existence 430 years before did not replace grace as a method to obtain the inheritance. However, the Baptists did not support the Presbyterian paradigm of the Covenant of Grace which wanted the latter to include the physical posterity of Abraham and of believers. Instead, they **applied their own paradigm of the Covenant of Grace (revealed/ concluded)** to this passage: **the Covenant of Grace was revealed to Abraham**, but **the formal covenant that God concluded with him was not the Covenant of Grace**. What is more, the text (Gal. 3.17-18) does not affirm that **God gave his grace to Abraham** through the covenant, but **through the promise**. In other words, the **Abrahamic Covenant contained a promise; this promise was the revelation of the Covenant of Grace**. The Abrahamic Covenant did include the physical posterity of Abraham, but it was not in the Covenant of Grace even if it was in a covenant that revealed the grace of God by way of a promise.[52]

The Covenant of Grace was, in fact, made *personally* with Abraham because of His faith, but this was before its establishment in the blood of Christ. This means that it was made with him *personally* by grace through his personal faith when the Covenant of Grace was still in its promise form. Furthermore, it was not made with him as a covenant head of his descendants of the people of Israel. The Abrahamic Covenant, of course, was made with him as a covenant head of his descendants according to the flesh.

Why Then The Law?

When considering the law, we are speaking of the Law of Moses and everything that surrounds and surrounded its establishment. First, we noted that the Lord promised to Abraham offspring and land among other things. Next, we see the Lord giving the sign of circumcision that the covenant community may be established and the people of God be known. Any man who would not be circumcised was cut off from the people of God. In the Mosaic Covenant, we see the great redemption and exodus of the people of God who were in bondage, and their inheritance of the promises made to Abraham. In the giving of the Law, the Lord also gave the Land of Canaan to Israel where they were to stay. The Lord caused them to stay there until the promised Offspring came and fulfilled what was written of Him. Not only was the Law given so that the covenant community may be recognizable, have the Land promise among other things fulfilled, but also so that it may be made clear to people that they're sinners and they should look for a Redeemer. Paul puts it this way:

> Gal. 3:23-24 Now before faith came, we were **held captive under the law**, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, **the law was our guardian until Christ came**, in order that we might be justified by faith.

The Law cursed them and showed them their depravity, but when they heard of the Savior Who took on the curse of the Law upon Himself, they rejoiced and saw the fulfillment of the Law in Him. It was never God's intention to redeem us by the Law, but that we would see our need of redemption from the Law, which reveals our sin (Rom. 3:20).

The Physical and Spiritual Seeds of Abraham

It is obvious for anyone who has read Romans or Galatians that there is something great about this man Abraham. Not only is he the father of the Jews, his natural descendants, but it appears as though he is also the father of all believers, the Gentiles also. I hope that what I'm laying down here may not be something new that you have missed, but merely repetition. This is a subject that is very clear when reading the New Testament. By simply reading the texts about "offspring" in the Old Testament you would not come to the conclusion that it is speaking of Christ and that the promises were given both to Abraham and the Lord Jesus. But that is, in fact, the interpretation of the Spirit Who wrote Genesis down for our sake (Gal. 3:15). Therefore, we shouldn't presume to be more learned and smarter than the all-knowing and all-wise Spirit of the Almighty, Who Himself has been pleased to interpret the Abrahamic promise through Paul. I will argue under the heading "**The Promises Fulfilled To the Natural Seed**" that all the promises concerning the Land of Canaan, the natural as-many-as-the-stars-of-heaven descendants of Abraham were fulfilled in the time of the Old Testament. This may be helpful for our Dispensationalist brothers.

Concerning the twofold seed, Nehemiah Coxe said the following:

> With respect to them, Abraham is to be considered in a **double capacity**: he is the **father of all true believers** and the **father and root of the Israelite nation**. **God entered into covenant with him for both of these seeds** and since they are **formally distinguished from one another**, their covenant interest must necessarily be different and fall under a distinct consideration. The **blessings appropriate to either must be conveyed in a way agreeable to their peculiar and respective covenant interest**. And these things may not be confounded without a manifest hazard to the most important articles in the Christian religion. The mutual reference of all God's covenant transactions with Abraham and God's dispensation toward the church for some ages following was such that it required a present intermixture of the promises, and an **involving of spiritual blessings in the shade of temporal, and of a spiritual seed in a natural**. This I suppose is more evident than to admit denial. The Scripture does not speak of any other relationship of Abraham in the covenants made with him. Neither can we prove by this that any of the covenants given to him were transacted with him simply under the notion, or in the relationship of, an ordinary believing parent or head of a particular household.[53]

Who are the Heirs of Abraham's Promises?

The question that I want to start with is the identification of the recipients of Abraham's promises. We know that the promises made to Abraham had their first level, natural fulfillment in the nation of Israel. But does the Bible give the idea that there was more to the Abrahamic Covenant than that? What about typology? Well, we obviously see shadow and typology in the identity of the offspring who Paul says is Christ (Gal. 3:15). But more than that, we learn from Romans 9 that the covenant community under the Old Covenant was mixed.

Rom. 9:4-8 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. 5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. 6 But **it is not as though the word of God has failed**. For **not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,** 7 and **not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring**, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but **the children of the promise are counted as offspring**.

To give a little context, Paul had just finished an amazing section about God's electing love for us from which we will never be separated. He demonstrated the work of God in us and that we were bound to Him and there was nothing that could separate us. Generally, he was speaking of the Gentiles. But now, Paul anticipates the objection that he can get from the Gentiles, "Paul, you talk greatly about God's electing love and His power and everything, but what about your people, who are known to be *the People of God* on earth?" The objection is understandable. The natural expectation was that when the Messiah would come, he would certainly be accepted by His own. But that would not have been the biblical Messiah, Who was prophesied to be rejected (Isa. 53:3-4).

The error that Paul sees in the objection is the identification of Israel. The objection assumes that God's promises were indiscriminately made to the people who descended from Abraham through the natural process. But he sees a great error in this. Rather than denying the fulfillment of the promises of God, Paul denies the idea that every Jew is a true child of Abraham and a true Israelite, and thus entitled to the promises of God. Paul says that there is an Israel in Israel. There are children of the flesh who are born through the natural process, but there are those who are children of the promise. Within the visible community, there were people who truly knew God in their hearts and were chosen by Him. Therefore, in the words of Galatians 3:14, the "blessing of Abraham" belongs to those who are promised that blessing, those who are born not *merely* of the flesh, but are children of promise. See also Romans 2:25-29, which is crucial in identifying who the true Jews are (cf. Phil. 3:3).

Now we may ask another question: Are the children of promise only the believing Israelites? I don't believe that. In Galatians 4:28, Paul identifies the Galatians—Gentile believers—as children of promise, *like* Isaac. To make the point concisely: only those who are in Christ are entitled to the blessings of Abraham and the promises that God made to him. No one else. Galatians 3 is also a very important chapter to identify the heirs of the promise. We have already gone to Galatians 3 to understand who the offspring is, but now we turn back to see who the heirs of the promises are according to Paul.

Gal. 3:7-9 Know then that **it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham**. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." 9 So then, **those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham**, the man of faith.

Paul could not have been clearer: the Abrahamic promises find their fulfillment in the children of promise—those who are of faith, Jew and Gentile. Merely being circumcised and being proud to be a natural descendant of Abraham does not mean that you're in favor with God or entitled to the blessing (see John 8:39-44; Luke 3:8). But if you are born of the Spirit and are a child of promise, then you are entitled to Abraham's blessing and promises. At the end of Galatians 3, Paul identifies those who are Abraham's offspring and are therefore heirs:

Gal. 3:25-29 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for **in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.** 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are **all one in Christ Jesus**. 29 And if you are Christ's, then **you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise**.

Now that Christ has come, it has been made clear and manifest that it is faith that gets us right with God and not keeping the Law and seeking to be justified by it. In former times, we were under the law as a schoolmaster to show us our sin and lead us to Christ, but now that New Covenant faith has come, we are no longer under the *burden/curse* of the law. Paul explicitly destroys the distinctions that were made before, because Christ has abolished it by His cross (Eph. 2:14-16). Jews considered Greeks (or Gentiles) unclean; those who were free disregarded and mistreated the slaves; females were seen as being lower than man even in value and being. But now in Christ, this dividing wall is destroyed because He has united us both in one, both believing Jews and believing Gentiles (Eph. 2:12-22). The dividing wall is destroyed because both believing Jews and Gentiles are one in our Lord Jesus Christ. Since that is the case, the Lord Jesus is Abraham's offspring and we, being in Christ, are also counted as Abraham's offspring and therefore are entitled to the promise! Oh…the wisdom of God! We are Abraham's offspring *because* we are in the true Offspring of Abraham. Through Him, we are children of Abraham and heirs to the promises of God (2 Cor. 1:20). Not because of physical descent, but because of faith in and union with the Offspring.

The Promises Fulfilled to the Natural Seed

It was pretty shocking to me when I discovered that all the promises concerning the natural seed of Abraham were fulfilled in the Old Testament. These were things that I did not hear (nor do hear) in popular movies, at church, in sermons or from people who were arguing for Israel being the people of God and other stuff which is largely based upon the Abrahamic Covenant. The fact is that the Scriptures plainly show the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises to the natural seed in the time of the Old Testament.

The Land and the Descendants

The Scriptures record the fulfillment of the land promised to Israel. It is recorded, for example, in Joshua at the end of his life:

> Josh. 21:43-45 Thus the LORD gave to Israel **all the land that he swore to give to their fathers.** And they took possession of it, and they settled there. 44 And the LORD gave them **rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers.** Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. 45 **Not one word** of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; **all came to pass.**

I have no idea how else the Bible could make clear that all the promises to Israel were, in fact, fulfilled. Everything was fulfilled, all came to pass, not a single promise made to the fathers was not brought to pass at the end of Canaan's conquest. All came to pass, about the land and the descendants. Even if some cities were not fully possessed.

Let us also note the high time of Solomon where peace and prosperity reigned:

> 1 Kgs. 4:20-21 Judah and Israel were **as many as the sand by the sea**. They ate and drank and were happy. 21 Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the **Euphrates** to the land of the Philistines and to the **border of Egypt**. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.
>
> 1 Kgs. 4:24 For **he had dominion** over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphsah to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates. And he had **peace on all sides** around him.

This is the territory promised to Abraham by God in Genesis 15:16, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates." The Lord did indeed give them the land, actually, already in the time of Joshua, but through disobedience, they lost some parts of the land in the time of the Judges. But in the time of Solomon, all the promises were completely fulfilled to the natural seed. The Scripture says that the covenant community descended from Abraham was "as many as the sand by the sea" or as much as the stars (Deut. 1:10). There is a kingdom firmly established in the fear of the LORD and wisdom. This is the fulfillment of the promises made to the natural seed of Abraham. In summary, three things may be observed from this text:

1. The promise, given to Abraham in Genesis 22:17, is seen as having been fulfilled here by the writer under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
    - The promise was also given to Jacob (Gen. 32:12).
2. There was peace and prosperity in the land. As was promised to be if the land obeyed the Law of the Lord (Deut. 28:1-14; Lev. 26:1-13).
3. The whole territory which was promised to Abraham in Genesis 15:18 is described as being under Solomon's rule.
    - Gen. 15:18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,
    - Exod. 23:31 And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.

Still Promises to the Natural Descendants?

The answer is no. The New Covenant people are the recipients of Abraham's promises because they are the ones in Christ, both Jew and Gentile (Gal. 3:29). Besides, all the promises were conditioned upon the obedience of Israel to the Abrahamic and later, Mosaic Covenant. As I tried to point out above about the connection between the **Abrahamic and the Mosaic Covenants**. There is no land without the Law and the Mosaic Covenant since the enjoyment of the Land was dependent upon the people's obedience. The Mosaic Covenant is gone (Heb. 8:13; 2 Cor. 3:11-14) and the natural descendants of

Abraham are not in any positive covenant with God; they are merely under the broken Covenant of Works of Adam. Therefore, they are not entitled to the promises. The promises are not made to them. I'm not here dealing with the question of whether Israel has a right to the land now called Palestine or not. The issue is a bit too political for me. I am not sure. But I am convinced that they have no entitlement on the basis of the Bible or the Abrahamic Covenant because they are still in rebellion against Christ.

Types and Shadows

We've already seen some shadow and type with the seed of Abraham and believers being the heirs of the promise, so I will not repeat those things again.

The Lamb

There is a great episode in Genesis 22 and a demonstration of what God would do on Calvary. Abraham is commanded by God to offer the child of the promise as a burnt offering. As they go to the place where God chose, Isaac asks the obvious question:

> Gen. 22:7-8 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but **where is the lamb for a burnt offering**?" 8 Abraham said, "**God will provide for himself the lamb** for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

He did not bring with himself an animal for offering because Isaac was supposed to be the offering. We all know that Abraham was stopped by the angel of God from killing his son and he heard a voice, which said to Him that God had seen his faithfulness. Indeed, Abraham's faith was great. The book of Hebrews summarizes this for us in these words:

> Heb. 11:17-19 **By faith** Abraham, when he was tested, **offered up Isaac**, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 19 He considered that **God was able even to raise him from the dead**, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

He knew the Almighty God Who never breaks His promises. God had said to him that Isaac would be the heir to the promises and He believed that God would fulfill the promises no matter what. But in this picture, we see a loving father offering his beloved son. What does that remind us of? Oh, the Lord Jesus! The beloved Son of the Father Whom the Father gave up for us. God the Father did not stop but delivered His beloved Son over to be murdered so that we would be sons and daughters of His. What fascinated me about this story is when I heard what Abraham actually sacrificed. I knew that Isaac asked about the offering and Abraham said that God would provide a lamb. But this is what they offer:

> Gen. 22:13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a **ram**, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the **ram** and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

Abraham and Isaac offer up a ram instead of a lamb. But then what becomes of the lamb? Well, it becomes a belief among the people of God that God will provide a lamb:

> Gen. 22:14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "**On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided**."

Atonement for the sins of God's people will certainly be provided for. Among other things, this promise might have run through John the Baptist's head when he said the following:

> John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "**Behold, the Lamb of God**, who takes away the sin of the world!

God has indeed provided His own Lamb: His beloved and only Son Who was to take the sins of man upon Himself on that judgment tree and bear the full wrath of God for the people of God. He is a pure lamb without blemish Whose blood was shed for our sake (1 Pet 1:18-19).

The Land

In the New Testament, the promise concerning the land is expanded. The Lord does not bother Himself with a little land in the Middle East, but rather, as Paul says, He wants the whole world!

> Rom. 4:13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be **heir of the world** did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

God wants the people of God to inherit the whole earth, not only a portion of land in the Middle East. The whole earth is the Lord's and the meek shall surely inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). This becomes important when we clear up people's ideas about the afterlife. Oftentimes we think when we die we go to Heaven and stay there for eternity. That is not true. Heaven is not our eternal resting place, rather, the earth is our eternal resting place. When the Lord Jesus shall come in glory, He will resurrect the righteous and wicked and judge them. Afterward, He will make all things new and He will reign with us in and over the New Heavens and the New Earth (e.g., Rev. 21-22). We are in agreement with the great expositor John Gill on this point:

> ...But rather, by "the world" here, is meant, both this world and that which is to come; Abraham and all believers are the "heirs" of this world, and of all things in it; "all things" are theirs, and, among the rest, the world, Christ being theirs, and they being Christ's; he is heir of all things, and they are joint heirs with him; and how little soever they may enjoy of it now, the time is coming, when they, by virtue of their right, "shall inherit the earth"; see Ps37:9; and now they have as much of it as is necessary, and with a blessing, and which the Jews call their "world"....And as he and all the saints are heirs of this world, so of the world to come, the future salvation, the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, never fading, and reserved in the heavens; for they are heirs of God himself, and shall inherit all things: now this large and comprehensive promise, which takes in the things of time and eternity,...[41]

Thus, certainly, according to the promise of Almighty God, the saints will inherit the world. As it is in Revelation 11:

> Rev. 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "**The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ**, and he shall reign forever and ever."

World without end, amen!

Circumcision of the Heart

The Jews boasted of the fact that they had circumcision and that they were the covenant people of God. Circumcision was the condition for the entrance to the covenant. Anyone who was not circumcised was cut off from the community and covenant (Gen. 17:14). Baptists and Presbyterians agree that circumcision pointed to something else. Presbyterians generally think that circumcision as a sign and seal of the Old Covenant becomes the baptism of the New Covenant. While Baptists, on the other hand, believe that the only counterpart to the circumcision of the flesh is the circumcision of the heart under the New Covenant. On this point, we may first go to Romans 2.

> Rom. 2:25-29 For **circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law**, but if you break the law, your **circumcision becomes uncircumcision**. 26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. 28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, **nor is circumcision outward and physical.** 2:29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and **circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit**, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

The apostle destroys the notion of the Jews that circumcision basically saves you, puts you in the covenant community and therefore you are okay with God. No such thing exists and he will later argue in Romans 9 that not all Israel is Israel. What makes a Jew a Jew is the circumcision of the heart performed by the Holy Spirit. This makes the point that not only the physical descendants of Abraham are Jews, but in the eyes of God, all believers are true Jews who walk in the footsteps of Abraham. Not merely having the mark of circumcision on the flesh, but having their hearts circumcised by the Holy Spirit in fulfillment to the promises of the Old Testament (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4). Paul uses some strong words when writing against the Jews who boasted in circumcision:

> Phil. 3:2-4 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who **mutilate the flesh**. 3 For **we are the circumcision**, who **worship by the Spirit of God** and **glory in Christ** Jesus and put **no confidence in the flesh**— 4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:

These are some very strong words against the Judaizes who wanted the Gentiles to be circumcised and thereby become bound to the Mosaic Law (Gal. 5:1-3). But Paul, in opposition to them, says that we, the Christians—the New Covenant community made up of Jews and Gentiles—are the circumcision. This was the name of the group that wanted to circumcise the Gentiles (Acts 11:2). But contrary to them, Paul claims that **we are the true circumcision!** Not those who have the marks on their flesh, but we whose heart God has changed and circumcised! Our confidence and glory are in Christ Himself. Therefore, this makes us true Jews and true Israelites. Lastly, let us also take a look at Colossians 2.

> Col. 2:9-13 For **in him** the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled **in him**, who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 **In him** also you were **circumcised with a circumcision made without hands**, by putting off the body of the flesh, **by the circumcision of Christ**, 12 having been buried **with him** in baptism, in which you were also raised **with him** through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together **with him**, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

The first thing we should note is the stress that Paul lays upon the believer's union with Christ. We are *in* Him and we are *with* Him. We have become one with Himself. Paul says that we were circumcised. But how? Obviously not physically, but this must be a circumcision of the heart, a spiritual circumcision in accordance with the Old Testament promises (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 36:25-27). This is also clear when he says "circumcision without hands". A circumcision without human doing, but solely the work of God on the heart of man. How did this happen? By putting off the body of flesh, meaning by putting off the fleshly desires and fighting against them, rather than being in the flesh as we formerly were (e.g., Rom. 8:1-11). This is confirmed by what is said in v. 13. Paul says that before Christ we were uncircumcised in the flesh, but more importantly, we were uncircumcised in our hearts. We were dead in sin and unrighteousness. But now that Christ has circumcised us ("the circumcision of Christ") through His Spirit, we were raised from spiritual death to life. We were circumcised at heart and were forgiven of our wickedness.

Let us now observe the connection with baptism in v. 12. This passage, coupled with Romans 4:11 (**which we looked to briefly above**), is often used to prove that baptism has replaced circumcision and is the sign and seal of the covenant. Since our Presbyterian brethren believe that the Old Testament covenants were administrations of the Covenant of Grace and the New Covenant was the final administration of the Covenant of Grace, they argue that since children of believers were included in the Abrahamic Covenant, therefore they must be included in the New Covenant also, as the Abrahamic and the New have the same substance. Therefore, children should receive the sign of the New Covenant, which they believe is baptism. **See here** for a longer discussion on Colossians 2:11-12.

