

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines

Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24

12 | Review and Preview thru the Lens of Covenant Theology

THE STORY OF REDEMPTION AND COVENANT THEOLOGY

1. "Covenant" of Redemption - Starting with God as Trinity

1. AKA *Pactum Salutis* or the "Covenant" between the Father and the Son

1. John 17 - "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. 6 "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me." (See also John 10, Eph. 1, Ps. 2, 110, Isa. 53)

2. WCF 3.5 - "Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen, **in Christ**, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace."

2. Common Grace Covenants (they apply to all people at all times, and serve as a foundation upon which God initiates special grace covenants)

1. **Covenant of Creation** - Gen. 1.1-2.3 - covenant of works, requiring perfect obedience - including "salvation" in the presence of God

1. In anachronistic terms, you could say that creation originally included common and special grace or “church and state” relations in one, but after the Fall they’re divided (see below)
2. WCF 7.1-2 - “The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.”
2. **Covenant with Noah** - Gen. 9.1-17 - re-establishes covenant of creation after the Flood, not to destroy the earth again until the final consummation, but doesn’t offer salvation and immediate presence of God like the covenant of creation
3. **Covenant of Grace** - WCF 7.3 - “Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.” (WCF 7.3)
 1. **Before Christ** - “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 foreshadowing 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.” (WCF 7.4)
 2. **After Christ** - “Under the gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper: which, though fewer in number, and

administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet, in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the new testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.” (WCF 7.6)

3. **Special notes:**

1. The Covenant of Creation or “Works” is still in effect, but Christ fulfills the covenant of creation and in its application to His people becomes the Covenant of Grace. The two covenants only compete if we try to fulfill the Covenant of Works on our own.
2. Anyone who is saved is saved by Christ - either in Christ to come or in Christ who has come.

4. **Special Grace Biblical Covenants** (apply to the elect only), begun in proto-form in Gen. 3.15

1. **Abrahamic Covenant** - Gen. 15.1-18 (cf. Gen. 12, 17, 22) - *Unilateral, unconditional promise* - promises the Mosaic, Davidic, and New covenants - numerous offspring, conquest/land, nations (i.e. Gentiles!) will be blessed
2. **Mosaic Covenant** - Exod. 3-Numbers 36 (Ex. 20-24.11 is the majority of it) - *Bilateral, conditional law*, yet still based on the gracious promise of the Abrahamic covenant, with the intent of highlighting God’s holiness, humanity’s sin, and what it should look like to be God’s chosen people. They weren’t saved by following it, they were already saved, and this explained what “saved people” should look like if they were to live in the promised land.
 1. WCF 19.1-2 - “God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, 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. This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables: the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man”

3. **Davidic Covenant** - 2Sam. 7.1-17 - *unilateral, unconditional promise* - to build David's "house" and sustain his dynasty as God's Anointed King over Israel
4. **New Covenant - fulfills all of the above**
 1. **Christ in the Old Testament** – Our starting point will always be Christ as the fulfillment and fulfiller of the Old Testament – see Mt. 5.17-20 and Lk. 24.13-34
 1. We need Christ in order to interpret the Old Testament properly – it's not meant to be read on its own
 2. The Old Covenant is a "shadow" (Heb. 10.1, Col. 2.16-17) to the "reality" of the New Covenant; or as "copies" are to "substance" (Heb. 9.23-28); or, as promise is to fulfillment (Gal. 3).
 3. It's not complete until the New Covenant church – Heb. 11.39-40, 1Cor. 10.6, 1Pet. 1.10-12.
 2. **Test Case: The Exodus and the Transfiguration – Lk. 9.28-36**
 1. Jesus' "exodus", the literal definition of Gk. word "departure" (v. 31)
 2. Isaiah 43.16-21 – the new exodus – that is, the hope of Israel was a new exodus, like a new creation, to do the what the first one did, but better
 3. Jesus as the True Passover Lamb, that redeems the New Israel (the Church), and Jesus also as the True Israel to whom we are united, who undergoes our purification (thru the Red Sea) on our behalf, so that we may follow God in the "wilderness" of this world until we reach the Promised Land
 3. So, to fully understand the Exodus, we have to look at both the OT stories and Jesus.

How ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?