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I. What is Covenant Theology?

Imagine that you have the day off, and you take a book with you to the park. After you stop off for a cup of coffee, you walk to the park and find a comfortable spot to read. You are excited. You love coffee, you love the park, and you love to read, especially when the book is good. And the book you've been reading is really good. You're almost done with it, just another few chapters to go. As you put the coffee down beside you and take the book out of your bag, trying to find the place where you left off, someone approaches you. It's a kind looking man about your age. He saw the title of the book as you pulled it out. He had heard really good things about the book but didn't know much about it. So as he was walking by, he stops and says to you, “Do you mind if I ask, what is that book all about?” Now, there's one more thing I haven't told you yet: the book that you have in your hand is the Bible. So, what would you say? How would you answer this man's question? How would you describe the Bible in just a few sentences? What is the big picture of the Bible? How do you put it all together? Is it a reliable record of ancient history? Is it a handbook for life? Is it a book of rules (or examples) to follow? A love letter from God? Some of us get really interested about particular details in the Bible but find it hard to see the big picture. Maybe you love the Scriptures but never knew there was a big picture. Well, there is a big picture. And Covenant Theology is something that is meant to help us understand what it is. Covenant Theology helps us to see that the Bible is one beautiful story. There are lots of characters, there are lots of chapters, and there are still many things we don't fully understand yet, but there is one unifying, overarching story that runs from Genesis to Revelation: The Bible is a story about redemption. Well, actually, it's a story about ruin and redemption. It's a story about how through one man (Adam), ruin came to us all—but through another man (Jesus), redemption would come for us all. The Bible is a story about ruin and redemption.

How is it, you ask, that Covenant Theology helps us understand all of this? Because the primary way the Bible tells the story of ruin and redemption is through God’s covenants. Adam hurled all humanity into ruin when he ate the fruit and transgressed the covenant God had made with him. But that wouldn't be the end of the story, for God would make a second covenant in and through a second Adam whereby He would redeem Adam’s fallen race. These two covenants are the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace; and it’s in and through these two covenants that Scripture tells us it’s own story. Scottish pastor and theologian Thomas Boston put it this way: “As man’s ruin was originally owing to the breaking of the covenant of works, so his recovery, from the first to the last step thereof, is owing purely to the fulfilling of the covenant of grace. . .” Or, to put it more simply: “Covenant Theology is just the gospel.” The Bible is one beautiful story of redemption. And Covenant Theology helps to show us how it all fits together.1

II. Why Study Covenant Theology?

1. We can't fully understand THE SCRIPTURES apart from the covenants:

   A) The covenants PERMEATE the Scriptures: In other words, you can't get away from a covenantal way of thinking as you read through the Bible. Scripture itself won’t let you do it! This is true, first of all, NUMERICALLY. The word “covenant” appears over 300 times in the Bible; roughly 30 times in the New Testament, and approximately 280 times in the Old Testament. That's pretty significant!

1 The quote from Boston is the very first line in his work, A View of the Covenant of Grace (p1), a post-humorous publication that first appeared in 1734. The second quote is from Mark Dever, cited from Ligon Duncan’s Covenant Theology course.
But there's more, because the covenants also permeate the Scriptures THEMATICALLY. It's not just that the word “covenant” shows up all over the Bible, it's that every page of the Bible is inherently related to God's covenantal dealings—even when the word itself isn't there. For instance, it would be difficult to make any sense of the book of Genesis apart from the context of the covenant God made with Abraham and with his seed after him. Nor could you make any sense of the book of Exodus, because it's in light of God's covenantal promises in Genesis that the Lord raises up Moses to deliver the people of Israel (Exodus 2:24). God's covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, in turn, serves as the contextual backdrop, not only of the book of Exodus, but of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And it doesn't stop there either, because when God brings Israel into Canaan in the book of Joshua, He does so on account of the covenant promises He had made to Abraham back in Genesis (Joshua 1:6; Genesis 15:18). We could go on and on, tracing God's covenantal dealings throughout Scripture.

Francis Roberts was an English Puritan in the 17th century who wrote a massive, 1700-page discourse on the covenants; and this is what he said: “God's covenant administrations [are] like a thread of gold running through the books both of Old and New Testament.” And J.I. Packer put it this way: “The books of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, are... God's own record of the progressive unfolding of his purpose to have a people in covenant with himself here on earth. The covenantal character of God's relationships with human beings... is in fact reflected one way and another on just about every page of the Bible.” Indeed, the concept of covenant is all over the Bible. So if we don't understand what covenant is all about, there's going to be a lot we don't understand in Scripture. For this reason alone, we ought to commit ourselves to better understanding the biblical doctrine of the covenants.