We've already taken issue with the idea of multiple administrations of the Covenant of Grace and tried to point out that the Abrahamic Covenant or any other covenant in the Old Testament is not an administration of the Covenant of Grace or is the Covenant of Grace, but they contain the promise of the Covenant of Grace. But now, let us get back to our text (v. 12). This verse shows us our union with our Lord and what baptism actually symbolizes. Baptism, the going into the water by immersion, perfectly symbolizes the believer's going into the grave with the Lord Jesus, dying to self and burying the old man and putting off the body of flesh. But coming out of the water, symbolizes our spiritual resurrection with our Lord, that through Him we overcame death and sin and reign in life with and through Him. Such an intimate union that is connected with baptism cannot possibly be experienced or realized by an infant! This text is similar to that found in Romans 6, which points out an implication of the fact that we have been baptized:

> Rom. 6:3-4 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death**? 4 We were **buried therefore with him by baptism into death**, in order that, just as **Christ was raised from the dead** by the glory of the Father, we too might **walk in newness of life**.

Therefore, I see no idea here of baptism being the sign of the New Covenant in the same sense as the Abrahamic or being allowed to be given to infants who have no idea what it means. I agree that circumcision was replaced, but not by baptism, rather **foreskin circumcision was replaced by heart circumcision.** Maybe it is better to say that circumcision was *fulfilled* in heart circumcision which is an invisible sign, between the believer and the Lord. More on baptism in **chapter 29**.

Conclusion On The Abrahamic Covenant

We have seen that the Abrahamic Covenant is one of the central covenants in Scripture with a lot of difficulties and interesting stuff accompanying it. I have tried to argue that it cannot be the Covenant of Grace or an administration thereof, but it is a gracious covenant nonetheless. It was dependent on the obedience of the people and closely connected with the Mosaic Covenant and obedience to it. This was a covenant that could be broken simply by rejecting circumcision which was the sign of the covenant. It was Christ along with everyone in Him to Whom the promises were made and they are *ultimately* realized in Him and those who are in Him.

I direct the interested reader to the works of Jeffrey D. Johnson: **The Kingdom of God** and **The Fatal Flaw** (**see my review**).

The Mosaic Covenant



The next revelation of the Covenant of Grace in God's plan was through the Mosaic Covenant with the children of Israel. This is the central covenant in the Old Testament Scriptures. There will be a lot of things that we'll need to get into concerning the Mosaic Covenant.

God's Story

After the Lord God Omnipotent made a covenant with Abraham, which He also repeated and promised to Isaac and Jacob, He sent the children of Jacob to Egypt. The first to be sent was Jacob's favorite son by the wicked act of his brothers. Starvation drives the brothers to Egypt where they find out that their brother has become the second most powerful man in the world after the Pharaoh himself. Not only do they find that, but also the fact that their brother has forgiven their sins against them. Joseph invites his whole tribe to come over to Egypt where he promises to provide for them. The Pharaoh gives them the best of the land, they settle in the land of Goshen and live in prosperity. After the death of Joseph and the patriarchs, a wicked Pharaoh comes along who did not know Joseph and the favor that Joseph and his family enjoyed in the land. The Lord was blessing the Israelites and they were multiplying quickly, Egypt thus feared that if an invasion would come against them, the Israelites would side with the enemies of Egypt. Thus the Pharaoh decided to enslave the Israelites and treat them badly so as to exclude such a revolution against his rule.

For 400 years the people of Israel were mistreated by the Egyptians. For all those 400 years, the Lord God of Israel seemed to be silent, but then toward the end of the 400 years, He comes to action, just as He told Abraham that He would (Gen. 15:13-16). It is in this way that the Lord delivers His people. He sends them a savior, Moses, who was saved from death as an infant from an order to kill all male Israelite infants because the Egyptians were in fear of the Hebrews. He was raised by the daughter of Pharaoh and in the house of Pharaoh. As Stephen says, he was "instructed in all the wisdom of the

Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). His people were still being mistreated by the Egyptians. He came face-to-face with this fact when he saw an Egyptian beat an Israelite. Moses, being angered by this, killed the Egyptian who was mistreating the Hebrew and then was forced to flee out of Egypt. This happened when he was 40 years old. Moses fled to Midian, married and at age 80, the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob appeared to Him on Mount Sinai and told him to demand of Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go free to worship Him. This is the single greatest act of redemption in the Old Testament and it greatly pictures the work of Christ on our behalf.

The Establishment of the Covenant

The Lord freed the Hebrews from Egypt's oppression to make a covenant with them so that they would become His servants and confirm the covenant He made with their fathers. Nehemiah Coxe writes:

> Thirdly, the Scriptures everywhere affirm that the **Lord brought up Israel out of Egypt**, formed their church-state by establishing the order of his solemn worship among them, and gave them the land of Canaan in possession, **in remembrance of his covenant with Abraham** and to fulfill its promises. For instance, let these places be well weighed: Exodus 2:24, 25; Deuteronomy 29:10-13; Nehemiah 9:7-9; Psalm 78 with Psalm 105.[54]

After displaying great judgments upon Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, the Lord leads Israel to Mount Sinai where He had first spoken to Moses. There the Lord speaks to the people the Ten Commandments and enters into a covenant with Israel. That takes place in Exodus 19. Let's take a look.

My Treasured Possession

> Exod. 19:5-8 Now therefore, **if you will indeed obey my voice** and **keep my covenant**, you shall be **my treasured possession** among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me **a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." 7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. 8 All the people answered together and said, "**All that the LORD has spoken we will do**." And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.

This is a classic case of a covenant. The Lord lays a condition upon the people of Israel. This condition is that they must obey Him and keep His covenant, then His blessings will follow. The blessings, among other things, are that Israel would be God's treasured people from among all peoples and they will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, reflecting the holiness of their covenant Lord and spreading His fame. We can already see the conditionality laid upon the covenant blessings. Just like it was the case with the Abrahamic (Gen. 17:9-14), so it is with the Mosaic. The people of Israel would need to be obedient to the Lord to be His treasured possession and enjoy His covenant blessings. The text begins with a condition and then follows with promises of what Israel shall be. Likewise, we see the response of the people to the Lord's covenant, which is important to note. This is unlike what happens, for example, in the New Covenant where the Lord sovereignly and unilaterally initiates the covenant and fulfills its condition through His Spirit in His people. In this covenant, there is a condition for the people to fulfill themselves. They must obey God and keep His covenant, otherwise, those promises will not be fulfilled. A. W. Pink summarizes the terms in this way:

> Not only is the word covenant used, but the transactions at Sinai contained all the elements of a covenant: the **contracting parties** were the Lord God and Israel; the **condition** was, "If ye will obey my voice indeed"; the **promise** was, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6); the **penalty** was the curses of Deuteronomy 28:15, and so forth.[55]

The Covenant Lord Speaks

> Exod. 19:17-18 Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to **meet God**, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the **LORD had descended on it in fire**. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.

The sight is terrifying. God has condescended to make a covenant with sinful man and that in some kind of visible way. By coming down on Mount Sinai, the people truly were terrified by the awful sight. The Lord then warns Moses that the thought should not come to the people to come upon the Mountain lest they perish. What follows then in chapter 20 are the Ten Commandments, which are the summary of the moral law written upon every heart (see **chapter 19** more on the Law of God and an exposition of the Ten Commandments). But now it is spoken by God to His covenant people as the summary of this covenant which He is making with them and the heart of it.

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are common to man. They are the basic moral law, which we know by virtue of the fact that we are created in the *Imago Dei* (in the image of God, **see here on the image of God**). Paul argues in Romans 2:12-15 and 1:18-32 that the basic things of the law concerning our duty to God, for example, are known both to Jews in the written Scriptures and also known to the Gentiles from their consciences and hearts. The Ten Commandments are divided into two groups. Commandments 1 through 4 concern our duty to God. We must worship God, the only true God. We must not seek to devise the way with which He is to be worshiped, but we should obey Him. We should likewise keep the seventh day, after six days designed for work, holy as a day of rest and worship (**see for the Christian Sabbath here**). Commandments 5 through 10 concern our duty to man. We are to love our neighbor, we are not to murder, bear false witness, steal or covet.

I find especially helpful Calvin's observation on the commandments that when we read, for example, "Honor thy father and thy mother," it not only applies to our parents, but also to other elders. But more than that, it also means the negative, i.e., you shall *not* dishonor and shame your elders. "Thou shalt not murder", for example, also means the negative, meaning: it teaches us to persevere life, to love life, to cherish life and to celebrate life, etc.

These Ten Commandments are summarized in two commandments by our Lord and Master:

> Matt. 22:36-40 "Teachwaer, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "**You shall love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: **You shall love your neighbor as yourself**. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Love for God and love for our neighbor, which comes as a result of loving God, is the summary of the Ten Commandments and the Bible. For more on the law, see **chapter 19**.

The Covenant Established in Blood

After giving various laws in chapters 21-23, then the Lord confirms and establishes His covenant with Israel.

> Exod. 24:3-8 Moses came and **told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules**. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "**All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.**" 4 And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and **built an altar** at the foot of the mountain, and **twelve pillars**, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. 6 And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. 7 Then he took **the Book of the Covenant** and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "**All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.**" 8 And Moses took the **blood and threw it on the people** and said, "**Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you** in accordance with all these words."

This is similar to what we read in Exodus 19, except that here the Lord inaugurates and establishes the covenant with the children of Israel. The people are told the terms of the covenant and the rules, their response is that they will do all that the Lord has commanded and that they will be obedient. Moses writes the words of the Lord so that they would be unalterable and then establishes the covenant with animal blood. This was a symbol to purify the people and set them apart as the covenant people of God (Heb. 9:18-22). They were to be holy as the Lord is holy (Lev. 20:26) because they were the Lord's chosen people and they were to be His representatives. They had to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and be a nation of priests to and of Him. Moses lays out the terms of the covenant and the people give their consent and promise to keep the covenant.

Not an Administration of the Covenant of Grace

Although gracious in many ways, the Mosaic Covenant cannot be seen as an administration of the same covenant (Covenant of Grace) as the New Covenant is. If that were the case, there would be many difficulties in understanding the contrasts – the sharp contrasts that the New Testament draws between the Old and New Covenants. Below, I will seek to show why the Mosaic Covenant, though gracious as all the Lord's covenants are, is not an administration of the Covenant of Grace.

2 Corinthians 3

> 2 Cor. 3:6-11 who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a **new covenant**, not of the **letter** but of the **Spirit**. For the **letter kills**, but the **Spirit gives life**. 7 Now if the **ministry of death**, carved in letters on stone, came with such

glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being **brought to an end**, 8 will not the **ministry of the Spirit** have even more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the **ministry of condemnation**, the **ministry of righteousness** must far exceed it in glory. 10 Indeed, in this case, what **once had glory has come to have no glory at all**, because of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if what was being **brought to an end** came with glory, much more will what is **permanent have glory**.

These are contrasts and not parallels that the apostle Paul lays out between the Old and New Covenants. They are not administrations of the same Covenant of Grace. How could this be said and these strong contrasts be made if that were the case? I think that Paul has in mind promises as in Jeremiah 31, which is the only place in the Old Testament where the phrase "new covenant" occurs. Furthermore, he had probably similar promises in mind as, for example, Ezekiel 36:25-27. In Jeremiah 31, it is made clear that the Old Covenant is not like the New Covenant that God is going to make. There is a big difference between these covenants. The apostle does mention some differences throughout this chapter. Let's make a table of those differences:

NEW COVENANT	OLD COVENANT
tablets written on our hearts (2 Cor. 3:3)	tablets of stone (2 Cor. 3:3)
letter written in Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3)	letter written in ink (2 Cor. 3:3)
Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6)	the letter kills (2 Cor. 3:6)
ministry of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:8)	ministry of death (2 Cor. 3:7)
ministry of righteousness (2 Cor. 3:9)	ministry of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9)
is permanent and has infinite glory (2 Cor. 3:9)	is coming to an end (2 Cor. 3:10-11; Heb. 8:13)
has infinite glory (2 Cor. 3:9-11)	once had glory (2 Cor. 3:10)

These two covenants are opposite and opposed to each other. Can we truly say that the ministry of condemnation, in substance, is the same as the ministry of righteousness? I cannot. Furthermore, Jeremiah 31:31-34, the promise of the New Covenant, which is quoted at length in Hebrews 8:8-12, declares:

Jer. 31:32 **not like the covenant** that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

This New Covenant will not be like the Old Covenant, which Paul used as a contrast for the promised New Covenant. The Old was breakable, but the New is not like the Old. This time when the Lord makes a covenant with Israel and Judah (in Christ Jesus on the Cross, not some future time), the Lord will do something different:

Jer. 31:33 For 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.

The Lord will not put the Law before them in letter, but rather He will write it on their hearts and cause them, by His Spirit and grace, to obey the Law of the Lord out of love and fear of God (Ezek. 36:25-27). This is the amazing grace of the New Covenant established in Christ's precious blood. The New Covenant grants that which it demands so that the blessings may come to the people of God freely and by grace. The Mosaic Covenant demands obedience but does not grant or promise the ability to obey. Pink comments on Hebrews 8:10 with the following words:

Observe carefully what is said in Hebrews 8 to be the characteristic difference between the new and the old economies: "I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts" (v. 10). No promise in any wise comparable to this was given at Sinai. But the **absence of any assurance of the Spirit's internal and effectual operations was quite in keeping with the fact that the Mosaic economy** required not so much an inward and spiritual, as an outward and natural obedience to the law, which for them had nothing higher than temporal sanctions. This is a fundamental principle which has not received the consideration to which it is entitled: it is vital to a clear understanding of the radical difference which obtains between Judaism and Christianity. Under the former God dealt with one nation only; now He is manifesting His grace to elect individuals scattered among all nations. Under the former He simply made known His requirements; in the latter **He actually produces that which meets His requirements**.[56]

There is not merely an accidental difference between these two covenants, but there is an essential difference. You can't get a stronger contrast than heart and stone, Spirit and letter, life and death, righteousness and condemnation, permanent and

temporary, glorious and no longer glorious.

Galatians 4

Another passage which lays out the difference and contrasts between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is Galatians 4:21-31. In chapter 3, Paul touched upon the Abrahamic Covenant and promises and now he goes on to compare the Mosaic and the New for those who were seeking to remain under the Mosaic Covenant. He does this by using Hagar and Sarah, the wives of Abraham, as an example. He does not merely mention parallels between the two, but he draws strong contrasts. Furthermore, what he presents here is not the view of the Judiazers, but lays out the biblical view of what the Mosaic Covenant taught and stood for.

> Gal. 4:21-31 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by **a slave woman** and one by **a free woman**. 23 But the **son of the slave was born according to the flesh**, while the **son of the free woman was born through promise**. 24 Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are **two covenants**. One is from **Mount Sinai**, bearing **children for slavery**; she is **Hagar**. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to **the present Jerusalem**, for she is in **slavery with her children**. 26 But **the Jerusalem above is free**, and **she is our mother**. 27 For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For **the children of the desolate one will be more** than those of the one who has a husband." 28 Now you, brothers, **like Isaac, are children of promise**. 29 But just as at that time he who was **born according to the flesh** **persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit**, so also it is now. 30 But what does the Scripture say? "**Cast out the slave woman and her son**, for the **son of the slave woman** shall not **inherit with the son of the free woman**." 31 So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but **of the free woman**.

Not merely the covenants, but the members of these two covenants cannot mix. Paul is not merely responding to a misrepresentation of the Mosaic Covenant, rather, he lays out these things straight out of the Old Testament. He begins by questioning those who desire to be under the law and asks "do you not listen to the law?". He does not say "do you not listen to your misrepresentation of the law" or "do you not listen to the interpretation of the Rabbis" or whatnot. What Paul presents in the verses to follow is the biblical view on the differences between the Mosaic and New covenants.

Paul uses the story of Hagar and Sarah as an example to make his point. He directly connects Hagar to the Mosaic Covenant (v. 24) and the covenant under which the Judiazers wanted to place Christians under. But this covenant places its children in slavery. This is a covenant that bears "children for slavery" (v. 24) and those born in it are "born according to the flesh" (v. 23). This means that its members are brought in not by divine grace, but by human working. The flesh vs. spirit and, in this place, flesh vs. promise contrast is a strong one in Paul (e.g., Rom. 8:1-11; Gal. 3:3; 5:16-26; 6:6; Rom. 9:6-9). This flesh vs. promise contrast is clearly seen in the birth of Ishmael from Hagar and the birth of Isaac by the very old Sarah. One came through human wisdom and human doing, the other came through the work of God against what is naturally expected. These two cannot abide together. We could also use the faith vs. works contrast here which is prevalent in Paul. These are categories that cannot mix.

Those who belong to the Old Covenant are the unregenerate Israelites. Paul says that the status of Hagar as a slave and what she brings forth is analogous to the present Jerusalem, which "is in slavery with her children" (v. 25). But in contrast to this, we belong to "the Jerusalem above" and she "is free, and she is our mother" (v. 26). Because she is free, she brings forth children born in freedom. This is obviously not meant that the physical children of believers are born as believers, but that all who belong to the Jerusalem above, who have faith in Jesus, are free because they are born from above. Therefore, "like Isaac, [we] are children of promise" (v. 28). The promise pertains to us, but not only that, but we are also born through the promise just like Isaac was.

The sons of the Sinaitic Covenant are excluded from the gracious promises of God because "the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman" (v. 30). These two seeds cannot intermix and neither can the promises pertaining to them mix. Furthermore, Paul draws something relevant to the present time from his analogy, namely, the persecution of the Jews of the Christians (v. 29). It is interesting to note the wording, "...just as at that time...so also it is now" (v. 29). Paul concludes by saying that we are children of the free woman (v. 31).

Now, having observed these contrasts and seeing that the apostle is not responding to a misunderstanding or misrepresentation, but showing the Judiazers what their theology actually means, can we say that both the Mosaic and New covenants have the same basic core? Instead of Paul saying "these women are two covenants", what he had to say was that "these women were two administrations of the same covenant". But neither the wording nor the idea is in the text. For the contrasts which the apostle uses here exclude each other and are not biblically harmonious. The slave vs. free and flesh vs. promise are mutually exclusive contrasts. They do not merely speak of alike things, but of things radically different. The same covenant cannot be the source of the covenant which produces children of promise who are free and children of the flesh who are in slavery. We also see here the idea of the double posterity of Abraham: the children of Abraham by the flesh

and the children of Abraham by faith/promise (e.g., Gal. 3; Rom. 4).

Therefore, it is very clear to me from this place that the Mosaic Covenant cannot be a covenant of grace or an administration of the Covenant of Grace.

The Mosaic and Eternal Life

I've had some changes in the perspective I take on this question and still not 100% settled.[57]

> Lev. 18:1-5 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. 3 **You shall not do as they do** in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. **You shall not walk in their statutes.** 4 **You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them**. I am the LORD your God. 5 You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; **if a person does them, he shall live by them**: I am the LORD.

The Lord's newly redeemed people need to be holy unto the Lord – separated from the pagan nations. They are not to follow their ways but the Lord's. They are not to walk in their statues but in the Lord's. Why? Because the one who keeps the Lord's statutes and rules will live by them. What does "live" mean here?

I believe that some commentators (e.g., John Gill) are right in saying that this passage is not talking about eternal life as it may be gleaned from the present context, which is about life in Canaan. But then I was challenged by some things that I've read from Jeffrey Johnson to recheck my position about the Mosaic and eternal life. I do now believe that the Mosaic did offer eternal life (though I am not that very firm in this position). That is the Law that our Lord was born under and that is the Law that He fulfilled and kept (e.g., Matt. 3:15; 5:17-18). The Mosaic did offer eternal life on the condition of perfect obedience, but the problem is that everyone who was under the Mosaic already came with a sinful nature and guilt from Adam, therefore it was impossible for anyone to perfectly keep the Law. It is not that the Mosaic did not offer eternal life, rather it is that people were not able to earn eternal life by their works.