B) The covenants STRUCTURE the Scriptures: God's covenants in Scripture are like the frame of a house. It's the covenants that frame and hold together everything else in the Bible. The rooms of a house and the furniture inside those rooms can only exist as they fit into the larger framework of that house. So too, the covenants are the framework that God himself has given us in His Word; and it's into this covenantal framework that all the various and particular truths and doctrines of the Bible fit together. Again, J.I. Packer gives us a helpful illustration as he explains this truth in his own words:

“If you are hunting on a map of the Pacific for a particular Polynesian island, your eye will catch dozens of island names, however small they are printed, but the chances are you will never notice the large letters spelling PACIFIC OCEAN that straddle the map completely. Similarly, we may, and I think often do, study such realities as God's promises; faith; the plan of salvation; Jesus Christ the God-man, our prophet, priest and king; the church in both testaments, along with circumcision, passover, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the intricacies of Old Testament worship and the simplicities of its New Testament counterpart; the work of the Holy Spirit in believers; the nature and standards of Christian obedience in holiness and neighbor-love; prayer and communion with God; and many more such themes, without noticing that these relational realities are all covenantal in their very essence. As each Polynesian island is anchored in the Pacific, so each of the matters just mentioned is anchored in God's resolve to relate to his human creatures, and have us relate to him, in covenant. From this, perhaps, we can begin to see how big and significant a thing the covenantal category is both in biblical teaching and in real life.”

2 Roberts' massive work is called The Mystery and Marrow of the Bible; his quote is from p9. This volume was compiled over the course of weekly lectures to his congregation, taking the span of six years. You will see him quoted often throughout these lessons on the covenants. I personally regard Roberts' volume as the very best on the covenants from a biblical perspective, and Boston's View of the Covenant of Grace as the very best on the covenants from a systematic perspective. J.I. Packer's quote is from his Introduction to Herman Witsius' Economy of the Covenants (P&R Publishing, 1990). We could quote others here as well. Ezekiel Hopkins began his treatise on the covenants in this way: “Of all the mysterious depths in Christian religion, there is none more necessary for our information, or more influential upon our practice, than a right apprehension and distinct knowledge of the doctrine of the covenants. For if we be ignorant or mistaken in this, we must needs be liable to false or confused notions of the Law and Gospel, of our Fall in Adam and Restoration by Christ, of the true grounds of mens condemnation, and the means and terms of their justification; of the justice of God in punishing sinners, and His glorious mercy in saving believers. And consequently neither can many perplexing doubts and questions be resolved, the necessity and yet different concurrence of faith and obedience unto salvation cleared, the utter insufficiency of our own righteousness to procure acceptance for us with God evinced, His justice vindicated, nor His grace glorified. For all these great and important truths will readily own themselves to be built upon the foundation of God's covenant and stipulation with man. ...” (Doctrine of the Two Covenants, pp2-3). Charles Spurgeon said: “The doctrine of the Covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that he who well understands the distinction between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace is a master of divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scriptures are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of law and the covenants of grace.” (Wondrous Covenant; Sermon #3526).

3 J.I. Packer, Introduction to Herman Witsius' The Economy of the Covenants. Again, Packer says it this way: “The backbone
One way we see this truth exemplified is through the very names, Old and New Testament. It's true that we call them by these names, but it would actually be more accurate to call them the Old and the New Covenants. This is because the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the word used for covenant in the original Hebrew is berith. This Hebrew word, berith, was consistently translated into the New Testament Greek as diatheke. And it's the Greek diatheke, which, in turn, was commonly translated into Latin as testamentum. And, as you might guess, this is where we get the English word Testament. So, “Although we tend to think of Old Testament and New Testament... your Scriptures bear the titles of the covenants, old and new... We just call them testaments, but more accurately, they are really covenants. So, why study the covenants? Because they structure the Scriptures.”

**HOW OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS IS REALLY OLD AND NEW COVENANTS**

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<tr>
<th>Hebrew word for Covenant in original Old Testament</th>
<th>Greek word for covenant translated from the Hebrew</th>
<th>Latin word for covenant translated from the Greek</th>
<th>English word for covenant translated from the Latin</th>
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<tr>
<td>Berith</td>
<td>Diatheke</td>
<td>Testamentum</td>
<td>Testament</td>
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C) The covenants UNIFY the Scriptures: The covenants help us to tie all of Scripture into one story. They help us see how everything fits together. Most of the Bible is made up of the Old Testament, and unfortunately, many of us as Christians don't know what to do with it. For some of us, the Old Testament is pre-Christian, or even sub-Christian revelation; and we just can't wait to get to the New Testament. But Covenant Theology helps us understand how to rightly interpret the Old Testament, doing so in such a way that allows us, on the one hand, to recognize the distinctions between the Old and the New Testaments, while at the same time, acknowledging their profound unity. Indeed, what we're going to see is that the Old Covenant is just as much about the gospel as the New; for the only way sinners have ever come to God is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Covenant Theology is the Bible's way of deepening our understanding of the unity and continuity of Scripture.