Let us consider a passage which echoes Leviticus 18 –

> Rom. 10:4-5 For Christ is the end of the law for **righteousness to everyone who believes**. 5 For Moses writes about the **righteousness that is based on the law**, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

It seems to me that Paul here is speaking about two kinds of righteousness. A righteousness that is through faith in Christ and a righteousness based and coming from the Law of Moses. I don't think that Paul is talking about two *kinds* of righteousness, rather he is talking about the *source* through which this righteousness comes. There are two sources, one is through faith in Christ, the other is through perfect obedience to the Law. Perfect obedience is seen to be the case from Galatians 3:10 –

> Gal. 3:10-12 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "**Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law**, and do them." 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." 12 But the law is not of faith, rather "**The one who does them shall live by them.**"

The least transgression of the commandments placed one under the condemnation of the Law. Therefore, it was impossible for anyone to earn righteousness before God through the Law. God gave the Law to show mankind their sin so that they would flee to the Savior (Gal. 3:24; Rom. 3:20). It is by looking at ourselves through the mirror of the Law that we are convicted of our sin and try to seek refuge in Christ (Rom. 7:7). God knew that sinful man was not able to keep the Law for righteousness, hence the Covenant of Grace through which the saints were saved from Adam until Christ. But the Mosaic was a covenant of works which Christ fulfilled and earned eternal life for us.

Many have seen a republication in the Mosaic of the principle of "do this and live" which was present in the Adamic Covenant of Works. This may also be seen from a biblical passage (Hos 6:7). It seems that Hosea is saying that Israel, like Adam did not merely transgress a covenant, but they transgressed **the covenant**. Therefore, for there to be a parallel between Adam and the Mosaic, the Mosaic has to offer eternal life, though as we said before, its members were not able to attain it because they were sinful (except Christ, of course). Of this Thomas E. Hicks writes concerning Owen's view:

> Owen resolves this apparent tension by arguing that the commands, curse and promise of the covenant of works were

> "revived" in the Mosaic Covenant. Regarding the "do this and live' promise of Leviticus 18:5, Owen says "Now this is no other but the covenant of works revived," and that the Mosaic Covenant "revived the promise of that covenant that of eternal life on perfect obedience." But by asserting the "revival" of the covenant of works, Owen in no way intended to say that the Mosaic Covenant is identical to the covenant of works, but only that part of the Mosaic Covenant contains a reminder of that covenant which was given to Adam in the garden before the fall. In this sense, Owen said that there is both "renovation" and "innovation" of the covenant of works. He wrote, "Nor had this covenant of Sinai any promise of eternal life annexed to it, as such, but only the promise inseparable from the covenant of works, which it revived, saying, 'Do this and live.'"[58]

Looking back at the Galatians passage, we see again that Paul, as in Romans 10:4-5, points out the source of this righteousness. The righteousness from faith is distinguished and opposed to that from the law. Perfect obedience in all points of the Law was required for eternal life. Basically, you had to be sinless and there is only one Person Who has remained sinless – Christ the Lord. So, yes, the Mosaic did offer eternal life by works, but no one was able to attain that except Christ. Christ fulfilled the Law and earned eternal life for His people (Gal. 3:13-14). See also **Christ Fulfilled The Law** in **chapter 8**.

Although the Mosaic Covenant is not the/a covenant of grace or an administration of it, **it is neither absolutely the covenant of works** as was in Adam for the people of Israel. Nonetheless, it is a covenant of works or better said, it is a **national covenant**, which brought blessings upon the nation for the obedience of the nation and curses for their disobedience of God's covenant as may be seen like in the historical books of the Bible. God did not treat Israel as strictly as their disobedience required, but many times was patient with them and did not treat them with the strict standard of "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law", nor did He directly bring His judgment upon them. Unlike the Adamic, there was a sacrificial system, which typified the sacrifice of Christ, through which people could renew their relationship with God. Douglas Van Dorn writes concerning grace in the Mosaic:

> Thus, there is **grace in this covenant**. It is grace that precedes and then attaches itself to the Mosaic covenant. We read that God brought Israel out of Egypt and made a covenant with them because "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Ex 2:24). The law that he gave them was preambled by this earlier covenant in such a way that it became part of the Ten Commandments: "And God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me'" (Ex 20:1-3). When they would break the covenant with Moses—the Law—God would "for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD" (Lev 26:45). **Their forgiveness would be based on the earlier promise**.[59]

Let us look at another example which suggests the idea that the Mosaic did offer eternal life. The story of the Rich Young Ruler is well known –

> Matt. 19:16-21 And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, **what good deed must I do to have eternal life**?" 17 And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. **If you would enter life, keep the commandments**." 18 He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, 19 Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 20 The young man said to him, "**All these I have kept.** What do I still lack?" 21 Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, **go, sell what you possess and give to the poor,** and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

The rich man had made an idol of his possessions. He has not loved his neighbor enough to help him. He has placed his possessions and riches above God. But, the question which we must answer here is: Did Christ mean what He said or did He not? He told him that he needs to keep the commandments to enter (eternal) life. Is that true or false? This seems to hearken back to the principle of "do this and live" as found in Leviticus 18:5, which we discussed. The Lord Jesus told the young man that keeping the commandments perfectly, i.e., not just thinking that you kept them while you secretly had made an idol of your possessions, would bring you to eternal life. So, yes, the Lord did teach salvation by works of the Law, but the problem here is if one honestly examines themselves under the light of the Law, they would see themselves not justified, but condemned by the Law. It is self-deception to look at the Law and think that we're fine. It is through the Law that we come to know that we're sinners (e.g., Rom. 3:20). Therefore, Christ the Lord gave him the Law to show him his sin and when he did that the young man "went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Matt. 19:22). While this is true, this does not diminish the fact that the Mosaic did offer eternal life, only that sinners were *unable* to attain it.

I repeat: the Mosaic did offer eternal life, but **sinners were unable to attain it by works**. Jesus, the sinless and perfect

Savior, did attain eternal life for all whom He represented. The same “do this and live” principle is also found in Deuteronomy 4:1; 8:1; Nehemiah 9:29; Ezekiel 20:11, 13, 21.

The Blessing and the Curse

Something else that is clear in the Mosaic Covenant is the fact that it contains curses and blessings for its members. I believe that the New Covenant does not contain curses for its members and therefore, they both cannot share the same basic source (the Covenant of Grace). The blessings and the curses of the Mosaic Covenant are laid among other places in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. The pattern is typical of a covenant of works, the “do this and live” principle is alive and well in the Mosaic. It was concerned with the blessing they would enjoy as a nation, not individual salvation, and the curses that would come upon them when they break the covenant. The blessing was dependent upon their obedience and the curses upon their disobedience. This is the basic pattern of a covenant of works, which is also found within the Adamic. The difference between the Mosaic and Adamic Covenants is that Mosaic did contain provisions for atonement and mercy, while one transgression of the Adamic condemned the whole human race. That’s why it would be wrong to say that the Mosaic was absolutely a republication of the covenant of works with Adam. It may be viewed as a **national covenant**, which depended not so much upon personal obedience or disobedience, but upon the conduct of the nation as a whole and their representatives. When they sinned, they got punished. When they wanted to come back to God, they made atonement and sought mercy from the Lord for their sins.

I think it will be wise for us to pay careful attention to what Pink is saying here about “outward obedience” of the nation to God’s law:

> The covenant which God made with Israel at **Sinai required outward obedience to the letter of the law**. It contained promises of **national blessing if they, as a people, kept the law**; and it also announced **national calamities if they were disobedient**. This is unmistakably clear from such a passage as the following: “Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee” (Deut. 7:12-16).
>
> In connection with the above passage notice, first, the definite reference made to **God’s “mercy,” which proves that He did not deal with Israel on the bare ground of exacting and relentless law**, as some have erroneously supposed. Second, observe the reference which the Lord here made unto **His oath to their fathers**, that is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; which shows that the Sinaitic covenant was based upon, and not divorced from, the Abrahamic—Israel’s occupation of Canaan being the “letter” fulfillment of it. Third, if, **as a nation, Israel rendered unto their God the obedience** to which He was entitled as their King and Governor, then **He would love and bless them**—under the Christian economy there is no promise that He will love and bless any who live in defiance of His claims upon them! Fourth, the specific **blessings here enumerated were all of a temporal and material kind**. In other passages God threatened to bring upon them plagues and judgments (Deut. 28:15-65) for disobedience. The whole was a compact promising to Israel certain **outward and national blessings** on the condition of their rendering to God a **general outward obedience to His law**.[60]

As for those who will object that God is not pleased with “outward obedience”, Pink answers in this way:

> But at this point it may be objected that God, who is infinitely holy and whose prerogative it is to search the heart, could never be satisfied with an outward and general obedience, which in the case of many would be hollow and insincere. The objection is pertinent and presents a real difficulty: how can we meet it? Very simply: this would be true of individuals as such, but not necessarily so where nations are concerned. And why not, it may be asked? For this reason: because **nations as such have only a temporary existence**; therefore **they must be rewarded or punished in this present world, or not at all!** This being so, the kind of obedience required from them is lower than from individuals, whose rewards and punishments shall be eternal.[61]

The blessings and curses of the Mosaic Covenant as found in Leviticus 26, are thus:

Leviticus 26: Blessings and Curses			
Verse	**If you do**	**Verse**	**If you don’t**

4	I will give you rains in their seasons	16	I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache
4	The land shall yield its increase	16	You shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it
4	The trees of the field shall yield their fruit	17	I will set my face against you
5	Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest	17	You shall be struck before your enemies
5	The grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing	17	Those who hate you shall rule over you
5	You shall eat your bread to the full	17	You shall flee when none pursues you
5	You shall dwell in your land securely	18, 24, 28	I will discipline you sevenfold for your sins
6	I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid	19	I will break the pride of your power
6	I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land	19	I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze
7-8	You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword…	20	Your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase
9	I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you	20	The trees of the land shall not yield their fruit
9	I will confirm my covenant with you	21	I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins
10	You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new	22	I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number
11	I will make my dwelling among you	25	I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant
11	My soul shall not abhor you	25	I will send pestilence among you
12	I will walk among you	25	You shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy
12	I will be your God, and you shall be my people	26	I [will] break your supply of bread
		26	You shall eat and not be satisfied
		29	You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters
		30	I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars
		30	I will cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols
		30	My soul shall abhor you
		31	I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas
		32	I myself will devastate the land , so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it
		33	I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you
		33	Your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste
		36	I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies
		37	They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though none pursues
		37	you shall have no power to stand before your enemies.
		38	You shall perish among the nations
		38	The land of your enemies shall eat you up
		39	Those of you who are left shall rot away in your enemies' lands because of their iniquity

As any one can see, the blessings are amazing, but the curses are total and destructive.

John Owen's 17 Reasons and Differences Between the Mosaic and the Covenant of Grace

I'm really mindblown by the genius of Owen. I have read his commentary on Hebrews 8:6 and I especially loved his 17

differences between the Mosaic and New Covenant. I have tried to summarize them here in his own words. I copied the text from the TheWord version, but the whole text may also be found in the Coxe/Owen volume on pages 200-211.

- Difference 1
  - These two covenants differ in the circumstance of time as to their promulgation, declaration, and establishment. The first covenant was made at the time that God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and took its date from the third month after their coming up from thence, Exo 19:24. From the time of what is reported in the latter place, wherein the people give their actual consent unto the terms of it, it began its formal obligation as a covenant. The new covenant was declared and made known "in the latter days," Heb. 1:1-2; "in the dispensation of the fullness of times," Eph. 1:10. And it took date, as a covenant formally obliging the whole church, from the death, resurrection, ascension of Christ, and sending of the Holy Ghost.
- Difference 2
  - They differ in the circumstance of place as to their promulgation; which the Scripture also taketh notice of. The first was declared on mount Sinai; the manner whereof, and the station of the people in receiving the law Exo 19:18. The other was declared on mount Zion, and the law of it went forth from Jerusalem, Isa 2:3. This difference, with many remarkable instances from it, our apostle insists on, Gal 4:24-26. And it "answereth," or "is placed in the same series, rank, and order with Jerusalem," namely, in the opposition of the two covenants. For as the new covenant, the covenant of promise, giving freedom and liberty, was given at Jerusalem, in the death and resurrection of Christ, with the preaching of the gospel which ensued thereon; so the old covenant, that brought the people into bondage, was given at mount Sinai in Arabia.
- Difference 3
  They differ in the manner of their promulgation and establishment.
  a. Of the Old Covenant:
     i. The dread and terror of the outward appearance on mount Sinai, which filled all the people, yea, Moses himself, with fear and trembling, Matt. 12:18-21; Exo 19:16; Exo 20:18-19. Together herewith was a spirit of fear and bondage administered unto all the people, so as that they chose to keep at a distance, and not draw nigh unto God, Deu 5:23-27.
     ii. That it was given by the ministry and "disposition of angels," Act 7:53; Gal 3:19. Hence the people were in a sense "put in subjection unto angels," and they had an authoritative ministry in that covenant.
  b. Of the New Covenant:
     i. The Son of God in his own person did declare it. This he "spake from heaven," as the apostle observes; in opposition unto the giving of the law "on the earth," Heb 12:25. Yet did he speak on the earth also; the mystery whereof himself declares, Joh 3:13. And he did all things that belonged unto the establishment of this covenant in a spirit of meekness and condescension, with the highest evidence of love, grace, and compassion, encouraging and inviting the weary, the burdened, the heavy and laden to come unto him. And by his Spirit he makes his disciples to carry on the same work until the covenant was fully declared, Heb 2:3. See Joh 1:17-18.
     ii. And the whole ministry of angels, in the giving of this covenant, was merely in a way of service and obedience unto Christ
- Difference 4
  - They differ in their mediators. The mediator of the first covenant was Moses. "It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," Gal 3:19. And this was no other but Moses, who was a servant in the house of God, Heb 3:5. And he was a mediator, as designed of God, so chosen of the people, in that dread and consternation which befell

them upon the terrible promulgation of the law. But the mediator of the new covenant is the Son of God himself 1 Tim 2:5. He who is the Son, and the Lord over his own house, graciously undertook in his own person to be the mediator of this covenant; and herein it is unspeakably preferred before the old covenant.

- Difference 5
  - They differ in their subject-matter, both as unto precepts and promises
    a. The Old Covenant absolutely considered:
      i. No promise of grace, to communicate spiritual strength, or to assist us in obedience; nor,
      ii. Any of eternal life, no otherwise but as it was contained in the promise of the covenant of works, "The man that doeth these things shall live in them;" and,
      iii. Had promises of temporal things in the land of Canaan inseparable from it.
- Difference 6
  - They differ, and that principally, in the manner of their dedication and sanction. This is that which gives any thing the formal nature of a covenant or testament. And this is by a sacrifice, wherein there is both bloodshed-ding and death ensuing thereon. Now this, in the confirmation of the old covenant, was only the sacrifice of beasts, whose blood was sprinkled on all the people, Exo 24:5-8. But the new testament was solemnly confirmed by the sacrifice and blood of Christ himself, Zec 9:11; Heb 10:29; Heb 13:20. And the Lord Christ dying as the mediator and surety of the covenant, he purchased all good things for the church; and as a testator bequeathed them unto it.
- Difference 7
  - They differ in the priests that were to officiate before God in the behalf of the people. In the old covenant, Aaron and his posterity alone were to discharge that office; in the new, the Son of God himself is the only priest of the church.
- Difference 8
  - They differ in the sacrifices whereon the peace and reconciliation with God which is tendered in them doth depend.
- Difference 9
  - They differ in the way and manner of their solemn writing or enrolment. The old covenant, as to the principal, fundamental part of it, was "engraven in tables of stone," which were kept in the ark, Exo 31:18; Deu 9:10; 2Co 3:7. But the new covenant is written in the "fleshy tables of the hearts" of them that do believe 2Co 3:3; Jer. 31:33.
- Difference 10
  - They differ in their ends.
    a. Of the Old Covenant, the principal end of the first covenant was to discover sin, to condemn it, and to set bounds unto it.
      i. By conviction: for "by the law is the knowledge of sin;" it convinced sinners, and caused every mouth to be stopped before God.
      ii. By condemning the sinner, in an application of the sanction of the law unto his conscience.
      iii. By the judgments and punishments wherewith on all occasions it was accompanied. In all it manifested and represented the justice and severity of God.
    b. The end of the new covenant is, to declare the love, grace, and mercy of God; and therewith to give repentance, remission of sin, and life eternal.
- Difference 11
  - They differed in their effects. For the first covenant being the "ministration of death" and "condemnation," it brought the minds and spirits of them that were under it into servitude and bondage; whereas spiritual liberty is the immediate effect of the new testament. See Rom. 8:15; 2Co 3:17; Gal 4:1-7; Gal 4:24; Gal 4:26; Gal 4:30-31; Heb

2:14-15. This, therefore, we must a little explain.

a. Wherefore the bondage which was the effect of the old covenant arose from several causes concurring unto the effecting of it: —
    i. The renovation of the terms and sanction of the covenant of works contributed much thereunto.
    ii. It arose from the manner of the delivery of the law, and God's entering thereon into covenant with them. This was ordered on purpose to fill them with dread and fear.
    iii. From the severity of the penalties annexed unto the transgression of the law. This kept them always anxious and solicitous, not knowing when they were safe or secure.
    iv. From the nature of the whole ministry of the law, which was the "ministration of death" and "condemnation," 2Co 3:7; 2Co 3:9; which declared the desert of every sin to be death, and denounced death unto every sinner, administering by itself no relief unto the minds and consciences of men. So was it the "letter that killed" them that were under its power.
    v. From the darkness of their own minds, in the means, ways, and causes of deliverance from all these things. It is true, they had a promise before of life and salvation, which was not abolished by this covenant, even the promise made unto Abraham; but this belonged not unto this covenant, and the way of its accomplishment, by the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God, was much hidden from them, — yea, from the prophets themselves who yet foretold them. This left them under much bondage. For the principal cause and means of the liberty of believers under the gospel, ariseth from the clear light they have into the mystery of the love and grace of God in Christ.
    vi. It was increased by the yoke of a multitude of laws, rites, and ceremonies, imposed on them; which made the whole of their worship a burden unto them, and insupportable, Act 15:10.

a. On the other hand, the new covenant gives liberty and boldness, the liberty and boldness of children, unto all believers. It is the Spirit of the Son in it that makes us free, or gives us universally all that liberty which is any way needful for us or useful unto us. For "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" namely, to serve God, "not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit." And it is declared that this was the great end of bringing in the new covenant, in the accomplishment of the promise made unto Abraham, namely, "that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve God without fear …… all the days of our life," Luk 1:72-75. And we may briefly consider wherein this deliverance and liberty by the new covenant doth consist, which it doth in the things ensuing: —
    i. i. In our freedom from the commanding power of the law, as to sinless, perfect obedience, in order unto righteousness and justification before God. Its commands we are still subject unto, but not in order unto life and salvation; for unto these ends it is fulfilled in and by the mediator of the new covenant, who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom 10:4.
    ii. In our freedom from the condemning power of the law, and the sanction of it in the curse. This being undergone and answered by him who was "made a curse for us," we are freed from it, Rom 7:6; Gal 3:13-14. And therein also are we "delivered from the fear of death," Heb 2:15, as it was penal and an entrance into judgment or condemnation, Joh 5:24.

iii. In our freedom from conscience of sin, Heb 10:2, — that is, conscience disquieting, perplexing, and condemning our persons; the hearts of all that believe being “sprinkled from an evil conscience” by the blood of Christ.
iv. In our freedom from the whole system of Mosaic worship, in all the rites, and ceremonies, and ordinances of it; which what a burden it was the apostles do declare, Acts 15, and our apostle at large in his epistle to the Galatians.
v. From all the laws of men in things appertaining unto the worship of God, 1Co 7:23.

a. It remains only that we point out the ways whereby this liberty is communicated unto us under the new covenant. And it is done,—
i. Principally by the grant and communication of the Spirit of the Son as a Spirit of adoption, giving the freedom, boldness, and liberty of children, Joh 1:12; Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:6-7. From hence the apostle lays it down as a certain rule, that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” 2Co 3:17.
ii. It is obtained by the evidence of our justification before God, and the causes of it. This men were greatly in the dark unto under the first covenant, although all stable peace with God doth depend thereon; for it is in the gospel that “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith,” Rom 1:17. Indeed “the righteousness of God without the law is witnessed by the law and the prophets,” Rom 3:21; that is, testimony is given to it in legal institutions and the promises recorded in the prophets. But these things were obscure unto them, who were to seek for what was intended under the veils and shadows of priests and sacrifices, atonements and expiations. But our justification before God, in all the causes of it, being now fully revealed and made manifest, it hath a great influence into spiritual liberty and boldness.
iii. By the spiritual light which is given to believers into the mystery of God in Christ. This the apostle affirms to have been “hid in God from the beginning of the world,” Eph. 3:9. It was contrived and prepared in the counsel and wisdom of God from all eternity.
iv. We obtain this liberty by the opening of the way into the holiest, and the entrance we have thereby with boldness unto the throne of grace.
v. By all the ordinances of gospel-worship, How the ordinances of worship under the old testament did lead the people into bondage hath been declared; but those of the new testament, through their plainness in signification, their immediate respect unto the Lord Christ, with their use and efficacy to guide believers in their communion with God, do all conduce unto our evangelical liberty.

- Difference 12
  - They differ greatly with respect unto the dispensation and grant of the Holy Ghost. It is certain that God did grant the gift of the Holy Spirit under the old testament, and his operations during that season, but it is no less certain, that there was always a promise of his more signal effusion upon the confirmation and establishment of the new covenant. See in particular that great promise to this purpose, Joe 2:28-29, as applied and expounded by the apostle Peter, Act 2:16-18. “the Comforter would not come; but if he so went away, he would send him from the Father,” Joh 16:7.
- Difference 13
  - They differ in the declaration made in them of the kingdom of God. It is the observation of Augustine, that the very name of “the kingdom of heaven” is peculiar unto the new testament. It is true, God reigned in and over the church under the old testament; but his rule was such, and had such a relation unto secular things, especially with respect

unto the land of Canaan, and the flourishing condition of the people therein, as that it had an appearance of a kingdom of this world. But now in the gospel, the nature of the kingdom of God, where it is, and wherein it consists, is plainly and evidently declared, unto the unspeakable consolation of believers. For whereas it is now known and experienced to be internal, spiritual, and heavenly, they have no less assured interest in it and advantage by it, in all the troubles which they may undergo in this world, than they could have in the fullest possession of all earthly enjoyments.

- Difference 14
  - They differ in their substance and end. The old covenant was typical, shadowy, and removable, Heb 10:1. The new covenant is substantial and permanent, as containing the body, which is Christ.
- Difference 15
  - They differ in the extent of their administration, according unto the will of God. The first was confined unto the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh, and unto them especially in the land of Canaan, Deu 5:3, with some few proselytes that were joined unto them, excluding all others from the participation of the benefits of it. But the administration of the new covenant is extended unto all nations under heaven; none being excluded, on the account of tongue, language, family, nation, or place of habitation. All have an equal interest in the rising Sun. The partition wall is broken down, and the gates of the new Jerusalem are set open unto all comers upon the gospel invitation. This is frequently taken notice of in the Scripture. See Mat 28:19; Mar 16:15; Joh 11:51-52; Joh 12:32; Act 17:30; Act 11:18, Gal 5:6; Eph 2:11-16; Gen. 3:8-10; Col 3:10-11; 1Jn 2:2; Rev 5:9.
- Difference 16
  - They differ in their efficacy; for the old covenant “made nothing perfect,” it could effect none of the things it did represent, nor introduce that perfect or complete state which God had designed for the church.
- Difference 17
  - They differ in their duration: for the one was to be removed, and the other to abide for ever; which must be declared on the ensuing verses.

Why Then The Law?

If the Law and the Mosaic Covenant cannot save and offer salvation, then one might wonder to what end was it given? The question and the answer thereof is addressed in **Galatians 3:19-24**, which we will look at now.

> Gal. 3:19-24 Why then the law? **It was added because of transgressions**, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. 20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. 21 **Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not!** For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. 22 But the **Scripture imprisoned everything under sin**, so that **the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.** 23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, **the law was our guardian until Christ came**, in order that we might be justified by faith.

There are several things that I would like to look at from this passage as to the purpose and use of the Law.

Because of Transgressions

The main answer to the question as to the purpose of the law is “because of transgressions” and sins. It was added that it may be manifest that people were breaking the Law of God. Paul, in Romans 2, makes the case that everyone is under the Law of God, but still, there is a distinction between two types of people there. There are those who possess the law of creation of which the Ten Commandments given at Sinai were a summary and there are those who have the “613” commandments of God. One was written on the conscience, which could be defiled; the other was written in stone (and scrolls), which could not be altered (**see chapter 19** on the law, especially paragraphs **1** and **5**). Because of the effects of the Fall even upon the mind, our conscience could sometimes approve of things that God would not approve and thus not

follow the law of God. But since the introduction of the written Law of God, we cannot excuse ourselves anymore of wickedness done only because our conscience did not tell us. We have God's clear voice speaking to us in the Scriptures, which is unalterable and undefiled, unlike our sin-stained conscience. Furthermore, in v. 22, the apostle declares that the purpose of the law was also to bind, imprison, conclude and shut up everything and everyone under sin. So that through the law the knowledge of sin might come as Paul elsewhere says (Rom. 3:20). Since all of us sin and break the law, we are therefore all cursed according to the penalty of the law (Gal. 3:10). Therefore, if all of us are sinners and sin, we cannot recommend ourselves to God by our righteousness. This leaves only one option, that God would be gracious toward us and that is also the chief reason why the law was given. To manifest sin and leave the option of faith and grace for salvation as the only hope.

Until the Offspring Should Come

In v. 19b, Paul also says that the law was placed until the promised Offspring should come. This is a reference to the Lord Christ and the promises made *to* and *concerning* Him in the Abrahamic Covenant (see Gal. 3:16 and **above on the Abrahamic**). The Abrahamic Covenant promised a people and a special Offspring to Abraham through Whom the whole world would be blessed. The Mosaic Covenant is built upon and grows out of the Abrahamic Covenant. Through the Mosaic Covenant, the Lord fulfills the Abrahamic promises to the carnal seed and establishes a people through whom the promised Offspring would come. The Messiah would come from the nation of Israel and come from Israel He did. As long as the Messiah had not come, the Lord kept the Mosaic Covenant with Israel and did not abolish it. But once the work of Christ was done, the Lord took away the Mosaic and made the New Covenant in His blood with the church.

Is the Law Contrary to the Promises of God?

Paul asks a rhetorical question: was the law against and contrary to the promises of God (justification by faith, Gal. 3:8-9, 14)? The answer is obviously no. But why? Because the Law and the promises had different ends. It was never the intention of the Law to justify sinners, although the Jews did interpret it in this way. Rather, as we have seen, the purpose of the law was to imprison everything under sin and manifest our wickedness and sinfulness. Since the law was never meant to justify sinners, therefore, it cannot be contrary to the promises of God, but it is distinct from it (Gal. 3:16-18). The promise of the Covenant of Grace was in and revealed through the Mosaic Covenant, but it was not there because the Mosaic was not an administration of the Covenant of Grace. Although the Mosaic did foreshadow the New Covenant, which is the Covenant of Grace, it is not itself an administration of the Covenant of Grace as we tried to point out why above.

The Law our Schoolmaster

Myself being influenced heavily by the ministry of Ray Comfort, the Way of the Master, in evangelism, I have heard this text a lot from him and it makes sense to me. The law is a teacher of some sorts. The Law teaches and shows us our sin, for what purpose? To condemn and to drive us to Christ, the Sin-Bearer. Only sinners need Christ. When we see our sin, we run to the Savior Who died for those sins and rose again for our justification and our cleansing from these sins. Therefore, the Law still has this function in the life of the Christian. It shows us the will of God and our sin so that we may run to the Savior Who died for it on the Cross. See **chapter 19** for the **Threefold Uses of the Law**.

The Way of Salvation

One of the strengths of Covenant Theology is its insistence on the one way of salvation after the Fall. It has always been by faith, by grace, and by Christ. Although the saints of old did not have as much light as we now do that the Lord Christ has come, nonetheless, they believed God's promise of redemption (Gen. 3:15; 15:6; Heb. 11; Rom. 4). See **chapter 8** on the **Retroactive Blood of Christ**.

That believers were saved under the Old Testament is no question, rather the question is by virtue of what covenant? John Owen says the following when he has argued that the Sinaitic Covenant and Covenant of Grace are two distinct covenants:

> Wherefore we must grant **two distinct covenants**, **rather than a twofold administration of the same covenant merely**, to be intended. We must, I say, do so, provided always that **the way of reconciliation and salvation was the same under both**. But it will be said, — and with great pretense of reason, for it is that which is the sole foundation they all build upon who allow only a twofold administration of the same covenant, — 'That this being the principal end of a divine covenant, if the way of reconciliation and salvation be the same under both, then indeed are they for the substance of them but one.' And I grant that this would inevitably follow, if it were so equally by virtue of them both. If reconciliation and salvation by Christ were to be obtained not only under the old covenant, but by virtue thereof, then it must be the same for substance with the new. But this is not so; for **no reconciliation with God nor salvation could be obtained by virtue of the old covenant**, or the administration of it, as our apostle disputes at large, though all believers were reconciled, justified, and saved, by virtue of the promise, whilst they were under the covenant.[62]

How was Abraham justified and saved? It was not by virtue of the covenant made with Adam because it was broken and did not offer eternal life anymore. Neither was it by virtue of the Noahic Covenant, for it is a covenant of common grace. Nor was it by virtue of the covenant made with Abraham since it made no offers of eternal life. It was rather by virtue of the Covenant of Grace contained in the promises that God made to him (Heb. 6:13-16; Gal. 3:6-9, 16-18; Eph. 2:12) and to our first parents (Gen. 3:15). Furthermore, we argued that the Abrahamic Covenant was not the Covenant of Grace (**see above**). As Scripture records, "[Abraham] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). It was by faith in God's word and promise that Abraham was justified. That is also the way the Covenant of Grace existed under the Old Testament, it was in a state of promise and became a definite covenant in its establishment in the blood of its Mediator, Christ. Until then, it was in a state of promise, part of no established covenant, but promised in every covenant as can be seen in the types and shadows (see also Eph. 2:12). That salvation was by virtue of the **retroactive New Covenant** (the Covenant of Grace in the state of promise) can be seen in Romans 3.

> Rom. 3:23-25 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom **God put forward as a propitiation** by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had **passed over former sins**.

What former sins? The only consistent reading is to say that these were the sins of the Old Testament saints, as all others got what they deserved and are getting what they deserve in Hades. This forbearance was temporary because God had predetermined to send the Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the elect. This propitiation (the sacrifice that brings satisfaction to the wrath of God) was the only means for salvation, which was received by faith even in Old Testament times. They were redeemed by the blood of Christ put forth as the means of cleansing from sin, which is the blood of the New Covenant (Heb. 9:15; 12:24; 13:20; Luke 22:20; Matt. 26:28). The death of Christ is what redeemed the saints of old from the sins they committed when they lived under the Old Covenant. It is the blood of the New Covenant which redeems, the precious blood of Jesus (Heb. 9:15). To close, I give you Dr. Owen again.

> This covenant [the Mosaic] thus made, with these ends and promises, did never save nor condemn any man eternally. All that lived under the administration of it did attain eternal life, or perished for ever, but **not by virtue of this covenant** as formally such. It did, indeed, revive the commanding power and sanction of the first covenant of works; and therein, as the apostle speaks, was "the ministry of condemnation," 2Co 3:9; for "by the deeds of the law can no flesh be justified." And on the other hand, it directed also unto the promise, which was the instrument of life and salvation unto all that did believe. But as unto what it had of its own, it was confined unto things temporal. **Believers were saved under it, but not by virtue of it**. **Sinners perished eternally under it, but by the curse of the original law of works**.[63]

Types and Shadows

The types and shadows from the Law are many. One only needs to read the book of Hebrews to find many of those. I'll try to mention a few here.

Christ the Sacrifice

The Lord officially and publicly instituted sacrifices, which were meant to cover sin. Not that before the Mosaic there were no sacrifices. No. We see sacrifices as early as Genesis 4 with Cain and Abel. But yet it seems as though they were not officially instituted, or at least their institution is not mentioned in the Bible, until the Mosaic Covenant. There were basically five types of offerings, which the ESV Study Bible on its note in Leviticus 1 puts in this way (this is a partial representation of the table):

Name	Emphasis
Burnt Offering	underscores prayers of petition or praise
Grain Offering	pleasing aroma; often mirrors emphasis of the offering it accompanies
Peace Offering	fellowship with the Lord by having a communion meal
Sin Offering	atonement of a committed sin; metaphor of purification
Guilt Offering	atonement of a committed sin; metaphor of compensation for wrongdoing

Those were the offerings that were to be presented to the Lord regularly for atonement. Now we can see what atonement means for these sacrifices. Does it really mean to take away sin as the Lord Jesus by His one offering did? That is unacceptable. Rather, these sacrifices provided a temporal *covering* of sin, not a *removal* of sin. Furthermore, they pointed to the One sacrifice and the Lamb that was to come to truly make atonement for the sins of His people and take their sins away (Rom. 11:27; Heb. 10:16-17). The idea that the blood of animals, which symbolized their life, and that an innocent life had to be taken for the forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22) could take away sins is directly contradicted by the Author of

Hebrews:

> Heb. 10:4 For it is **impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**
>
> Heb. 10:11 And every priest stands daily at his service, **offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.**

The Author also tells us that the sacrifices were shadows and in them, there was a reminder of sins committed. A shadow points to something else, greater than itself. It has some *resemblance* of the real thing, but it is not *the real thing*. It points to something else, something much greater.

> Heb. 10:1-3 For since **the law has but a shadow of the good things to come** instead of the true form of these realities, **it can never**, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, **make perfect those who draw near.** 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? 3 But in these sacrifices **there is a reminder of sins every year**.

Why would an Israelite need to offer sacrifices if he had not sinned? Indeed, there were freewill offerings, but most of the time they would have needed to offer sacrifices as an atonement for their sins. In fact, in the Law, there were made provisions even for unintentional sins (Lev. 4:13ff). When the worshiper went to the altar of the Lord in the Temple, he was reminded of his sins, his conscience was defiled and could not be cleansed by the blood of animals. Since the law was merely a shadow, so the Author argues, it, therefore, cannot provide the forgiveness experienced by the New Covenant people of perfect cleansing from sin and purifying of the conscience (e.g., Heb. 9:14; 10:22). In contrast to this and the offerings, our blessed Lord has a different view of what pleases God:

> Heb. 10:5-10 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; 6 in **burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure** 7 Then I said, ‘Behold, **I have come to do your will,** O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” 8 When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), 9 then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” **He does away with the first** in order to establish the second. 10 And **by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

Our Lord understands the meaning of the sacrifices and the fact that they were shadows of what He would do for perfect righteousness and atonement. By His once and for all offering, He has perfected all those for whom He died. He, being the promised Messiah of old, the Lamb that was awaited from the time of Abraham (Gen. 22:14, see above in **Types and Shadows under the Abrahamic Covenant**), has fulfilled and done away with the Old Covenant sacrifices by His once for all sacrifice. His sacrifice, in contrast to the Mosaic sacrifices, is done once and not repeatedly. His sacrifice, in contrast to the Mosaic, is able to perfect, why? Not only is His sacrifice perfect, but His intercession is likewise perfect:

> Heb. 10:12-14 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, **he sat down at the right hand of God**, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. 14 For **by a single offering he has perfected for all time** those who are being sanctified.

Oh, praise the Lamb of God all you His saints! He is our propitiation (Rom. 3:21; 1 John 2:1-2), Who has taken away our sins and satisfied the wrath of God on our behalf. Not only that, but Christ is our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). When the Israelites put the blood of the Passover lamb upon their doorposts, they were picturing the fact that God would cleanse us in the blood of the Lamb and that because we are covered in His blood we would be saved from God’s wrath (Rom. 5:9; Rev. 7:14; 12:11; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). As John the Baptist observed:

> John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “**Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**

Christ the Temple and the People of God as God’s Temple

The Temple, as built by Solomon or the Tabernacle before that, was the special meeting place of God with men. Once a year, the High Priest would go into the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices and enter into the place where God’s presence was mostly

manifested on the earth in those days. Hezekiah prays:

> Isa. 37:16 “O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, **enthroned above the cherubim**, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.

The Lord manifested His special presence there. It was His meeting place with the people. When they would pray and they would do this facing Jerusalem where the presence of the Lord was manifested especially, as did, for example, Daniel (Dan. 6:10). When reading the Gospel of John, we learn that the Logos was eternally God, in perfect communion with the Father before the world began. Then in v. 14, we also read:

> John 1:14 And **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Young’s Literal Translation puts it in this way: “And the Word became flesh, and **did tabernacle among us**.” This was the fulfillment of the type and shadow that the Tabernacle and Temple pointed to. The Lord God of Israel Himself, in the Person of Jesus Christ, came down and tabernacled with His people and walked among them (cf. Mal. 3:1). He is our Tabernacle and our Mediator. If we are in Him, then we have fellowship with the Father and we are bold to go and stand before His throne. He is the fulfillment of the Tabernacle. Not only that, but the Lord Jesus claims to *be* the Temple:

> John 2:19-22 Jesus answered them, “**Destroy this temple**, and in three days I will raise it up.” 20 The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” 21 But **he was speaking about the temple of his body**. 22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

The Jews took things too literally, yet the Lord was pointing them to Himself, which the shadows and types of the Temple pointed to. The Lord Jesus is the Temple of God and whoever is in Him, is in fellowship with God. As He was walking the streets of Israel, He was already replacing and being the fulfillment of what the Temple pointed to. The Temple was to be the place where the glory of God was housed, God would dwell among His people and a place of worship. This is even more relevant when we note v. 22 connects the fulfillment of the rebuilding of the *Temple* of His body to His resurrection from the dead.

Not only is the Lord Jesus the Temple of God, but those who are in Him are the Temple of God:

> Eph. 2:18-22 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and **members of the household of God,** 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows **into a holy temple in the Lord**. 22 In him you also are being built together **into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.**

The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), since the body of Christ according to the Gospel of John is the Temple of God, therefore those who are His body are likewise the Temple of God. This is also seen, for example, in 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 1 Peter 2:9. The Temple pointed to the desire of God to dwell among His people, which was partially fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, but will perfectly be fulfilled in the New Jerusalem which is called a Temple! There we will have perfect communion with God the Triune in our resurrection bodies:

> Rev. 21:22 And I saw no temple in the city, for **its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.**

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, Lord! Maranatha!

Christ the Prophet

In Deuteronomy 18, we come to a passage which promises the people of God a prophet like Moses:

> Deut. 18:15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you **a prophet like me from among you**, from your brothers—it is

to him you shall listen—

Deut. 18:18-19 I will raise up for them **a prophet like you from among their brothers**. And **I will put my words in his mouth**, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And **whoever will not listen** to my words that he shall speak in my name, **I myself will require it of him**.

Through Moses, the Lord promises His people that He will raise for them a prophet like him. Anyone who does not listen to him will be cut off. The Lord tells His people that this coming prophet will be from among them and from their brethren. He will come into and from the covenant community of God. Is there any doubt that this prophecy concerns the Lord Jesus Christ? The true and ultimate Prophet of God. Not only is He the ultimate Prophet, but He is superior to the prophets of old as the book of Hebrews repeatedly shows:

Heb. 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke to our fathers by the prophets**, 2 but in these last days **he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

God has spoken to His people through the prophets, sending them warnings for their disobedience and announcements of judgment. But now, in *these* last days, which is the whole time between the Cross and the Second Coming, He has spoken to us by His Son. The book of Hebrews thinks it low to call the Lord Jesus merely a prophet. He is superior to them. He is the final and ultimate revelation of God. Allusions and citations of this text in the New Testament confirm our interpretation. The Spirit Who wrote Deuteronomy 18, has also interpreted what it means in the New Covenant Scriptures:

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "**We have found him of whom Moses in the Law** and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Acts 3:19-26 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that **he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus**, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. 22 Moses said, '**The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers**. **You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you**. 23 And it shall be that **every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed** from the people.' 24 And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, '**And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**' 26 God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Indeed, every soul that disobeys the Lord Jesus and does not submit to Him in faith and repentance, will find no peace and will be rejected by God (e.g., John 3:36). Salvation is only found in Him and this is the One to Whom the whole Old Testament testifies. The Lord Jesus is the greater Moses. He is the perfect Mediator of a perfect covenant. You could go to Hebrews 3 to see the contrasts that the Author there lays between the Lord Jesus and Moses.