of the Bible, to which all the expository, homiletical, moral, liturgical, and devotional material relates, is the unfolding in space and time of God's unchanging intention of having a people on earth to whom he would relate covenantally for his and their joy. . .The story that forms this backbone of the Bible has to do with man's covenant relationship with God first ruined and then restored. . .[E]very book of the Bible in effect asks to be read in terms of these unities, and as contributing to the exposition of them, and is actually misunderstood if it is not so read.” Packer continues: “As artists and decorators know; the frame is important for setting off the picture, and you do in fact see the picture better when it is appropriately framed. So with the riches of the gospel; the covenant is their proper frame, and you only see them in their full glory when this frame surrounds them, as in Scripture it actually does, and as in theology it always should.” And again: “[T]he gospel of God is not properly understood till it is viewed within a covenantal frame. Jesus Christ, whose saving ministry is the sum and substance of the gospel, is announced in Hebrews the mediator and guarantor of the covenant relationship (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6). The gospel promises. . .are therefore invitations to enter and enjoy a covenant relationship with God. Faith in Jesus Christ is accordingly the embracing of the covenant, and the Christian life. . .has at its heart covenant communion between the Savior and the sinner. The church. . .is the community of the covenant, and the preaching of the Word, the practice of pastoral care and discipline, and manifold exercises of worship together, and the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper (corresponding to circumcision and Passover in former days) are all signs, tokens, expressions, and instruments of the covenant. . .As artists and decorators know, the frame is important for setting off the picture, and you do in fact see the picture better when it is appropriately framed. So with the riches of the gospel; the covenant is their proper frame, and you only see them in their full glory when this frame surrounds them, as in Scripture it actually does, and as in theology it always should.”

4 The quote is from Ligon Duncan in his Covenant Theology course. Francis Roberts drew out the same truth when he wrote: “This covenant of God is the key that unlocks the whole Scriptures. . .Ye a God's covenant is such a primary subject of the whole Scripture, that the whole Word of God receives its denomination from God's covenant, being styled The Old and New Testament: or, The Old and New Covenant. And surely no context of holy Scripture can be solidly explicated, no common place of divinity can be rightly handled, no polemical or controversial point can be dexterously decided, no case of conscience or practical question can be accurately resolved, no Christian duty can be skillfully urged or advised, without due respect and scope had to the Covenant of God. Hereupon it is reported of Olevianus, that he styled himself, Concionatorum loeiders; that is, a preacher of the Covenant. And so should every faithful and skillful minister have it principally in design, to be a preacher of God's Covenant; and every prudent Christian to be a hearer and practitioner of God's Covenant...” (Roberts, p9).

5 We'll get into this in more detail later in this lesson. But for now, Ezekiel 37:24-28 can serve as an example, where the New Covenant is spoken of as the fulfillment of the Davidic, Mosaic, and Abrahamic Covenants; which means it's not something fundamentally different but rather the fulfillment of everything that went before. Duncan cites an example from the gospels: “If you pick up the Last Supper narratives in any of the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, or Luke, and you look at Jesus' words as He is explaining the bread and the cup, those passages are undergirded by Old Testament passages, especially Isaiah 53, Exodus 24. . .and Jeremiah 31. . .What is Jesus claiming as He explains His death. . .? What He is saying is, I am the fulfillment of these covenant signs and forms for which we have been waiting to be fulfilled, as the people of God, for hundreds of years, for over a millennium.” So, Covenant Theology is important to study because the covenants unify the Scriptures.” And
2. We can't fully understand THE SAVIOR apart from the covenants:

At the very beginning of the gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel comes to a man named Zacharias, and tells him that he would have a son in his old age—and not just any son—but that his child would be the one who would go as a forerunner before the Messiah. Because he doesn't believe God's message at first (maybe it sounded too good to be true), he's unable to speak for a time; but when God opens up his lips once again, he begins to prophecy about the coming of the Savior; and this is what he says:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant—as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, to grant that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear. . .” (Luke 1:68-74).

Here as Zacharias glories in the coming of the Christ, there's two references that he makes to the Old Testament Scriptures. His first reference, to 'the house of David', is an allusion to the covenant that God had made with David back in 2 Samuel. And his second reference is to the covenant that God had made with Abraham. And so, here at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the Scriptures themselves are trying to help us see that we can only properly understand who Jesus is in light of all the covenant promises that have gone before. Indeed, we can't understand the Savior apart from the covenants.⁶