Christ the High Priest

One of the clearest things we see in the book of Hebrews is Christ's superiority over everyone and everything, including the Old Covenant—its order of worship and priesthood. We advise the pious reader (as they used to say) to take a look and study the book of Hebrews as a whole, especially chapters 7-9. See also **chapter 8** of the Confession where there is a lot said about Christ's priesthood for God's people.

In this section, we will see how the New Testament sees that the Lord Jesus has fulfilled the priesthood, which pointed to Him, and which was actually a shadow of what He would do and what He now does. First, let us start from the fact that the priests under the Old Covenant were to be descended from the tribe of Levi, which was chosen by the Lord to serve Him forever. Those were the only legitimate priests under the Old Covenant. The high priest also had to be a Levite, but specifically from the house of Aaron, the first high priest of Israel. It was necessary, the Scriptures say, that our Lord should've been a high priest and share our humanity:

Heb. 2:14-18 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, **he himself likewise partook of the same things,** that **through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death,** that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but **he helps the offspring of Abraham.** 17 Therefore he **had to be made like his brothers in every respect,** so that he might become **a merciful and faithful high priest** in the service of God, to **make propitiation for the sins**

of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, **he is able to help those who are being tempted**.

It was necessary for Him Who was and is God from all eternity (Heb. 1) to become man for our salvation. It was necessary because God cannot die, but man can. Therefore, it was the wisdom of God to destroy death through the death of His Son. By His death on the cross on behalf of God's people, the Lord Jesus, the faithful High Priest, offered Himself as the sacrifice (Heb. 10:12) in order to deliver us and that death may die. He had to be made a man because the high priests on earth were set up as shadows of His work and therefore He had to partake of the same nature as those for whom He does His high priestly work, though without sin (Heb. 4:15). He understands what we are going through, He sympathizes with us and our temptations and therefore He is able to help us and intercede effectively for us.

Let us also note that the Lord Jesus in His sacrifice made *propitiation* for our sins. Propitiation is the sacrifice that turns away and satisfies God's wrath. All the sacrifices of the Old Testament were merely pictures of what the perfect High Priest would do. They did not propitiate God or remove sin (Heb. 10:4, 11). We already see that His ministry is much more excellent than those priests under the Old Testament.

Let us also not forget that our Lord descended from the tribe of Judah, which was not the tribe from which the high priests came. But the Lord had promised to David:

Ps. 110:1-4 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." 2 The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! 3 Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "**You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.**"

This Melchizedek is an interesting figure in the book of Genesis who comes there for a chapter (Gen. 14) and then disappears and we hear nothing else of him in the Old Testament, except in this Psalm. But the book of Hebrews in chapter 7 makes a big deal from the fact that our Lord was a priest not according to the order of Levi, but of Melchizedek. I believe that Melchizedek was an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ to Abraham:

Heb. 7:2-3 and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, **king of righteousness**, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, **king of peace**. 3 He is without father or mother or genealogy, having **neither beginning of days nor end of life**, but **resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.**

This greatness is seen in the priesthood of our Lord in contrast to the priesthood of Levi which was ineffective and imperfect. I don't want to go too deep into this, but I would ask the reader to read and study the book of Hebrews for themselves. To close, I give you Hebrews 7:17-28 where the glory of our Lord's priesthood is seen –

Heb. 7:17-28 For it is witnessed of him, "**You are a priest forever**, after **the order of Melchizedek**." 18 For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its **weakness and uselessness** 19 (for **the law made nothing perfect**); but on the other hand, **a better hope is introduced**, through which we draw near to God. 20 And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, 21 but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'" 22 This makes **Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.** 23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but **he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.** 25 Consequently, he is able to **save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him**, since he always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, **separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.** 27 He has **no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily**, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this **once for all when he offered up himself**. 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

The Priesthood of Believers

The priesthood of all believers is an important biblical and Protestant doctrine. Many of us, influenced by the Roman Catholic religion and the like where there are specific people who are called priests, don't realize that the Bible teaches that all believers are, in fact, priests of God. In the Old Testament, we learn of the priesthood from the time of Abraham when he

meets Melchizedek, who was a priest of God the Most High (Gen. 14:18). Priests have also existed long ago for other religions and they function as some sort of mediators. From the tribes of Israel, the Lord chose the tribe of Levi to be priests to Him. He chose the tribe of Levi which was to be the teachers and priests of the covenant people. They were to minister to God and offer the sacrifices that he has prescribed. Although all Israel was in covenant with God, yet the tribe of Levi out of all the tribes of Israel was the only tribe chosen by God to be priests to Him.

Like many other types, that is not the case anymore. This function is no longer limited to a select group but is applicable to the whole people of God. We have already seen how the Lord Christ fulfills the priesthood and especially the high priesthood of the Old Covenant by His high priesthood in the New Covenant. But now we should also see that the New Covenant sees all believers as priests before God. The foremost text is found in Peter –

1 Pet. 2:5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a **spiritual house**, to be a **holy priesthood**, to **offer spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may **proclaim** the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Most clearly, the people of God (1 Pet. 2:10) are addressed here not only as God's Temple (a spiritual house) but also as His priests. We have become a holy and royal priesthood to our God. In fact, it is He who has made us priests to Himself as the Apocalypse says (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). It is according to His good pleasure to extend the gift of being a priest not only to one tribe but to the whole New Covenant people of God (as some Old Testament texts anticipated like Isa. 66:21). All believers are priests of and to God. Our priesthood, the text says, involves us offering spiritual sacrifices. No longer do we need a physical temple where we offer physical and bloody sacrifices since Christ has been offered once and for all and has fulfilled all shadows concerning the sacrifices. What does the Bible says our sacrifices are? Here a few verses:

Ps. 50:23 The one who **offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice** glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!"

Ps. 141:2 Let my **prayer** be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!

Rom. 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, which is your **spiritual worship**.

Phil. 2:17 Even if I am to be poured out as a **drink offering** upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

Phil. 4:18 I have received full **payment**, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the **gifts** you sent, a **fragrant offering**, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

Heb. 13:15-16 Through him then let us continually offer up **a sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. 16 Do not neglect to **do good and to share what you have**, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

As we see from the texts produced above, there are a lot of things the Bible connects with the priesthood and sacrifices. Even from Old Testament times, it is said that thanksgiving and sacrifice are pleasing sacrifices to our God. Even in the time when the institution of the animal sacrifices was not yet fulfilled and done away with, the people could see the sacrifices that God truly desired. The Bible furthermore says that our bodies and our whole lives should be given to God as spiritual sacrifices. In the way we live and conduct our lives, it will be manifest that we are offering ourselves to God in worship. Our gifts and our giving of money are counted as sacrifices. Our praise is counted as a sacrifice. Our good deeds are counted as pleasing sacrifices to God. Basically, the whole Christian life is a life of sacrifice and priesthood (Rom. 12:1).

One who is familiar with the Mosaic Covenant cannot but hear Exodus 19:5-6 in 1 Peter 2:9. Words almost identical to that which were spoken to Israel are spoken of the church, which is the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:16). We are again called a priesthood, but not only that, but Peter identifies the believers as a holy nation unto God. We are a people; we are *His* people (1 Pet. 2:10). We belong to our God. We are His possession, or in the words of Exodus 19:5, we are "[His] treasured possession among all peoples". But there is a purpose given ("that you may") for those blessings that God has graciously bestowed upon us. One important thing about priests is the fact that they are representatives of God. In Christ Jesus, indeed we are God's ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). We represent God and not only that, we declare what God has declared and we defend our faith. That is an important part of the priesthood. So our priesthood includes making the truth of God known and defending it against error. In other popular terms, this includes evangelism and apologetics.

An important difference between Exodus 19:5-6 and 1 Peter 2:9 is the fact that that which was promised to Israel upon the condition of obedience is granted to the church as a present reality in Christ. No conditions are attached to 1 Peter 2:9, but these things are described as truths and blessings applicable to every believer with no condition of obedience for that to be

a reality, which reveals another difference between the Mosaic and the New Covenant.

No longer do we live under the shadow of the Old Testament priesthood, but now we have the reality of the priesthood of all believers in Christ who are His representatives and who offer spiritual sacrifices to our God. We do not acknowledge the priesthood of the Catholic Church or any other church, but we acknowledge and confess the priesthood of all the believers in Christ.

> Rev. 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and **you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God**, and they shall reign on the earth.”

The Davidic Covenant



The covenant of God with David and His promise is in many ways similar to the Abrahamic Covenant, both in its fulfillment and the “I will” of God and “you shall” of the human party. As a Christian and an Amillennialist at that (**see my case for Amillennialism in chapter 31**), I will make the case that the Davidic Covenant is currently being fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ.

God’s Story

Since the days of Moses and Joshua have passed, the people of God were settled in the land promised to their fathers. But the people were stiff-necked and disobedient, as God testified of them in the wilderness (Exod. 32:9). They did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and forgot the God Who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt. As promised by the Mosaic Covenant, so the judgments of God came upon Israel and they were ruled by their enemies and taken captive. Then the Lord would graciously raise up judges when they would come to repentance and seek His face so that they would free them. That went for about 400 years.

Then the people came and demanded a king to be set over them, just like the other nations they were surrounded with when the LORD Himself was their king. The Lord gave them Saul, a man whom Israel loved and followed after. The Lord blessed Saul until Saul disobeyed the word of the Lord. When Saul disobeyed the word of the Lord and thus disregarded God, the Lord rejected Him (1 Sam. 15). At that time, when the Lord abandoned Saul, the Lord sent unclean spirits upon him that would torment him (1 Sam. 16:14). They soon learned that a certain youth could drive the spirit away by his playing on the lyre and therefore Saul could be at rest. That youth was none other than David. One of the icons and most known people from the Bible. A biblical hero and an example of faith and failures.

The Lord chose David to be “prince” over His people Israel because David was a man after the Lord’s heart (1 Sam. 13:14). David wanted to follow the Lord wholly and carry out His will with no delay. He was the one chosen despite all circumstances and appearances. But in the choice of David, the Lord was fulfilling what was prophesied by Jacob concerning his son Judah:

> Gen. 49:10 The **scepter shall not depart from Judah,** nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes

to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin and concerning that tribe, Jacob did not have any kingly blessings (Gen. 49:27). But clearly, kingship and rulership are promised to the tribe of Judah of whom David is the man after God's own heart. After the Lord established David as king and after Saul was gone, the Lord promised that He would bless David and will always keep a descendant of his on the throne of Israel.

God's Covenant with David

We find the main text in 2 Samuel 7 and its parallel in 1 Chronicles 17:11-14. I'd like to highlight some things from the text as our starting point about the covenant. But before we do that, let us get a little bit of context.

The Lord had given the kingdom of Israel to David and He has clearly been with him and giving him victory. David is perplexed in his heart by the fact that he lives in a great house, but the Ark of the Lord stays in tents. Therefore, David decides that he wants to build a house for the Ark of the Lord. But the word of the Lord comes to the prophet who was ministering to David, Nathan, telling him that instead of David building a house for the Lord, the Lord Himself will build a house for David. What a play on words and plans! The Lord had not asked or required of the children of Israel to build for Him a house and a temple, nonetheless, the desire of David will be fulfilled, but it will be fulfilled by his son, not by himself.

> 2 Sam. 7:11-16 ...Moreover, the LORD declares to you that **the LORD will make you a house**. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, **I will raise up your offspring after you**, who shall come from your body, and **I will establish his kingdom**. 13 **He shall build a house for my name**, and **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever**. 14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, 15 but **my steadfast love will not depart from him**, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. **Your throne shall be established forever.**'"

The Lord is the One Who will build a house for David, not David for the Lord. He will bless David with unfathomable mercy. From this point onward, David becomes the prime example of a righteous king in Israel and later in Israel's history, kings are compared to him. Many times we also read of blessings coming upon kings and people because of David as was the case because of the fathers (e.g., 1 Kgs. 11:34; 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19; 13:23).

As was the case with the Abrahamic Covenant and its understanding of the "offspring" and its fulfillment, so also, the case is similar here. Obviously, the promise concerns David's son, the one chosen by God to be king over Israel after David would be gone. Solomon is here intended, but not only him. It is Solomon who built the Temple of the Lord and established it (1 Kgs. 6; 8). The Lord establishes the kingdom of Solomon and grants him rest as promised here (1 Kgs. 2:12) and promised to the Patriarchs (Gen. 15:18-21; 1 Kgs. 4:20-21). It cannot be denied that this covenant and promise also concerns the immediate sons of David, the kings of Israel. It concerns them all, not only Solomon. Those who would obey the Law of God and be like David their father will prosper and will have peace in their time. But those who disobey will get the covenant curses. Likewise, it is very clear that this covenant and promise has its ultimate fulfillment now in the true Son of David—the Son of God. This covenant has its fulfillment in King Jesus, David's greater Son. That I will try to argue in the section "Types and Shadows." But for now, I'll give you Pink's take on things:

> In view of all that has been before us in connection with the preceding covenants, it is but reasonable to expect that this one too has both a "**letter**" and a "**spirit**" significance. This expectation is, we believe, capable of clear demonstration: **in their primary and inferior aspects those promises respected Solomon and his immediate successors**, but in their **ultimate and higher meaning they looked forward to Christ and His kingdom**. In the account which David gave to the princes of Israel of the divine communications he had received concerning the throne, he affirmed that God said unto him, "Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for **I have chosen him to be my son**, and **I will be his Father**" (1 Chron. 28:6). Yet the application of the same words to Christ Himself— "**I will be to him a Father**, and **he shall be to me a Son**" (Heb. 1:5) —leaves us in no doubt as to their deeper spiritual import.[64]

The Dichotomous Nature of the Covenant

Then we come to the question we have raised with every covenant: What about administration and is this an administration of the Covenant of Grace? As I have pointed out at other places, as a 1689 Federalist, I believe that the Covenant of Grace existed in the time of the Old Testament as a *promise*, and was *not formally* made into a covenant until in the blood of Christ. Therefore, among other things, 1689 Federalism rejects the idea of the administration of the Covenant of Grace and

therefore, the Davidic Covenant is not an administration of the Covenant of Grace.

We have noted in the Abrahamic Covenant the two sides seen in the covenant in the text of Genesis 17 (**see here**), where we clearly see the part of God in the covenant and the part of man. Likewise in this covenant, there is the same idea. God promises the blessing *if* David's sons obey:

> Ps. 132:10-12 **For the sake of your servant David**, do not turn away the face of your anointed one. 11 The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "**One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.** 12 **If your sons keep my covenant** and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne."
>
> 2Chr. 6:16 Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, '**You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel**, **if only your sons pay close attention to their way**, to walk in my law as you have walked before me.'

The Lord has promised to David that surely one of his sons will always sit on his throne. David will always have a lamp before the Lord (1 Kgs. 15:4-5). But it is clear that there is a conditionality to the promise of God here. The promise of God will be fulfilled only *if* the sons of David keep the way of the Lord. Only when they obey the Lord will they have the blessing of David and of being a king like him. As Jeffrey D. Johnson notes just before citing 1 Kings 2:1-4, "David understood that although God would be faithful in fulfilling his promise to him, **his royal line would be obligated to obey the Mosaic Law in order to remain upon the throne**. For this reason, David sternly warned his son, Solomon, to obey God"[65].

That the promise is of grace, I will not argue against, but one cannot say that this is an absolute administration of the Covenant of Grace and thus in substance the same as the New Covenant, where such conditionality does not exist (Jer. 31:31-34). All God's promises are of grace and are unmerited by us sinful humans. But it is another thing to say that if a covenant contains gracious promises it must be an administration of the Covenant of Grace. The Lord will fulfill the promises made to David...*if* his sons obey and keep the way of the Lord. The success of this covenant and fulfillment of the promises depends upon the perfect obedience of the Son of David, as we shall see below.

Shadow and Types

Obviously, there are shadows and types concerning the King, the kingdom and its people in this covenant. It was not made with only the regular kings of Israel in mind, but with its fullest fulfillment is in the King of kings and Lord of lords—King Jesus!

King Jesus

To the point that the Lord Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords and sits upon the throne of David now, I give you my commentary on Revelation 1:5. What follows is taken from my commentary on the book of Revelation, which I was working on and I don't know if I will ever finish it.

> Rev. 1:5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and **the ruler of kings on earth**. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

The Ruler of Kings on Earth

One cannot overestimate the weight of these words. He is not merely the King of kings, but He is the *ruler* of them. He reigns over them. He is the King. All these kings that were persecuting the precious people of God, Revelation tells them that Jesus is the Ruler of kings on earth, the Ruler of them that persecute them. Even those who persecute them are not outside of King Jesus' sovereignty and kingly reign. He is the only ultimate King. He reigns supreme. God is absolutely sovereign. In Revelation 17:14; 19:16, He directly is called the King of kings and the Lord of lords. From the Bible, we learn that God does whatever He pleases (Ps. 115:3; 135:6). God is unstoppable (Dan. 4:35; Job 42:2; Prov. 21:30; Isa. 43:13). God works all things according to His pleasure (Isa. 46:8-11; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 1:3). God is King over the world (Ps. 10:6; 29:10; 93:1; 145:13; 146:10; Isa. 33:22; Jer. 10:10; Lam. 5:19; Dan. 4:34; 6:26; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16). He is sovereign over the affliction of His people (1 Pet. 3:17; 4:19; Gen. 50:20; Acts 21:11-14). He is sovereign over their adversaries and He can stop them, yet He does not. Not because He is powerless to do anything, nor because He must respect the free will of man or some other nonsense, no. It is because He has morally sufficient reasons to decree their sufferings. Those who suffer according to God's will and love Him are assured that all things work together for their good (Rom. 8:28-30; Gen. 50:20).

Jesus is King Now!

Many of our Dispensational brothers and sisters will not agree with the fact that Jesus is King now upon David's throne. Often they say that Jesus will be King finally in the Millennium where He will visibly reign. I heartily disagree and argue that Jesus reigns now as King of kings and Lord of lords and further, upon the throne of David! Jesus *will* not be King; He *is* the King.

All authority

Before His glorious ascension, the Lord Jesus tells the following to His disciples:

> Matt. 28:18-20 And Jesus came and said to them, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

So, why are we to go and get all the world for King Jesus? Because all authority, not only in heaven but also on this earth, is given to Him. He reigns and all things are given to Him. He, as God and Lord, is in control of all things. All authority means every single power and authority, whether in the glorious heaven or on this cursed earth is given to Him. Heaven and earth are under His power and word. The Lord Jesus, further, even before the cross, claims to already have all authority!

> Matt. 11:27 **All things have been handed over to me by my Father**, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.
>
> See also: John 3:35; 5:27; 13:3; 17:2.

Not only the salvation of people is in His hands, but everything that God the Father exclusively controls (all creation) is handed over to Him! As a last example of King Jesus having all authority is a prophecy in Daniel 7:13-14.

> Dan. 7:13-14 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came **one like a son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given **dominion** and **glory** and a **kingdom**, that **all peoples**, nations, and languages should serve him; his **dominion is an everlasting dominion**, which shall not pass away, and **his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed**.

This concerns the ascension of our Lord when He came into Heaven again as the conquering Lord and Savior. He was rewarded by the Father for His perfect work in His humiliation on the earth and the bearing of God's peoples' sins upon Himself and in obeying the Father in every point. He is given the Kingdom that all people should serve Him. If we see this we may get the idea that it is a one-moment event, but if we look earlier in Daniel we will see that this Kingdom is represented as a rock which *grows* into a mountain which fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:35, 44-45). Meaning that its expansion is progressive. Further confirmation of this fact is that the Lord Jesus, about 80 times, referred to Himself as the Son of Man, Who is a divine-human figure and does not mean merely a human being. Before His accusers, He told them what His crucifixion will accomplish:

> Matt. 26:64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see **the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power** and coming on the clouds of heaven."

His crucifixion, which was the way to His exaltation, accomplished this. He has the Kingdom of Daniel *now!* And by His power, He is subduing all His enemies under His feet *now* (1 Cor. 15:25).

If we look at the Daniel 7 text, we see that this passage does not concern Christ's second coming, but His glorious ascension. Why? Because it speaks about "one like a son of man" Who "came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him" (Dan. 7:13). This is a scene where the Son of Man is going upward to God rather than coming down to earth. This means that the promises in v. 14 are a current reality for King Jesus and the world.