3. We can't fully understand THE CROSS apart from the covenants:

At the Last Supper, when Jesus wanted to explain the significance of His death to His disciples, how did He do it? He referred back to the doctrines of the covenant. Jesus said in Matthew 26:28, “This is My blood of the covenant.” What's He saying? He's quoting Exodus 24:8, which is a reference to the covenant that God had made with Israel at Sinai, when Moses had taken the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, “Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you. . .” In Luke's description, Jesus says it a little differently: “This cup. . .is the new covenant in My blood” (22:20). This language of “new covenant” is a reference to Jeremiah 31. But in both instances, what's Jesus doing? He's telling His disciples that what He's about to do on the cross is bring to fulfillment the covenant realities that Moses and Jeremiah had foretold. Surely, there's nothing more important for us to understand than the cross; and we can't fully understand the cross apart from the covenants.⁷

4. We can't fully understand OUR SALVATION apart from the covenants:

This is really clear from Romans 5. In Romans 5:12-21, Paul is teaching us about justification. And the way that he explains it is by setting forth Adam and Christ as two distinct covenant representatives. Paul tells us that we are justified in Christ in exactly the same way that we were condemned in Adam. And what we learn is that God deals with men through covenant representatives. Adam represented all humanity, so that when he fell, all humanity was condemned with him. And it works the same way with justification. Christ came into the world as the second Adam. And Paul argues here in Romans 5 that just like Adam, Christ is the covenant representative of all those who believe in Him. So, just as all humanity was condemned on the basis of Adam's disobedience, so too, all those who belong to the Savior are justified on the basis of Jesus' obedience as their covenant representative. What we see here is that the doctrine of justification is wholly covenantal; indeed, we can't understand our salvation apart from a covenantal framework, for: “It is by a covenantal redemptive design that God saves us.”⁸

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⁶ Jonty Rhodes notes: "Covenant is the theme that links the different books of the Bible to make them one united story, blazing through the Old Testament like a firework, before exploding into full color in the coming of Christ." (Covenants Made Simple).

⁷ As Rhodes notes again: "Zechariah knew that God was about to do something enormous, something that would shake the world. He also knew that the origin of this plan had been the covenant God had made with Abraham right back in Genesis."

⁸ Insight gleaned from Ligon Duncan in his Covenant Theology course. Jonty Rhodes writes: “My blood of the covenant [Matthew 26:28]. Why 'covenant'? Wouldn't 'This is my blood, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' have been enough? Most Christians have at least some understanding that Jesus shed his blood so that we might be forgiven. Far fewer, I suggest, would be able to explain what Jesus meant by calling his blood covenant blood. In fact, many of us could put our finger over the word 'covenant' and read the verse just the same. . .The death of Christ stands at the heart of the Christian gospel. And Jesus, for one, thought 'covenant' best unlocked the meaning of that death." (Covenants Made Simple, chapter 1).

⁸ The quote is from Ligon Duncan's Covenant Theology course. Francis Roberts notes: "Mans enjoyment of God, by natural
5. We can't fully understand THE SACRAMENTS apart from the covenants:

The covenants are also the way Scripture explains and deepens our understanding of the sacraments. The two sacraments that we celebrate now in the new covenant—baptism and the Lord's Supper—are founded upon the reality of Old Testament covenant signs. Baptism has now replaced circumcision, which was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham; and the Lord's Supper has replaced Passover, which was given in the context of God's covenant with Israel under Moses. Scripture teaches us that sacraments are signs and seals of covenant promises. In God's covenant with Noah, the rainbow was given as an outward sign of God's covenantal promise (Genesis 9:12-13); and our sacraments function in exactly the same way. 'They're given as tangible representations of God's faithful mercies. They're things we can see and smell and taste in the midst of the darkness that so often surrounds us. They're given to confirm the covenant promises that God has made to us, and thereby to strengthen our faith. So truly, we cannot rightly understand the sacraments apart from an understanding of the covenants.'

Summary: In other words, understanding the covenants is something that's absolutely vital: "What we are talking about is not something peripheral. . .We are talking about something that strikes at the very heart of our understanding of the person and work of Christ, of the Gospel of salvation, of redemptive history, [and] of the relationship between the Old and the New Testament. Covenant Theology is that central."

III. What is a Covenant?

1. The ORIGIN of the word covenant:

A) The HEBREW WORD: The Old Testament Hebrew word for covenant is berith. It's uncertain exactly where berith was derived from. Some think it was derived from the Hebrew verb barah, "to cut," which alluded to the covenant ceremony of cutting the animals into pieces and passing between the parts (recorded in Genesis 15 and Jeremiah 34). Others think that berith was derived from the Assyrian word baru, meaning "to bind," which would have related to the oath-binding commitment that was made between the parties involved. While both suggestions would fit with the nature of a covenant, it's not immediately clear where the word berith actually came from. At the end of the day, though, the origin of the word berith isn't all that important, since its exact meaning doesn't so much depend on where this word was derived from, but rather on the way that it's used in the Scriptures.

5 As the Westminster Confession says: "Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace..." (27:1). Alec Motyer puts it this way: "Covenant signs declare covenant promises to covenant people. [A covenant sign] is a token and guarantee of the word of God." (Covenant and Promise; Evangel, 1983). We'll talk more about this in the lessons on Noah and Abraham.

quoted from Ligon Duncan's Covenant Theology course (Chapter 1: Introduction to Covenant Theology).

Berkhof notes: "The Hebrew word for covenant is always berith, a word of uncertain derivation. The most general opinion is that it is derived from the Hebrew verb barah, 'to cut,' and therefore contains a reminder of the ceremony mentioned in Genesis 15:17. Some, however, prefer to think that it is derived from the Assyrian word berita, meaning 'to bind.' This would at once point to the covenant as a bond." (Berkhof). Witsius says: "With respect to [the Hebrew word berith], the learned are not agreed. Some derive it from barah, which, in Piel, signifies 'to cut down'; because, as we shall presently observe, covenants were solemnly ratified by cutting or dividing animals asunder. It may also be derived from the same root in a very different signification; for, as berah properly signifies 'to create'; so, metaphorically, [it may signify] 'to ordain', or 'dispose'. . .Others had rather derive it from bara...signifying, besides other things, 'to choose'. And in covenants, especially of friendship, there is a choice of persons between whom, of things about which, and of condition upon which, a covenant is entered into. . ." (V1, p42). Along with the possibility that berith came from the Akkadian root baru, 'to bind, to fetter,' and its related noun berita, 'band' or 'letter,' Robertson notes a few other options: '[Another] suggestion points to the verb barah, which means 'to eat.' If
B) The GREEK TRANSLATION: As we mentioned, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) consistently translated the Hebrew berith into the Greek word diatheke. Though the ordinary word for “covenant” in Greek is suntheke—not diatheke—the Greek word suntheke carries with it the idea of a mutual agreement or pact between two equal parties. The Greek word diatheke normally means “last will” or “testament” rather than “covenant,” but it seems to have been chosen in order to emphasize two truths: 1) The sovereign nature of God's covenant with man (the fact that this isn't mutual—God doesn't need our permission); and, 2) The vast difference between the two parties involved (God's covenant with us isn't between equal parties—rather, the Creator enters into covenant with His creatures). As suntheke was inadequate to describe what was happening when God enters into covenant with man, the word diatheke was chosen instead and “received a new meaning.”

C) The ENGLISH ROOTS: We mentioned earlier that the Old and New Testaments derive their names from the word covenant. Again, this is because our English “testament” comes from the Latin testamentum, which, in turn, had come from the Greek diatheke, which, once again, had come from the Hebrew berith. But here we can also note that when the Greek word for covenant, diatheke, was translated into Latin, it was actually translated into three distinct Latin words. One of them, as we saw, was testamentum. But it's interesting to note that another way the Greek diatheke was translated into Latin is foedus. This is where we get the English word “federal” (IE, federal government); and it's also why covenant theology is sometimes called “federal theology.” The last way diatheke is translated into the Latin is pactum, which is where we get the English word “pact.” All three terms (foedus, pactum, and testamentum) are translations of the Greek diatheke, which had come from the Hebrew berith.

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<tr>
<th>HEBREW word for covenant</th>
<th>GREEK word for covenant</th>
<th>LATIN words for covenant</th>
<th>ENGLISH words from the Latin</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BERITH</td>
<td>DIATHEKE</td>
<td>Foedus</td>
<td>Federal</td>
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<td>Testatmentum</td>
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<td>Pactum</td>
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THREE ENGLISH WORDS THAT COME FROM THE GREEK WORD FOR COVENANT

2. The TYPES of Biblical covenants:

In the Scriptures we can find three different types of covenants: There are covenants that men make with each other (human covenants); covenants that God establishes with men (divine covenants); and covenants that God's people renew with the Lord (covenants of renewal). Let's take them one by one:

A) HUMAN COVENANTS: There are many different examples of human covenants in Scripture. We know, first of all, that marriage is a covenant: for the prophet confronted God's people with these words in Malachi 2:14, “the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.” But this was the reference, the case would be to the sacred meal which often was associated with the covenant-making process...

[And Martin] Noth favors the suggestion that 'covenant' derives from the Akkadian birit, which relates to the Hebrew preposition 'between',... which took on the substantival meaning of 'a mediation,' which consequently required the introduction of a second preposition 'between' and finally evolved into the normal word for 'covenant,' which could be used with verbs other than 'to cut' (between).” (p3). Robertson asserts that the etymology of the Old Testament term for covenant has proven inconclusive, but affirms that “the contextual usage of the term in Scripture points rather consistently to the concept of a bond or relationship.” (Robertson, p3). Roberts had earlier noted many of these possibilities in his volume (pp10-11).