On David's Throne

Dispensationalists will agree that Jesus has all authority, but they will disagree that He reigns from David's throne. This, I would like to go prove mainly from Psalm 110 and its extensive use in the New Testament. I would also like to begin by admitting that no verse in the New Testament directly comes as says that "Jesus is king now upon the throne of David." While that is true, I believe that the New Testament says that in other ways and even ascribes to Him more power that it would be insignificant compared to David's throne. The idea that Jesus is not fulfilling the Davidic covenant is unique to

Dispensationalism.

Psalm 110 is a prophecy of the Yahweh's Anointed One Who is also the Lord of David (Matt. 22:45). It speaks of the coming kingdom of the Messiah and its success. The best place to prove that Jesus is seated on the throne of David is, I think, Acts 2:

> Acts 2:29-36 "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that **God had sworn with an oath to him** that he would **set one of his descendants on his throne**, 31 **he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ**, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore **exalted at the right hand of God**, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. 34 For **David did not ascend into the heavens**, but he himself says, "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, 35 until I make your enemies your footstool."' 36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that **God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified**."

Concerning God's oath to David about a Davidic King, Peter alludes to Psalm 16 and 132. The latter is important, for there we read:

> Ps. 132:11 The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "**One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.** 12 If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne."

This promise was made to every son of David, but ultimately about the final Son of David Who always obeyed and pleased God. From this allusion to Psalm 132, we learn that Peter has in mind the promise of the Davidic King. So now we move further. Peter then speaks of Jesus' resurrection, which leads to His return to heaven as the Exalted and Conquering Son and the believers are a witness to this fact. He is not only exalted, but He is exalted *by* sitting at the right hand of God, by sitting at the side of authority, which the right hand symbolizes. He has all authority.

Now in v. 34, he goes back to the promise made to David about the Davidic King and says that it was not David who bodily ascended to Heaven, but it was the Lord Jesus and thereby received the throne of David. This he confirms by the citation of Psalm 110:1. This Jesus, whom the Jews crucified, has been made both Lord and Christ. Which Lord? The Lord of Psalm 110 Who is even higher than David himself. He does not merely have the throne of David, but He is seated upon the throne of God (Rev. 3:21). The titles *Lord* and *Christ* are much higher than "king," thus in a way, Peter does not even bother to call Him King, because He is the Lord who was higher than king David of Psalm 110.

Notice how in vv. 30-31 the apostle Peter, through whom the same Spirit Who inspired David speaks, connects the promise of the Davidic kingship with the resurrection of Christ. David, by believing and knowing of God's promise, *foresaw* the resurrection of Christ. This implies that the resurrection of Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. Peter connects the resurrection of Christ with the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant in their days and even our days, as He reigns over all things and the Father puts all His enemies under His holy feet. David, knowing that one of his descendants would sit on his throne, foresaw and spoke about the resurrection. This is the ultimate fulfillment of the Davidic covenant and promise.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note how some Old Testament passages connect the throne of the Davidic Kingdom to the throne of Yahweh:

> 1 Chron. 28:5 And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the **throne of the kingdom of the LORD** over Israel.
>
> 1 Chron. 29:23 Then Solomon sat on the **throne of the LORD** as king in place of David his father. And he prospered, and all Israel obeyed him.
>
> 2 Chron. 9:8 Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and **set you on his throne as king for the LORD** your God! Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness."
>
> 2 Chron. 13:8 "And now you think to withstand the **kingdom of the LORD** in the hand of the sons of David, because you are a great multitude and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made you for gods.

We could go on and on about this. Jesus is on God's throne (Rev. 3:21), which, as we can see from these passages, is the

throne of David and vice versa. Therefore, the Dispensational argument that Jesus is reigning but not from David's throne, is invalid. In 1 Corinthians 15:26, we have an allusion to Psalm 110:

> 1 Cor. 15:25 For **he must reign until** he has put **all his enemies under his feet**.
>
> Ps. 110:1-2 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until **I make your enemies your footstool**." 2 The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. **Rule in the midst of your enemies!**

Rule in the midst of Your enemies, King Jesus! He is doing that *now*! We have learned from Acts 2 that the reign of King Jesus is happening right now. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul teaches us that King Jesus must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. But if we read further, we will see what period Paul has in mind:

> 1 Cor. 15:26-28 The **last enemy to be destroyed is death**. 27 For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

Paul has in mind the two-staged Kingdom of God. The first stage is the present Kingdom which is invisible, the second stage is the visible Kingdom in the New Heavens and the New Earth (**see chapter 31 for more on this**). Jesus will reign until death is destroyed. If death is not yet destroyed it means that He is still reining and will reign until all His enemies are destroyed. All powers in heaven and earth are under the feet of King Jesus, He reigns absolutely. He must reign until death is defeated. But then the question comes: When is death defeated? The answer is that death is defeated at the coming of our Lord (1 Cor. 15:53-57). Therefore, He is reigning before that happens and from the interpretation of Psalm 110 (and the Davidic promise) in Acts 2, we see that Psalm 110 is about the Davidic King. The last passage to go to is Luke 1:32-33:

> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the **Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David**, 33 and **he will reign over the house of Jacob forever**, and **of his kingdom there will be no end.**"

From His birth, He is promised the throne of David and about His reign over Jacob, His people. This does not speak about a Millennium that would be at least 2000 years after the prophecy here. Rather, it speaks about the present Kingdom as we have seen from the earlier passages which we examined. But who is the house of Jacob then? It is Israel. Who is Israel? All true believers. In Romans 9:6-8, we read:

> Rom. 9:6-8 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, Rom. 9:7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but **the children of the promise are counted as offspring**.

Thus, the matter is not about physical descent, but it's all about spiritual descent. We also read:

> Gal. 3:7 Know then that it is **those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.**
>
> See also: Gal. 3:7-9, 16-22, 28-29; 4:21-31; 6:16.

While not wanting to go too deep into this, we learn from these two passages put together that it only those who follow Abraham's footsteps and believe as Abraham did, they alone are true Israel and thus the children of the promise. Christ is seated upon the throne of God which is also the throne of David and reigns as Supreme King now!

> Ps. 2:8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.
>
> Ps. 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

The Son is king over all things reigning from the throne of God and fulfilling Psalms 2 and 110, among other promises and

Psalms.

The Kingdom People

It is important to see who the people of this Davidic Kingdom are. It is not the Jews according to the flesh, but Jews according to the Spirit—all true believers in David's greater Son. This, I will seek to prove from the exegesis of Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15:14-18. It is an amazing point in Covenant Theology which acknowledges the precedence of the New Testament to interpret the Old for us. This is especially true of *Reformed Baptist* Covenant Theology. We do not insist on the Dispensational hermeneutic of literalistic interpretation, but rather, we believe in the Analogy of Faith (**see here**). That is: the Bible interprets the Bible and we go to the easy before the difficult passages. Now let us get into the text.

> Amos 9:11-12 "**In that day** I will **raise up the booth of David that is fallen** and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and **rebuild it as in the days of old**, 12 that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name," declares the LORD who does this.

Just a surface reading of this will tell us that this speaks about the future time of the Messiah when the earthly kingdom of David will be restored and Israel will reign over their enemies and all the world. But is this the meaning of the text? The question we must ask when reading every Old Testament prophecy is, "How does this relate to the Lord Jesus and the New Covenant?" We can't act like the Lord Jesus has not come and that there is no New Covenant, or that the texts of the Old Testament only concern physical Israel. I have already tried to point to the fact in the Abrahamic Covenant that the Lord Jesus was the true Offspring to Whom the promises were made (**see here**). Not the fleshly line of Abraham, although they were blessed and they pointed to the true fulfillment of the promises in the church and the Lord Christ.

Controversy arose in the early church from the fact that the Lord was graciously bringing Gentiles into the fold of the New Covenant community, which at that time was mainly Jewish. The problem was so great that the Holy Spirit brought them together to discuss this matter (Acts 15:28). A portion of the Jewish believers said that Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved, and thus they cannot be saved by faith alone, but must also keep the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1, 5). In the midst of (a heated) discussion, Peter stands up and delivers the verdict:

> Acts 15:7-9 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by **giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us**, 9 and **he made no distinction** between us and them, having **cleansed their hearts by faith**.

The Lord had chosen Peter to bring the gospel to the Gentiles and this Peter accomplished when the Lord sent him to Cornelius (Acts 10). The Holy Spirit descended upon them while Peter was preaching and this was proof to Peter that the Lord made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles and received both by faith and this the Lord demonstrated by giving both His Holy Spirit. Both were cleansed by faith and not by works of the Law or because of ethnic status. By grace through faith alone. Indeed,

> Acts 15:11 But we believe that **we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will**."

To what Peter testified, Paul and Barnabas, who were also apostles to the Gentiles and preached the gospel among the Gentiles, strengthened the testimony of Peter by adding theirs to what God had done among the Gentiles (Acts 15:12). After that, the apostle James—the Lord's half-brother, delivers the conclusion and judgment of the council:

> Acts 15:13-18 After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how **God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name**. 15 And **with this the words of the prophets agree**, just as it is written, 16 "'**After this** I will return, and I **will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen**; I will rebuild its ruins, and **I will restore it**, 17 that the **remnant of mankind may seek the Lord**, and **all the Gentiles who are called by my name**, says the Lord, who makes these things 18 known from of old.'

Not only is the testimony of Simon Peter correct in what the Lord showed him in a vision and what Peter saw happen to the Gentiles, but more ultimately, the Word of God is in agreement with his testimony. What we should notice is the fact with what "the words of the prophets agree". James specifically says that the words of the prophets agree with the fact that God would visit the Gentiles and take from them a people for the glory of His name. It is with this fact, the coming of the Gentiles in the church of God, that the words of the prophets agree. James only provides a passage from Amos, but he says the words

of the *prophets* meaning that if he was pressed, he could have provided more proof from the Old Testament and that the other prophets do not contradict this simple message of the last days as preached by the apostles. The Lord has rebuilt the tent of David by seating the Lord Jesus, Who is the true heir of the promises made to David (Luke 1:32-33), upon the throne of God's Kingdom and by bringing the Gentiles to His fold. Oh, the magnificent grace and wisdom of God. Praise Him, all ye His saints! This is even strengthened when we understand that this passage has also to do with the building of the spiritual temple of God, but we will not go into that here (see G. K. Beale's *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, chapter 6 on that). In that case, we could add the following passages to "the words of the prophets": Jeremiah 3:17; 12:14-16; Isaiah 2:2-3; 25:6; 56:6-7; 66:23; Micah 4:1-2.

If the Lord Jesus was not seated on the throne of David and the tent of David was not rebuilt, then the Gentiles and all people including Jews, would not have sought the Lord. But since they, in fact, do and have done so, it means that the King is seated on His throne and the Kingdom of David, which is the Kingdom of God, is here. I could go on describing the way that Amos 9:11-12 is cited in Acts 15:16-17, but I'll leave that to the interested student to study. Though I will say: notice the differences in Acts, "after this" instead of "in that day"; "the tent of David" instead of "the booth of David"; "I will restore it" instead of "rebuild it as in the days of old", no mention of Edom in Acts, but instead the call to all mankind and the Gentiles. Therefore, I conclude that the Kingdom of the Son is here in the present time and does not await some future Millennium as Premillennialists await and the kingdom people are the Israel of God and not fleshly Jews. Those are they who are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus just as the Christian Jews are (Acts 15:11).

An interesting connection between the kingdom people and the house of God is pointed out to us by A. W. Pink in the following words:

> The **kingdom of Christ** and the **house of God are one and the same**, viewed from different angles. It is the **redeemed who constitute the true subjects of Christ's kingdom**, for they alone own His scepter: where there are no subjects, there can be no kingdom. And it is **the redeemed who provide God with a satisfying resting place.** In the later prophets it was expressly foretold, "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory" (Zech. 6:12, 13). Now the **true house in which God dwells is a spiritual one**, composed of living stones, converted souls, which is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 1:20, 21).[66]

The New Covenant



Now we come to the central and last covenant of the whole Bible. From Genesis 3:15 and until Malachi we are promised the coming of the Savior and the Messianic Covenant. It is the central covenant of all the Scriptures. All God's promises find their fulfillment in this covenant. All the shadows and types from the Old Testament point to this covenant, have their fulfillment in this covenant or will have their fulfillment in this covenant.

God's Story

After the Mosaic and Davidic covenants, the people of Israel did see some good time, but most of the time was bad since they went astray from the Lord Who freed them from Egypt. Over and over again, the Lord showed His mercy and love toward Israel, but they rejected Him since only their flesh was circumcised and not their hearts. The people were always rebellious. They would come back to the Lord for a short time, but then follow the wicked kings who come upon the throne. It is because of this that the Lord sent the divided kingdom of Israel to captivity. Northern Israel went in 722 B.C. to Assyria and Judah starting in 597 B.C. to Babylon.

The Old Covenant people of God did come back to the land of their fathers in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah in stages. The last book of the Old Testament was written around 450 B.C. and there was no further word from God until around the time of the Incarnation. There was a period of four centuries where the Lord was silent. It is only in the first century A.D. that the Lord begins to speak again through His prophet John, whom He sent as a forerunner. The plan of God was now that He Himself would come. Indeed, as Malachi prophesied:

> Mal. 3:1 "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And **the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple**; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, **he is coming**, says the LORD of hosts.

In the Lord Jesus Christ—the Messenger and the Mediator of the New Covenant—all the promises of God find their fulfillment (2 Cor. 1:20). God will first send His messenger to prepare the way for Him to come. This was fulfilled in John the Baptist (Mark 1:2-4; Luke 1:76; 7:24-28). What was still remaining was the coming of God into His temple in Jerusalem.

The Promise of the New Covenant

I have tried to show by arguing negatively (against the idea that the previous covenants were administrations of the Covenant of Grace) and positively (how Hebrews 8:6 shows that the New Covenant is alone the establishment and "administration" of the Covenant of Grace, **see here**) that the New Covenant is the established Covenant of Grace. The Covenant of Grace was not established, ratified, enacted or "cut" before the Cross of Christ. And as was Owen so helpful, so I repeat what he said concerning the Covenant of Grace and the New Covenant:

> So that although **by "the covenant of grace," we ofttimes understand no more but the way of life, grace, mercy, and salvation by Christ**; yet **by "the new covenant," we intend its actual establishment in the death of Christ**, **with that blessed way of worship** which by it is settled in the church.[34]

We understand that every promise of Scripture about Christ is also about the New Covenant because Christ is the covenant and its reward (Isa. 42:6; 49:8). Therefore, the promise of the New Covenant goes from Genesis 3:15 to Malachi 4. The Old Testament through shadows and types, which I have tried to show, points to the Lord Jesus and the New Covenant. I would like to look at a couple of Old Testament promises about the New Covenant. The most significant one is also the one where the phrase "new covenant" occurs.

Jeremiah

> Jer. 31:31-34 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when **I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 **not like the covenant** that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, **my covenant that they broke**, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. 33 For **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**. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' **for they shall all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For **I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more**."

Jeremiah, a prophet living in the time of the exile of Judah and the warnings that God sent to them, which they did not heed, is also the one through whom the Lord gives the people the promise of the New Covenant. The promise will find its fulfillment in the days that are coming, or in New Testament terms, in *the last days* (Heb. 1:1-2), the time between the first to the second coming of Christ. The entire church age is the last days (Heb. 1:1-2; Acts 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:1). This will be a new covenant, unlike the Mosaic Covenant. It will not be like it, because the Mosaic Covenant is not useful for these people. They have despised and broken it. But this promised new covenant, will not be like it; that is, it will not be *breakable*. This is obvious from the text. The New Covenant is not breakable like the Mosaic, which the people over and over broke, or like the

Abrahamic which people could break by not being circumcised (Gen. 17:14). Unlike those covenants, the New Covenant cannot be broken. This is one of the main weaknesses of the Mosaic, but this new covenant is unlike the Mosaic in this and other aspects. This is an aspect which is mentioned of the Mosaic Covenant and the New is said to be like it. The New Covenant will not be broken. The New Covenant is not like the Old Covenant, i.e., the "covenant that they broke".

The Law of God, the Decalogue (**see for more here**), will no longer be given on tablets of stone, rather, it will be written upon our hearts where we will obey it. No longer will it remain so far off, but it will be near and God would write it in our inner being, even giving us the ability to love it and desire to obey God (Rom. 7:24). With the result that He will be our God and we will be His people.

This Covenant will be made with the eschatological Israel and Judah of God, which is the Jewish-Gentile church of Christ (Rom. 2:25-29; 9:6-7; Gal. 3:15ff; 6:16, **see also above**). With the result that all those who are in the covenant will *know* God. They will have a relationship with God. Indeed, all in Israel knew *about* the true God, but they obviously did not all *know* Him. The Lord promises that all the members of this covenant will know Him, from the least to the greatest, children and adults will know the Lord Who has called them.

They are promised that their sins and iniquities will be forgiven. A promise that is not made in any other covenant. The Lord will forgive the sins of all its members. All the members of the New Covenant will savingly and truly know the Lord. It will not be a mixed community as in the days of old with Israel. No longer will there be a true Israel within fleshly Israel. As a Reformed Baptist, I do not believe that just because a person is a member of a church that also makes him a member of the Covenant of Grace in substance or administration. I don't associate church membership with covenantal membership. Notice how vv. 34 gives a reason for the assertion that the members of the New Covenant will know the Lord. The last part of v. 34 begins with the word "for" which gives us the reason as to why everyone in this covenant will intimately and savingly know God, and it is because He has granted complete forgiveness of sins.

It is indisputable that this covenant was ratified in Christ's blood. It is also without a doubt that this is the New Covenant which the New Testament speaks of. This is clearly seen in the full citation of the promise in **Hebrews 8**.

> Heb. 8:6-13 But as it is, Christ has obtained a **ministry that is as much more excellent** than the old as **the covenant he mediates is better**, since it is **enacted on better promises**. 7 For **if that first covenant had been faultless**, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. 8 For **he finds fault with them** when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 9 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For **they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them**, declares the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: **I will put my laws into their minds**, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 11 And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." 13 In **speaking of a new covenant**, **he makes the first one obsolete.** And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

The Lord Christ received a better ministry from God than the ministry received by Moses and the priests of the Old Covenant. The reason is seen in the fact that our beloved Lord is the Mediator of the Covenant (Heb. 9:15; 12:24). The Lord is a mediator to no other covenant than the New Covenant and that's why it is much better and perfect than any preceding covenant. The Book of Hebrews is all about showing how the ministry of Christ and the New Covenant is much greater and more excellent than anything that has come before. One of these things is the fact how the Lord Christ is a better Mediator of a better covenant (8:6; 9:15; 12:24). Christ is the surety, guarantee, and guarantor of the New Covenant (Heb. 7:22), therefore just like He, being the God-Man, cannot fail, so likewise the Covenant that He mediates cannot fail.

The promises of this covenant are likewise much better. They do not concern life in Canaan, but of eternal life in the Jerusalem above (Heb. 11:16, 35). Here we are promised that all the members of the covenant will really know God and not just know about Him. They will have God as their God in its fullest sense and will savingly know Him. This is a promise concerning all the members of this covenant, no such thing exist for the Mosaic Covenant. Likewise, the complete forgiveness of our sins is promised in this covenant for all of its members. The Lord will remove our sins as far as the east is from the west and will cast them into the sea of forgetfulness (Ps. 103:12; Mic. 7:19). The complete forgiveness of sins and justification are promises unique to the New Covenant. The Old Covenant sacrifices never saved or took away sin (Heb. 11:4).