13 Berkof writes: “In the Septuagint the word berith is rendered diatheke in every passage where it occurs with the exception of Deuteronomy 9:15 (marturion) and 1 Kings 11 (entole).... This use of the word seems rather peculiar in view of the fact that it is not the usual Greek word for covenant, but really denotes a disposition, and consequently also a testament. The ordinary word for covenant is suntheke. Did the translators intend to substitute another idea for the covenant idea? Evidently not, for in Isaiah 28:15 they use the two words synonymously, and there diatheke evidently means a pact or an agreement.... But the question remains: Why did they so generally avoid the use of suntheke and substitute for it a word which denotes a disposition rather than an agreement? In all probability the reason lies in the fact that in the Greek world the covenant idea expressed by suntheke was based to such an extent on the legal equality of the parties, that it could not, without considerable modification, be incorporated in the Scriptural system of thought. The idea that the priority belongs to God in the establishment of the covenant, and that He sovereignly imposes His covenant on man was absent from the usual Greek word. Hence the substitution of the word. The word diatheke thus... received new meaning.” (Louis Berkof, Systematic Theology).

13 From Ligon Duncan's course on Covenant Theology.
there are other examples as well. In Scripture, covenants included treaties between nations, such as when Joshua “made a covenant” with the Gibeonites, “to let them live” (Joshua 9:15); or when “there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a covenant” (1 Kings 5:12). Or, covenants could also be laws and agreements between kings and their people, as it was when “all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and David made a covenant with them....” (1 Chronicles 11:3). Covenants were also used as binding contracts for business negotiations, as it was in Genesis 21 with Abraham and Abimelech, when “the two of them made a covenant” (v22-32). And covenants could be deeply personal commitments between friends, as it was when “Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David” and “made David vow” to deal with him and his posterity in lovingkindness (1 Samuel 20:12-17). Covenants also included any other kind of agreement between two parties, as it was when Laban and Jacob made a covenant to deal faithfully with one another (Genesis 31:44ff); or when Abner made a covenant with David to establish his throne over all Israel (1 Samuel 3:6-13ff).11

B) DIVINE COVENANTS: Throughout the Old Testament, we also see the Lord binding himself to His people through covenant. This is what we’re going to be studying over the course of our time together. We’re going to be looking at the covenants that God makes with Adam, Noah, Abraham, with Israel at Sinai, David, and ultimately the new covenant instituted by Christ, and we’re going to be asking: What do these covenants mean? What do they teach us about who God is and what He has promised? What do they show us about the redemption He would accomplish for His people? And how is it that the covenants which the Lord establishes in the Old Testament find their fulfillment in the new covenant inaugurated in Christ? It’s on these divine covenants that we’ll be mainly focused.

C) COVENANTS OF RENEWAL: This is the last type of biblical covenant. This kind of covenant has to do with what we might call covenant renewal, when God’s people come together corporately in order to renew their covenant relationship with the Lord. We see examples of this in passages such as 2 Kings 11:17, where Jehoiada the priest “made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they would be the Lord’s people....” In a similar way, Hezekiah gathered the priests and Levites together during the course of his reign, and told them it was in his heart “to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel” that His anger would turn away from them (2 Chronicles 29:1ff). Ezra the priest likewise urges the people to repent of their sins and covenant afresh with the Lord (10:1-3). It’s important to recognize that the ones making these covenants are already in covenant relationship with the Lord; but in these instances God’s people are corporately seeking to renew their allegiance.13

3. The DEFINITION of a covenant:

What is a covenant? We see human covenants scattered throughout the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures. We know about the divine covenants, such as the ones that God establishes with Noah, Abraham, and David. And we’re familiar with the Last Supper, when Christ spoke of inaugurating the new covenant in His blood. But what actually is a covenant? How does Scripture define for us what a covenant actually is? Theologian O Palmer Robertson gives what is perhaps the best definition (and possibly also the shortest!) when he says: “A covenant is a bond in blood, sovereignly administered.”16

A) A BOND: In other words, a covenant is an oath-bound commitment.” When we examine the more prominent human covenants in Scripture, it’s clear that this aspect of oath-bound commitment is what is at the absolute forefront of the covenant. Indeed, it would seem that the giving of a solemn oath isn’t just something that takes place in the context of a covenant, but is rather the very thing that

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11 These three distinct categories of human covenants, divine covenants, and covenants of renewal are set forth by O Palmer Robertson, who speaks of “covenants inaugurated by man with man, covenants inaugurated by God with man, and covenants inaugurated by man with God” (p8). Zach Keele gives these helpful sub-categories to the human covenants in Sacred Bond.

13 As O Palmer Robertson carefully notes: “These covenant relations initiated by man with God should be understood in a context of covenant renewal. It is only on the basis of a relation previously existing that man may presume to covenant with God (cf. 2 Kings 11:17; 23:3; 2 Chronicles 29:10).” (Christ of the Covenants, pp8-9). Probably the best way to understand the present significance of these covenants of renewal is by thinking about our corporate times of Sabbath worship: As we gather together every week, corporately presenting ourselves before the Lord, we are renewing our covenant relationship with Him.

16 Robertson's definition is found in his Christ of the Covenants (p4). Ligon Duncan also follows Robertson's definition in his Covenant Theology course. One thing we should note is that though this is Robertson's definition for a covenant in general, it's clear from the context that he's speaking especially of divine covenants. Though we can say all covenants in Scripture are "bonds in blood"; human covenants are mutually entered into, while it's the divine covenants that are sovereignly administered.
constitutes the essence of a covenant. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of this is in the "covenant between Abraham and Abimelech" in Genesis 21. Here, Abimelech asks Abraham to swear to him that he would deal faithfully with him and his posterity after him (verse 23). Abraham then swears to him (verse 24); and we're told that "the two of them made a covenant" (verse 27). Then, to sum up what had just taken place, Scripture goes on to tell us in verses 31-32: "Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because there the two of them took an oath. So they made a covenant at Beersheba. . ." Another example is the "covenant between Isaac and Abimelech" in Genesis 26. Here, we're told that Abimelech comes to Isaac, saying: "Let there now be an oath between us, even between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you" (verse 28). And though we don't hear anything more in the text about a covenant, Scripture implies this is exactly what took place the next day when "they arose early and exchanged oaths" (verse 31). And we see the same thing in the "covenant between Israel and the Gibeonites" in Joshua 9. Here, the Gibeonites come to Joshua and all Israel asking them to enter into a covenant with them (vv6,11); and when Joshua and the people agree, this is how Scripture describes what happened: "Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them." (verse 15). And again, a few verses later, the covenant is directly equated to the oath that they "had sworn" (verse 18). From all these passages, it's clear that an oath is at the heart of a covenant. Indeed, a covenant is an oath-bound commitment.17

It's in light of passages such as these that the theologian John Murray concludes: "When all the instances of merely human covenants are examined, it would definitely appear that the notion of sworn fidelity is thrust into prominence in these covenants. . .It is not the contractual terms that are in prominence so much as the solemn engagement of one person to another. . .It is the giving of oneself over in the commitment. . .It is the promise of unreserved fidelity, of whole-souled commitment that appears to constitute the essence of the covenant." And O Palmer Robertson writes: "Scripture would suggest not merely that a covenant generally contains an oath. Instead, it may be affirmed that a covenant is an oath. . .'Oath' so adequately captures the relationship achieved by 'covenant' that the terms may be interchanged (Psalm 89:3, 34f; 105:8-10)." Indeed, the oath that was taken was so much a part of the covenant that it can truly be said, "in the Bible, promise and oath are often synonyms for covenant."18

There's a beautiful illustration of this in the covenant between Israel and the Gibeonites in Joshua 9. The Gibeonites were a tribe of Canaanites who were living in the land of Canaan; which was the land that God had promised to give to Israel—and was commanding them to go in and possess. Well, the Gibeonites got word that Israel was coming. They had heard all about the Lord; they knew Israel was coming to take possession of the land; and they realized they didn't stand a chance against them. So, they came up with a plan. A few of them traveled down the road to where Joshua and Israel had set up camp. And when they came to them, they pretended to live in a far away land, and asked Joshua and all Israel to enter into a covenant with them. Joshua and the people forget to ask the Lord about it; and so they agree and make a covenant with these Gibeonites—an oath-bound commitment of total fidelity. It's three days later they find out the truth, that the Gibeonites were actually living in the land. But at that point there was nothing they could do, because they had already given their word. There was no going back now. So when the people grumble about it, Joshua and the leaders of Israel say in response: "We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them." They even go on to say: "This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them." (vv19-20). Once you make a covenant, there's no going back.19

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17 The phrase “oath-bound commitment” comes from Ligon Duncan’s Covenant Theology course. We could also reference a few other examples that highlight the fact that a covenant was, in its essence, a solemn oath. We see the same truth in the covenant between Laban and Jacob in Genesis 31:44,53; as well as in that between Jonathan and David in 1 Samuel 20:16-17.

18 The last quote is from Zach Keele’s Sacred Bond. Murray’s quote is from his pamphlet, The Covenant of Grace. He’s reacting to the notion that a covenant is merely a pact or agreement; he argues it’s much more—a wholehearted commitment of relational fidelity. Robertson likewise notes: “While the divine covenants invariably involve obligations, their ultimate purpose reaches beyond the guaranteed discharge of a duty. Instead, it is the personal interrelation of God with his people that is at the heart of the covenant.” (p5). And again, he writes: “The prominence of oaths and signs in the divine covenants underlines the fact that a covenant in its essence is a bond. . .in several passages of Scripture the integral relation of the oath to the covenant is brought out most clearly by a parallelism of construction (Deuteronomy 29:12; 2 Kings 11:4; 1 Chronicles 16:16; Psalm 105:9; 89:3-4; Ezekiel 17:19). In these cases, the oath intertwines with the covenant, and the covenant with the oath. This closeness of relationship between oath and covenant emphasizes that a covenant in its essence is a bond.” (pp6-7). Along with the passages already quoted, we could also reference Genesis 9:11 with Isaiah 54:9; 2 Samuel 7 with Acts 2:30; and Luke 1:72-73.