The first covenant, that is, the first covenant with Israel, the Mosaic Covenant was not faultless. It was not without fault otherwise the Lord would not have needed to over and over again promise and picture the New Covenant. It was faulty because of the people and that's why we needed the New Covenant. The fault lies within the people who could not obey the demands of the Law and who misinterpreted its end, which was to show sin and not to justify, and lead to Christ (Rom. 3:20;

Gal. 3:24). But the text also finds fault with the covenant itself. Had there been sinless people, they could have perfectly kept the Mosaic Covenant. But that is obviously not the case. In vv. 8-12, follows the citation of Jeremiah 31:31-34 with no significant difference for our purpose here, which the Author sees as the present covenant established in Christ's blood, which He mediates. The New Covenant is a present reality for the whole people of God, Jews and Gentiles, and not something restricted to Israel after the flesh in some future earthly kingdom. The first covenant, i.e., the Mosaic Covenant had become obsolete and without effect when the Mediator of the New Covenant shed His precious blood. It no longer pleased the Lord and it was officially and publicly done away within in 70 A.D. with God's judgment upon the people who rejected the Lord who came to His temple, as He foretold (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). Since 70 A.D., biblical Judaism has not existed since there is no Temple and its sacrifices which was central to the Old Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant is no longer in effect, it is past and it is old. The New Covenant is here now. The New Covenant is the rule of the church of God. The Old Covenant began to vanish away from the moment that the New Covenant was promised and the Old Covenant was repeatedly broken. As soon as the New Covenant was established in Christ's blood, the Old Covenant was done away with, although it remained to have an outward form until 70 A.D.

The promise of Jeremiah is also partly cited in **Hebrews 10** –

> Heb. 10:12-18 But when **Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins**, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. 14 For **by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.** 15 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: **I will put my laws on their hearts,** and write them on their minds," 17 then he adds, "**I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more**." 18 Where there is forgiveness of these, **there is no longer any offering for sin**.

This is said in contrast to the Old Covenant offerings, which were never able to forgive sins, although they were offered daily. The worshiper would go to the altar and be reminded of his sins and of the fact that he needs forgiveness and cleansing. "No more!", says the New Covenant, for by a single offering the blood of Christ has accomplished what all the Old Testament sacrifices could not. His singular offering was enough to make all those who draw near to Him, all those who are in the New Covenant, perfect for all time, because of His infinite worth and superiority over everything. There is no need for any offering because Christ is our offering and He has offered up Himself for the forgiveness of our trespasses and sins. Not only that, but He is our Intercessor and Mediator (Heb. 7:25; 9:15; 12:24) and our High Priest Who is able to help us and sympathizes with us (Heb. 4:15-16). The New Covenant is a present reality for the believer. It is through this covenant that they receive the forgiveness of sins daily from God. We should hold to this gracious promises of this covenant and plead with God for them.

Jeremiah 32:40 is likewise part of the New Covenant promise.

> I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that **I will not turn away from doing good to them**. And **I will put the fear of me in their hearts**, **that they may not turn from me**.

Here the New Covenant is called an everlasting covenant as in Hebrews 13:20. It is this covenant, in which the Lord promises that He will never stop from doing good to its members and He will by grace cause their obedience so that it will not fail. While the Old Covenant was repeatedly broken because of the disobedience and unfaithfulness of its people, this will not be the case for the New Covenant. The Lord will do something through which we will not turn away from Him. The Lord will put His fear in us. The book of Proverbs speaks a lot about the fear of the Lord and how the fear of the Lord is a good thing and not something wrong. What does the fear of the LORD actually do?

> Prov. 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the **beginning of knowledge**; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
> Prov. 8:13 The fear of the LORD is **hatred of evil**. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.
> Prov. 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the **beginning of wisdom**, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
> Prov. 10:27 The fear of the LORD **prolongs life**, but the years of the wicked will be short.
> Prov. 14:26-27 In the fear of the LORD one has **strong confidence,** and his children will have a refuge. 27 The fear of the LORD is a **fountain of life**, that one may turn away from the snares of death.
> Prov. 15:33 The fear of the LORD is **instruction in wisdom**, and humility comes before honor.
> Prov. 16:6 By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD **one turns away from evil**.
> Prov. 19:23 The fear of the LORD **leads to life**, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.
> Prov. 22:4 The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is **riches and honor and life.**

Simply put, you cannot live a godly life, the life which the Lord desires His children to live, without the fear of Him and reverence for Him. A person who knows God and does not fear Him is an oxymoron. Among those things listed in Proverbs, the fear of the Lord planted in us in the New Covenant will not allow us to apostatize. The fear of the Lord will lead us in the right path and not lead us into apostasy as in the days of old with Israel. The New Covenant will not have apostates because the Lord will graciously work and cause the obedience of its members. The visible church will have apostates, no doubt, but the New Covenant will not have apostates because all of its members will persevere by the promise and thanks to the power of God. The Spirit of the Lord will lead us to fear the Lord and live godly lives for the sake of Christ.

Ezekiel

The promise of the New Covenant found in Ezekiel is likewise amazing and encouraging. It gives me hope because God promises that He will help me and cause me to obey by His grace because, in myself, I am hopeless. Ezekiel, living among the exiled community of Judah, comes to them as the mouthpiece of God and gives Israel this hope of a great future. I believe that this prophecy concerns both the present time and the future. It is what is called a blended prophecy. Let us look at the text:

> Ezek. 36:25-28 **I will sprinkle clean water on you**, and **you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses**, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And **I will give you a new heart**, and **a new spirit I will put within you**. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you **a heart of flesh**. 27 And **I will put my Spirit within you**, and **cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules**. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and **you shall be my people**, and **I will be your God**.

Obviously, there are similarities between the New Covenant found in Jeremiah and this passage here. Although the word "New Covenant" is found nowhere in Ezekiel, it is inarguable that this passage speaks of the New Covenant. The Lord promises in this covenant to cleanse His people from their sins. He will sprinkle water (this is not about the mode of baptism...) upon them to cleanse them from their sins. This promise speaks of a spiritual cleansing like that for example in Titus 3:5 –

> Titus 3:4-6 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, **by the washing of regeneration** and **renewal of the Holy Spirit**, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

In this passage, we can see how Paul has in mind the promise of the New Covenant in Ezekiel and the like. He speaks of washing and renewal of spirit by the Holy Spirit. Obviously, as Reformed believers, we do not believe that baptism causes our regeneration, therefore this verse is speaking figuratively of our spiritual cleansing and not of our baptism. See also 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:26, and **chapter 29 on Baptism**. The Lord will wash us and sprinkle cleansing water upon us to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and uncleanness. He will drive us away from our idols and will cause us to look upon Him as our only God. The Lord will give us a new heart, which will be able to obey Him and which is regeneration. Indeed, Moses noted the cause of Israel's frequent disobedience –

> Deut. 29:2-4 And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, 3 the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. 4 But **to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand** or eyes to see or ears to hear.

The Lord had not given them a heart of flesh but left them to their natural heart of stone because the heart of flesh is the promise of the New Covenant and no other covenant. Like we noted, in Jeremiah, the New Covenant does not produce a mixed community, but a community of the elect believers alone. Moses looks forward to the promise of the new heart as a prophet in Deuteronomy 30:6 –

> And the LORD your **God will circumcise your heart** and the heart of your offspring, **so that you will love the LORD** your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

This promise which Moses gave to the children of Israel finds its fulfillment in the New Covenant where God circumcises our heart and gives us a heart of flesh willing to do what He loves, rather than the heart of stone which does what He hates. Obedience to the first table of the Law and the summary thereof, which is loving God, follows from heart circumcision, which

is the work of God the Spirit on the elect. The Lord will renew our nature, you could say He will re-create us, in fact, that is precisely what the New Testament says that He did in us who believe –

> 2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is **a new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
>
> Gal. 6:15 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but **a new creation**.

The Lord renewed our nature and gave us a new nature (heart), which desires to obey Him and do the things that He loves. We are no longer slaves to our sinful nature and our stony heart, we are slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6). The Lord has renewed us and given us His Spirit Who helps us to live a life that is pleasing to Him. It is God Who works through the Spirit in us (Phil. 2:11-12). He has given us His Spirit as a pledge of the good things in the age to come (Eph. 1:13-14). It is the Spirit of the Almighty, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, God in the fullest sense, Who dwells within us and has made our bodies His Temple:

> 1 Cor. 6:19-20 Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you**, **whom you have from God**? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

The fact that He has given us His almighty Spirit is a great act of grace, mercy, and love toward us who don't deserve it, but such is the amazing grace of God found in the New Covenant, which is based on Christ's blood and work. The fact that He has given us His Spirit testifies to us that we belong to Him and that we are accepted as His children (Rom. 8:9, 14). Most importantly, the Lord will cause our obedience to Him by the giving of the new heart of flesh to us and most importantly, but the giving of His glorious Spirit Who will cause us to obey and help us in our weaknesses (John 14:26; Rom. 8:26-27). Lastly, this ends with the promise that the covenant community will dwell in the land that the Lord gave to the fathers, the land of Canaan. But we learn from the New Testament that this land promise has extended to the whole world and that in the last day, the whole world will be under the dominion of God and His people and thus the perfect fulfillment of this promise (Rom. 4:13; Rev. 11:15; 21:1ff).

All Christians have been born again. This phrase comes from John 3, in which the Lord Jesus depends on the promise found in Ezekiel 36:25-27. Let us check it out –

> John 3:3-5 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God**." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water** and **the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

In v. 5, the Lord brings to mind the promise of the New Covenant in Ezekiel. Unless one is born of water, meaning created anew by the cleansing power of God and of His Spirit Who causes us to walk in the ways of the Lord, we cannot see or enter the Kingdom. We cannot go to heaven unless the promise of Ezekiel 36:25-27 is fulfilled in us. We are in agreement with the great expositor John Gill –

> **except a man be born of water and of the Spirit**: these are, שנות מלות, "two words", which express the same thing, as Kimchi observes in many places in his commentaries, and signify the grace of the Spirit of God. The Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read, "the Holy Spirit", and so Nonnus; and who doubtless is intended: by "water", is not meant material water, or baptismal water; for water baptism is never expressed by water only, without some additional word, which shows, that the ordinance of water baptism is intended: nor has baptism any regenerating influence in it; a person may be baptized, as Simon Magus was, and yet not born again; and it is so far from having any such virtue, that a person ought to be born again, before he is admitted to that ordinance: and though submission to it is necessary, in order to a person's entrance into a Gospel church state; yet it is not necessary to the kingdom of heaven, or to eternal life and salvation: such a mistaken sense of this text, seems to have given the first birth and rise to infant baptism in the African churches; who taking the words in this bad sense, concluded their children must be baptized, or they could not be saved; whereas by "water" is meant, in a figurative and metaphorical sense, the grace of God, as it is elsewhere; see Eze 36:25. Which is the moving cause of this new birth, and according to which God begets men again to, a lively hope, and that by which it is effected; for it is by the grace of God, and not by the power of man's free will, that any are regenerated, or made new creatures: and if Nicodemus was an officer in the temple, that took care to provide water at the feasts, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, and as it should seem Nicodemon ben Gorion was, by the story before related of him; [See comments on Joh 3:1]; very pertinently does our Lord make mention of water, it being his own element: regeneration is sometimes ascribed to God the Father, as in 1Pe 1:3, and sometimes to the Son, 1Jo 2:29

and here to the Spirit, as in Tit 3:5, who convinces of sin, sanctifies, renews, works faith, and every other grace; begins and carries on the work of grace, unto perfection;[41]

One cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless he receives a new heart and the Spirit of God according to the promise of the New Covenant. This is clear from what the Lord says and he expected Nicodemus, "the teacher of Israel" (John 3:10), to understand the promise of the new birth in Ezekiel 36:25-27. Now we move on.

The Establishment of the New Covenant

John Owen on Hebrews 8:6, the New Covenant is the Covenant of Grace Established

For those, a bit familiar with 1689 Federalism, will know our dependence on John Owen's great and mind-blowing exegesis of Hebrews 8:6. From there we learn that the New Covenant, which is the Covenant of Grace, was not ratified, established and enacted as a covenant, but was in a state of promise under the Old Testament. Here I would like to quote a lengthy portion of his exegesis and the understanding that he sees in the word "enacted" (as in the ESV), "established" (KJV) or νενομοθέτηται *(nenomothetētai)* in the original.

It remains unto the exposition of the words, that we inquire what was this covenant, whereof our Lord Christ was the mediator, and what is here affirmed of it.

This can be no other in general but that which we call "the covenant of grace." And it is so called in opposition unto that of "works," which was made with us in Adam; for these two, grace and works, do divide the ways of our relation unto God, being diametrically opposite, and every way inconsistent, Rom 11:6. **Of this covenant the Lord Christ was the mediator from the foundation of the world**, namely, from the giving of the first promise, Rev 13:8; for it was given on his interposition, and **all the benefits of it depended on his future actual mediation**. But here ariseth the first difficulty of the context, and that in two things; for, —

[1.] If this covenant of grace was made from the beginning, and if the LORD Christ was the mediator of it from the first, then where is the privilege of the gospel-state in opposition unto the law, by virtue of this covenant, seeing that under the law also the **Lord Christ was the mediator of that covenant, which was from the beginning**?

[2.] If it be the covenant of grace which is intended, and that be opposed unto the covenant of works made with Adam, then the other covenant must be that covenant of works so made with Adam, which we have before disproved.

The answer hereunto is in the word here used by the apostle concerning this new covenant: νενομοθέτηται, whose meaning we must inquire into. I say, therefore, that the apostle doth not here consider the new covenant absolutely, and as it was **virtually administered from the foundation of the world, in the way of a promise**; for as such it was consistent with that covenant made with the people in Sinai. And the apostle proves expressly, that the renovation of it made unto Abraham was no way abrogated by the giving of the law, Gal 3:17. There was no interruption of its administration made by the introduction of the law. But he treats of such an establishment of the new covenant as wherewith the old covenant made at Sinai was absolutely inconsistent, and which was therefore to be removed out of the way. Wherefore **he considers it here as it was actually completed, so as to bring along with it all the ordinances of worship which are proper unto it**, the dispensation of the Spirit in them, and all the spiritual privileges wherewith they are accompanied. It is now so brought in as to become the entire rule of the church's faith, obedience, and worship, in all things.

This is the meaning of the word νενομοθέτηται; "established," say we; but it is, "reduced into a fixed state of a law or ordinance." All the obedience required in it, all the worship appointed by it, all the privileges exhibited in it, and the grace administered with them, are **all given for a statute, law, and ordinance unto the church**. **That which before lay hid in promises**, in many things obscure, the principal mysteries of it being a secret hid in God himself, **was now brought to light**; and that **covenant which had invisibly, in the way of a promise, put forth its efficacy under types and shadows**, was **now solemnly sealed, ratified, and confirmed, in the death and resurrection of Christ**. It had **before the confirmation of a promise, which is an oath**; **it had now the confirmation of a covenant, which is blood.** That which before had no visible, outward worship, proper and peculiar unto it, is now made the only rule and instrument of worship unto the whole church, nothing being to be admitted therein but what belongs unto it, and is appointed by it. This the apostle intends by **νενομοθέτηται, the "legal establishment" of the new covenant, with all the ordinances of its worship.** Hereon the other covenant was disannulled and removed; and not only the covenant itself, but all that system of sacred worship whereby it was administered. This was not done by the making of the covenant at first; yea, all this was superinduced into the covenant as given out in a promise, and was consistent therewith. When the new covenant was given out only in the way of a promise, it did not introduce a worship and privileges expressive of it. Wherefore it was consistent with a form of worship, rites and ceremonies, and those composed into a yoke of bondage which belonged not unto it. And as these, being added after its giving, did not overthrow its nature as a promise, so they were inconsistent with it when it was completed as a covenant; for then all the worship of the church was to

proceed from it, and to be conformed unto it. Then it was established. Hence it follows, in answer unto the second difficulty, that as a promise, it was opposed unto the covenant of works; as a covenant, it was opposed unto that of Sinai. **This legalizing or authoritative establishment of the new covenant, and the worship thereunto belonging, did effect this alteration.**[67]

Owen's contention is that the use of the word *enacted* or *established* makes clear that the New Covenant was established no sooner than the shedding of Christ's blood. Prior to the time of Christ's death, the Covenant of Grace was in a state of promise. After the death of Christ, it was officially established with all things pertaining and acceptable to it as the only rule of the church.

The Blood of Christ, the Blood of the Covenant

Like the priests on the Old Covenant, which God put in place as types and shadows of the Lord Christ, so the Lord Jesus, the great High Priest, enters into the Most Holy Place by blood. The high priests of old would enter by the blood of animals, but not so our great High Priest—

> Heb. 9:11-14 But when **Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come**, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered **once for all** into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but **by means of his own blood,** thus **securing an eternal redemption.** 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who **through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience** from dead works to serve the living God.

The animal sacrifices were ineffective in bringing forgiveness of sins and cleansing (Heb. 10:4, 11), but not so the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ secures an eternal redemption. It makes sure and certain our redemption. Not only that but the once-for-all offering of our High Priest perfects us and cleanses our conscience (Heb. 7:25; 11:40; 12:23), something which the Mosaic Covenant could not do (Heb. 7:11-12, 18-19; 9:9; 10:1). Just like the Mosaic Covenant was established and inaugurated with blood (Heb. 9:18-22), so likewise the New Covenant was inaugurated and established in the blood of Christ, the blood of its Mediator.

> Heb. 9:23-24 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but **into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf**.

Christ has entered, we learned, by the means of His own blood and not animal blood as the high priests of old did in the Temple and Tabernacle. His precious blood was the means of His entrance to appear on our behalf before God. The Lord Christ did not offer repeatedly Himself, unlike the high priests on the Day of Atonement every year. They would offer first for their sins and then the sins of the people and yearly. Not only that, but the regular offerings were to be offered daily also. All of this could not perfect anyone and it was to be repeated. The sacrifices of the Old Covenant cannot bring justification and peace to its members, but they merely cover sin and remind the worshipers of their sin.

> Heb. 9:25-26 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has **appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

The purpose of His appearing before God and of His offering Himself was to atone for our sins. He has put away from us our sin once and for all. He has come down and given Himself for us as the Substitute to stand in our place and bear the wrath of God that we should have borne. Our High Priest was both the Offering and the Offerer. Through the blood of Jesus and what He did for us in the sacrifice of Himself, we all have the authority and boldness to go before God and stand cleansed in the blood of Christ –

> Heb. 10:19-23 Therefore, brothers, since **we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus**, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since **we have a great priest over the house of God**, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of

our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

God is faithful and God is the covenant-keeper Who has promised us these blessings. God has promised that we have full assurance and acceptance in the blood of Christ to come to Him and fellowship with Him. We are allowed and encouraged to come to God in the Most Holy Place, a place where only the high priest once a year was allowed to come. Now all believers have direct access to God through our Lord and in the New Covenant like never before (Heb. 4:16). His sacrifice perfects us and cleanses us from our sin. The Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, is the Surety of the Covenant (Heb. 7:22). He will not allow the covenant to be broken like the Mosaic Covenant. He will make certain that the conditions of the covenant (faith and repentance) are met. He will work in us the obedience that He requires as He has promised in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Indeed, it is on the basis of Christ's blood, which is the blood of the covenant, that we remain ultimately in obedience to God and have peace –

Heb. 13:20-21 Now may the **God of peace** who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, **by the blood of the eternal covenant**, 21 **equip you with everything good that you may do his will**, **working in us that which is pleasing in his sight**, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

It is God the Father, the God of peace Who raised up the Lord Jesus, Who will equip us with His Spirit and in grace to do that which He pleases. If left to ourselves, we would only sin, but God in His grace has chosen to use us and cleanse us that we may live life as He has intended it. It is the Lord Who works in us that which is pleasing to Him. Our obedience does not come from us ultimately, but it comes from God and it is based on the blood of Christ which is the blood of the covenant that we are in. This New Covenant is the eternal and everlasting covenant. It is the Covenant which existed in the form of promise and which every covenant of God typified and pointed to. It is established in the blood of Christ, the only acceptable sacrifice that belongs to this covenant. The expression "everlasting covenant" occurs also in Jeremiah 32:40 in reference to the New Covenant. Lastly, on this point, let us see what John Owen said concerning the "blood of the everlasting covenant."

…**it is the covenant of grace, which is a transcript and effect of that covenant of redemption, which is intended**…And this is called **"everlasting," as in opposition unto the covenant made at Sinai**, which, as the apostle proves, was but for a time, and accordingly waxed old, and was removed; so because the effects of it are not temporary benefits, but everlasting mercies, — grace and glory.

[2.] **The blood of this covenant is the blood of Christ himself,** so called in answer to the blood of the beasts, which was offered and sprinkled in the confirmation of the old covenant; whence it is by Moses called "the blood of the covenant," Exo 24:8; Heb 9:20. See that place, and the exposition. And it is called the blood of the covenant, because, as it was a sacrifice to God, it confirmed the covenant; and as it was to be sprinkled, it procured and communicated all the grace and mercy of the covenant, unto them who are taken into the bond of it.[67]

He is the Mediator of a New Covenant

Heb. 9:15-17 Therefore he is the **mediator of a new covenant**, so that **those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance**, since **a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.** 16 For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. 17 For **a will takes effect only at death**, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

A **mediator** is a go-between between two parties, in this case, God and man. The Lord Jesus, being the God-man is the perfect and only Mediator between man and God (1 Tim. 2:5). A **will** is like a promise that one makes to his children or others. For example, a father can promise his house to his son when he puts it in his will, but the house will not be his son's until he has died. Likewise, we see the same idea here in this passage. As I have tried to argue, the Covenant of Grace under the Old Testament existed only in the form of a promise and not as an established covenant. Here we see the fact that what was promised to the elect under the Old Testament concerning salvation and the Covenant of Grace was dependent upon the work and death of Christ. They were *called*, a term commonly associated with election (Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Tim. 1:9), like us who live in the time that the New Covenant is established and the only rule and law of the church, to receive the promised inheritance. They were called to the New Covenant. As they were in the time of the Old Testament already a part of the Covenant of Grace, so now that the New Covenant is established and is the only rule of the church, they are in the New Covenant. The death of Christ has redeemed the elect before the coming of the New Covenant. Here, the Author speaks of the sins of God's elect committed under the Mosaic Covenant and no doubt the sins of all the elect before the Mosaic Covenant were atoned by the death of Christ just like our sins. We come across a similar idea in Romans 3 when Paul writes about justification –

> Rom. 3:24-26 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom **God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith**. This was to show God's righteousness, because **in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.** 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The Lord in His patience and with the knowledge that the Lord Christ would atone for the sins of His elect, passed over their sins and did not punish them, but brought them into His presence for the sake of Christ and on the basis of His sacrifice for sin. Pascal Denault says the following—

> The Abrahamic Covenant, the Sinaitic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant were not the Covenant of Grace, nor administrations of it; however, **the Covenant of Grace was revealed under these various covenants.** The Epistle to the Hebrews seems to sanction this understanding, particularly this passage: "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance— now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." (Heb. 9.15).
>
> The **first covenant did not redeem transgressions; consequently it did not offer the forgiveness of sins**. However, the believers under this covenant received the forgiveness of their sins and the heritage of salvation in Jesus Christ, something which is shown through the conjugation of the verb (κεκλημένοι) to call in the perfect tense. Those who were called before Christ paid for their transgressions received the eternal inheritance and those who continue to be called since that event receive this same promised inheritance. As a result, **all those who were saved since the creation of the world were saved by virtue of the New Covenant which was in effect as a promise** even **before it was an accomplished covenant**. Owen writes: "I will take here for granted, that no man was ever saved but by virtue of the New Covenant, and the mediation of Christ in that respect."[68]

In the next paragraph, he goes on to describe the lengths Paedobaptists went through to make the Lord Jesus the Mediator even of the Mosaic Covenant! Furthermore, he writes about the agreement and disagreement between the two groups:

> The Presbyterians and the Baptists both believed that Christ's sacrifice was effective before being offered, however they saw the relationship of this effectiveness with the Old Covenant differently. Many paedobaptists considered that it was through the Old Covenant that Christ offered the benefits of his mediation to the believers that were under this covenant, while the Baptists affirmed the effectiveness of Christ's death from the revelation of the Covenant of Grace, but exclusively by virtue of the New Covenant. These two conceptions were very different; according to the paedobaptist conception, the work of Christ was communicated to believers both by the Old and New Covenants.[69]

Conditionality, Membership, Seal, Sign

It is important to lay out what we mean when we use the word **conditionality.** Do we by using the word directly mean that the covenant spoken of is breakable or are we able to use the word to mean what the conditions are to enter the covenant. To begin we ask, what must we do to be saved? The answer of the Bible is to repent and believe (Acts 2:38; 20:21; etc...). Since according to the exegesis of Jeremiah's promise, the community of the New Covenant is not a mixed community, but a community in which everyone knows the Lord savingly, therefore I conclude that the conditions of entering the New Covenant are repentance and faith. That is similar to circumcision with the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:10, 14). The crucial difference is the fact that God promises to accomplish in us what He requires of us. The way to enter the covenant is through the circumcision of the heart performed by the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 3:3; Col. 2:11-12). As Calvinists, we already know that God both grants faith (Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8-9) and repentance (e.g., 2 Tim. 2:24-26). But those were the conditions of the covenant, or in other words, what we were commanded to do to be saved (e.g., Acts 17:30-31). But if these conditions are brought about by God's sovereign grace and by virtue of Christ's death, they are not like the conditions in the Abrahamic or the Mosaic covenants where humans were commanded to action without a promise of divine assistance or that God would fulfill what He required. Therefore, we should be very careful when using the word "condition" in reference to the New Covenant, because, in actuality, it is wholly unconditional on the part of man. On this point of conditionality and unconditionality, it is good to listen once again to John Owen –

> Obs. 9. The promises of the covenant of grace are better than those of any other covenant, as for many other reasons, so especially because **the grace of them prevents any condition or qualification on our part**. — **I do not say the covenant of grace is absolutely without conditions**, if by conditions we intend the duties of obedience which God requireth of us in and by virtue of that covenant; but this I say, **the principal promises thereof are not in the first place remunerative of our obedience in the covenant**, but efficaciously assumptive of us into covenant, and establishing or confirming in the covenant. The covenant of works had its promises, but they were all remunerative,

respecting an antecedent obedience in us; (so were all those which were peculiar unto the covenant of Sinai). They were, indeed, also **of grace, in that the reward did infinitely exceed the merit of our obedience**; but yet they all supposed it, and the subject of them was formally reward only. **In the covenant of grace it is not so; for sundry of the promises thereof are the means of our being taken into covenant**, of our entering into covenant with God. The first covenant absolutely was established on promises, in that when men were actually taken into it, they were encouraged unto obedience by the promises of a future reward. But those promises, namely, of the **pardon of sin and writing of the law in our hearts, which the apostle expressly insisteth upon as the peculiar promises of this covenant, do take place and are effectual antecedently unto our covenant obedience**. For **although faith be required** in order of nature antecedently unto our actual receiving of the pardon of sin, yet is that **faith itself wrought in us by the grace of the promise**, and so its precedency unto pardon respects only the order that God had appointed in the communication of the benefits of the covenant, and intends not that the pardon of sin is the reward of our faith.[70]

As to **membership** in the New Covenant, we have seen from Jeremiah that it is only elect believers, those united to Jesus Christ, and thus those who are members of a local church are not necessarily members of the Covenant of Grace/New Covenant. Members of the church are just that, members of a local church, but not necessarily members of the universal church of Christ, they are merely members of the visible church. Furthermore, as Reformed believers, we believe that Christ died to save and atone for the sins of the elect. Those are also His covenant community and by His blood, He places them in the New Covenant and in relationship with God. But this is not the case for apostates or infants of believing parents. It is essential to understand what the basis of membership in the New Covenant (or for that matter, any covenant) is and it is one's relation to the Federal Head. The Israelites were in covenant with God because of their physical relation to Abraham. No Amorite could claim membership to the Abrahamic Covenant. Relation to the head defines the membership. The same is true for the Davidic Covenant. The same is true for the New Covenant, but what is very clear under the New Covenant is that physical privileges no longer apply (e.g., John 1:12-13; Rom. 9:6-8). Our relationship with Jesus Christ is called our union with Him, which is by faith (see **chapter 27**). Therefore, without faith, there can be no relation to Christ. And if there is no relation to Christ, there is, therefore, no relation to His Covenant, too. The Old Covenant did not require faith for membership, while the New Covenant presupposes faith from all its members. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him or to be in any sense, in Christ. Dr. Renihan explains the nature of the Kingdom of God:

> The kingdom proclaimed by the Christ is a kingdom not of this world (John 18:36). Though the full unveiling of the nature of this kingdom occurs in the apostolic writings, the ministry of Christ established all its fundamental features. It is a **kingdom from above**, a kingdom entered not by natural birth, but **supernatural birth** (John 3:3-6). It is a kingdom belonging not to those born of the flesh, but **those born of the Spirit** (Matthew 8:11-12). It is a kingdom belonging not to those born of Abraham's body, but **his belief** (John 8:39, 56). It is a kingdom whose localized assembly is based on **faith in Christ and the exercise of His authority** (Matthew 16:16-19). It is a **kingdom of those who are humble and helpless like children** (Matthew 18:1-4).[71]

The description which is given to us in the New Testament precludes the membership of those who do not have the Holy Spirit and are not united to Christ by faith. Therefore, union with Christ is the only way to be or enter into the Covenant of Grace. Dr. Renihan helps us again:

> **Apart from union with Christ**, the federal head of the New Covenant of grace, **there is no participation in the blessings and benefits of Christ's covenant**. Paul is quite clear that "**Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him**" (Romans 8:9). This is consistent with all other cases of federal headship in the covenants of Scripture. Apart from Adam, none participate in the Covenant of Works. **Apart from Abraham, none participate in the Abrahamic Covenant**. Apart from David, none participate in the Davidic Covenant. **Federal headship always defines and delimits the extent of the blessings and benefits (or curses) of each covenant**.
>
> Because Christ's federal headship was established in the Covenant of Redemption, and because **the New Covenant mediates that covenant to its inheritors**, the extent of the blessings and benefits of the covenant is **limited to those for whom Jesus Christ is High Priest** in the New Covenant. As summed up by John in 1 John 5:11-13. "11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you *who believe in the name of the Son of God* that you may know that you have eternal life."[72]

Therefore, no one should be recognized as a member of the New Covenant and thus, of a local church, other than those who profess and bring forth fruits consistent with the way of Christ. Although hypocrites can deceive us, they cannot deceive God and they will receive their judgment from Him.

The Spirit is the **seal** and guarantee of and in the New Covenant (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). It is not circumcision, baptism or anything else. It is the Spirit of the Lord Whom He has given to us, which sets the people of God apart from the reprobate. Benjamin Keach said:

> But in a word, **we know nothing called a Seal of the New Covenant, but the holy Spirit**, which the Saints were said to be sealed with after they believed, unto the day of Redemption (Eph. 1:13; 4:30); God by setting his Seal upon us assures us that we are his, and that we shall have Eternal Life.[73]

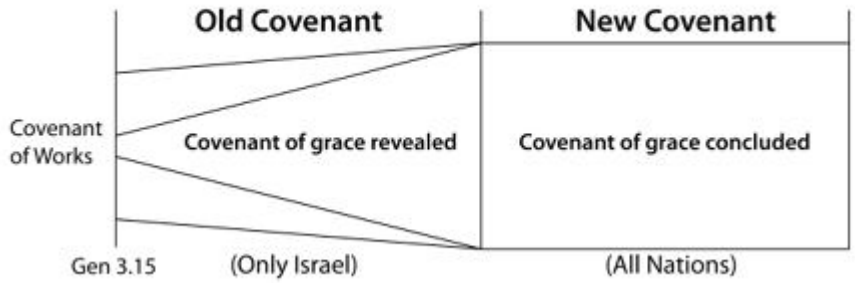
As for those who use Romans 4:11 to argue that baptism now is the seal of the covenant I direct them **above to my exegesis of the text**. **See also chapter 29** on this question.

As for the sign or signs of the covenant, I argue in **chapter 29** that the signs of the New Covenant are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Circumcision is not replaced by baptism, rather, circumcision is fulfilled by the circumcision of the heart. Need I mention, that therefore, only those in the New Covenant are entitled to the Covenant sacraments and promises?

Conclusion

I actually enjoyed this study of Covenant Theology that took me something like a month or more to finish writing [aside from later repeatedly updating it]. I had to revisit a lot of books that I've read on Baptist Covenant Theology to check how things were. I tried to use the Scriptures and explain the Scriptures as much as possible since I believe that often with the study of Covenant Theology, I do not hear much Scripture but names of men who have stood on both sides (Westminster and 1689). While that is great and encouraging, I wanted to focus more on the Scripture. Not to deny that I've benefited a lot from reading Owen obviously and made me stronger 1689 Federalist than I was beginning this study.

What sets 1689 Federalism apart is our insistence that the Covenant of Grace was not established, enacted and "cut" at any time before the death of Christ. The Covenant of Grace did indeed exist since Genesis 3:15, but it did exist in the **form of a promise**, not an established covenant. Every covenant of God did shadow and typify it and contained promises concerning it, but was not an administration of it. The Covenant of Grace was established, ratified, enacted and "cut" **in the blood of Christ and in the New Covenant**. We believe that the Covenant of Grace was established and cut in the New Covenant, thus, the Covenant of Grace is the retroactive New Covenant. Lastly, this is a diagram is from Pascal Denault's work which represents the 1689 Federalist understanding of the Covenant of Grace as being revealed by farther steps but was concluded and established in the New Covenant/Testament.



"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new

covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,

(Jeremiah 31:31)

Footnotes

1. ^ *Many Scriptural references have been supplied by Samuel Waldron's Modern Exposition of 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith which was apparently supplied by the Westminster Confession of Faith 1646.*
2. ^ *Wikipedia. Covenant Theology.*
3. ^ *Theopedia. Covenant.*
4. ^ *Nehemiah Coxe in Nehemiah Coxe & John Owen. Covenant Theology: From Adam To Christ. Edited by Ronald D. Miller, James M. Renihan, Francisco Orozco. (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005). p. 36.*
5. ^ As cited in Jeffrey D. Johnson, "The Fatal Flaw of Infant Baptism: The Dichotomous Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant" in *Recovering A Covenantal Heritage: Essays In Baptist Covenant Theology*. Edited by Richard C. Barcellos. (Palmdale, CA: RBAP, 2014). p. 230, n. 10
6. ^ *Arthur W. Pink. The Divine Covenants. (Memphis, TN: Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2011). p. 26.*
7. ^ *Richard C. Barcellos. Getting the Garden Right: Adam's Work and God's Rest in Light of Christ. (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017). pp. 56-66.*
8. ^ *Coxe, Covenant Theology. pp. 36-37.*
9. ^ *Richard Barcellos. The Covenant of Works: Its Confessional and Scriptural Basis. (Palmdale, CA: RBAP, 2016). p. 53.*
10. ^ *Pascal Denault. The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology: A Comparison Between Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist and Paedobaptist Federalism. (Solid Ground Christian Books. 2013). p. 28.*
11. ^ *Coxe, From Adam To Christ. pp. 37-38.*
12. ^ *Barcellos, Getting the Garden Right. pp. 57-58.*
13. ^ *Samuel D. Renihan. The Mystery of Christ: His Covenant and His Kingdom. (FL: Founders Press, 2019). p. 66.*
14. ^ *John Owen. "An Exposition Of Hebrews 8:6-13" in Covenant Theology: From Adam To Christ. p. 178.*
15. ^ *Coxe, From Adam to Christ. p. 49.*
16. ^ *Pink, Divine Covenants. p. 31.*
17. ^ *ibid., p. 27.*
18. ^ *Barcellos, Getting the Garden Right. p. 67.*
19. ^ *Renihan, Mystery of Christ. p. 33.*
20. ^ *ibid., p. 35.*
21. ^ *ibid., p. 67.*

22. ^ *ibid., p. 88.*
23. ^ *Coxe, From Adam To Christ. p. 90.*
24. ^ *Renihan, Mystery of Christ. p. 74.*
25. ^ *Covenant of Redemption. Read also the section about Phraseology.*
26. ^ *Theopedia. Covenant Theology.*
27. ^ *Micah and Samuel Renihan, "Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology and Biblical Theology" in Recovering A Covenantal Heritage. p. 476. The essay, in a slightly different form, is also to be found online.*
28. ^ *Douglas Van Dorn. Covenant Theology: A Reformed Baptist Primer. (Erie, CO: Waters of Creation Publishing, 2014). pp. 37-38.*
29. ^ *Renihan, Mystery of Christ. pp. 154-155. Words within brackets are mine.*
30. ^ *Benjamin Keach's Catechism, or the Baptist Catechism. See reference for Q&A number.*
31. ^ *Earl M. Blackburn in R. Barcellos, S. Waldron, E. Blackburn, & Paul R. Martin. Going Beyond The Five Points. Ed. by Rob Ventura. (San Bernardino, CA: [CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform], 2015). p. 150.*
32. ^ *Denault, Baptist Covenant Theology. p. 63. 'The distinction between the revelation and the administration of the Covenant of Grace finds its whole meaning when the second element of Baptist federalism is added to it, that is to say, the full revelation of the Covenant of Grace in the New Covenant. If the Westminster federalism can be summarized in "one covenant under two administrations," that of the 1689 would be "one covenant revealed progressively and concluded formally under the New Covenant."'*
33. ^ *ibid., p. 64.*
34. a, b *John Owen. An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc. Can also be found on p. 186 of the Coxe/Owen volume.*
35. a, b *Sam E. Waldron. A Modern Exposition Of The 1689 Baptist Confession Of Faith. (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2013). pp. 132-133.*
36. ^ *Denault, Baptist Covenant Theology. p. 63 [footnotes references removed].*
37. ^ *Ibid. pp. 64-67 [footnote references removed].*
38. a, b *ESV Study Bible. (Crossway, 2008). Taken from the Online Version at www.esvbible.org*
39. ^ *John M. Frame. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014). p. 68, footnote references removed.*
40. ^ *Coxe, From Adam to Christ. p. 67.*
41. a, b, c, d *John Gill. Exposition of the Entire Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
42. ^ *Renihan, Mystery of Christ. p. 83.*
43. ^ *Coxe, From Adam to Christ. p. 111.*
44. ^ *Pink, Divine Covenants. p. 96.*
45. ^ *Coxe, From Adam To Christ. p. 135.*
46. ^ *Benjamin Keach. Gold Refin'd, or, Baptism in its Primitive Purity. Edited by Simon Wartanian. (London, 1689). p. 75.*
47. ^ Coxe, From Adam To Christ. *p. 116.*
48. ^ *Jeffrey D. Johnson, "The Fatal Flaw of Infant Baptism: The Dichotomous Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant" in Recovering A Covenantal Heritage. p. 226.*
49. ^ *ibid., pp. 237-238.*
50. ^ *Pink, Divine Covenants. pp. 82-83.*
51. ^ *ibid., p. 83.*
52. ^ *Denault, Baptist Covenant Theology. p. 116.*
53. ^ *Coxe, From Adam To Christ. pp. 72-73.*
54. ^ *ibid., pp. 90-91.*
55. ^ *Pink, Divine Covenants. p. 100.*
56. ^ *ibid., p. 110.*

57. ^ *I have, by reading Jeffrey Johnson's works, the Fatal Flaw and the Kingdom of God, changed my position concerning whether the Mosaic offered eternal life or not. When writing the article at first I did not believe that it offered eternal life and used Lev. 18:5 for this point, but now I argue also using Lev. 18:5 that the Mosaic did offer eternal life, but no one was able to obtain it, except Christ the Lord. I'm not completely certain on this point, and could change.*
58. ^ Thomas E. Hicks, Jr., "John Owen on the Mosaic Covenant" in Recovering A Covenantal Heritage. p. 185.
59. ^ *Van Dorn, Covenant Theology. pp. 99-100.*
60. ^ *Pink, Divine Covenants. p. 107.*
61. ^ *ibid., p. 109.*
62. ^ *Owen, An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews 8:6, but it can also be found in the Coxe/Owen volume pp. 187-188.*
63. ^ *ibid., but it can also be found in the Coxe/Owen volume, pp. 197-198.*
64. ^ *Pink, Divine Covenants. p. 161.*
65. ^ *Johnson, "The Fatal Flaw of Infant Baptism: The Dichotomous Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant". p. 232.*
66. ^ *Pink, Divine Covenants. p. 175.*
67. a, b *Owen. An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. But it can also be found in the Coxe/Owen volume pp. 172-174.*
68. ^ *Denault, Baptist Covenant Theology. p. 71.*
69. ^ *ibid, p. 72.*
70. ^ *Owen. An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In loc. But it could also be found on pp. 178-179 of the Coxe/Owen volume.*
71. ^ *Renihan, Mystery of Christ. p. 150.*
72. ^ *ibid., pp. 171-173.*
73. ^ *Keach, Gold. p. 76.*