19 Ligon Duncan gives this illustration in his course on Covenant Theology. He also goes on to draw out the implications of
This is a solemn thing—and it's also a precious thing as we think about what this means for us as God's covenant people. Old Testament scholar J. Alec Motyer sums it up beautifully when he writes: “The covenant idea in the Old Testament can be very simply expressed in the words God makes and keeps promises.” How do we know that God will continue to be faithful to us in the midst of all our sin and failure? How can we be sure He won't get fed up with us and cast us away? Because of His covenant promises: When God enters into covenant with us, He's binding himself with a solemn oath to be our God. What we're going to see as we continue our study is that at the heart of God's covenant with His people are solemn promises He's sworn to uphold; and when He makes promises, He keeps them.20

B) A Bond IN BLOOD: So, a covenant is the giving of a solemn oath; an oath-bound commitment. But as we examine the Scriptures, what we're going to find is that it's also more than that. A covenant is the kind of oath that carries life and death consequences. Life or death was at stake in a covenant. This is why we say that a covenant is “a bond in blood.” It's not just an oath—it's a blood-bound oath.

We can see this even in the terminology that's used for “making a covenant” in the Hebrew language. In Scripture, the English phrase “to make a covenant” is literally in Hebrew, “to cut a covenant.” And though other Hebrew phrases can also be used for God's covenant dealings (see chart below), it seems that this phrase, to cut a covenant, is consistently used for the inauguration of a covenant relationship. When God first made a covenant, He literally cut a covenant. And this phrase, “to cut a covenant,” vividly describes what would happen when a covenant was inaugurated. Both in extra-biblical sources, as well as in the Scriptures themselves, we have accounts of covenants ceremonies. And what would happen in covenant ceremonies is that animals were slaughtered and then cut into pieces. Those who were entering into a covenant would then symbolically walk between the pieces of the slain animals. What was the significance? “By walking between the pieces, they were taking what is known as a self-maledictory oath. . . In other words, ‘Be it done to us, as we have done to these animals if we are not faithful to our commitments that we have made to you in the covenant. Slaughter us. . . just like we have slaughtered these animals, if we break our commitments that we have made in the covenant.”21

20 Alec Motyer's quote is from his article, Covenant and Promise, Part 1 (Evangel, January, 1983). Witsius says: “God, by this covenant, acquires no new right over man. . . Because God is the blessed, and self-sufficient Being. . . But man. . . does acquire [the] right to demand of God the promise; for God has, by his promises, made himself a debtor to man. Or, to speak in a manner more becoming [of] God, he was pleased to make his performing his promises, a debt due to himself, to his goodness, justice, and veracity. And to man in covenant, and continuing steadfast to it, he granted the right of expecting and requiring, that God should satisfy the demands of his goodness, justice, and truth, by the performance of the promises.” (Volume 1, p48).
21 The quote is from Ligon Duncan, Covenant Theology. O Palmer Robertson notes here: “Particularly striking is the fact that the verb to cut may stand by itself and still clearly mean to cut a covenant (cf. 1Sam.11:1; 12; 20:16; 22:8; 1Kings 8:9; 2Chron.7:18; Ps.105:9; Hag.2:5). This usage indicates just how essentially the concept of cutting had come to be related to the covenant idea in Scripture.” (p9). And again: “As the covenant is made, animals are ‘cut’ in ritual ceremony. The most obvious example of this procedure in Scripture is found in Genesis 15, at the time of the making of the Abrahamic covenant. First Abraham divides a series of animals and lays the pieces over against one another. Then a symbolic representation of God passes between the divided pieces of animals. The result is the ‘making’ or ‘cutting’ of a covenant. What is the meaning of this division of animals at the point of covenantal inauguration? Both biblical and extra-biblical evidence combine to confirm a specific significance for this ritual. The animal-division symbolizes a pledge to the death at the point of covenant commitment. The dismembered animals represent the curse that the covenant-maker calls down on himself if he should violate the commitment which he has made. . . It is in this context of covenant inauguration that the biblical phrase ‘to cut a covenant’ is to be understood. Integral to the very terminology which describes the establishment of a covenantal relationship is the concept of a pledge to life and death. A covenant is indeed a ‘bond in blood,’ or a bond of life and death.” (Christ of the Covenants, pp9-10). Nor is this notion an idea invented by more modern thinkers. Long ago, Thomas Boston noted: “It was an ancient custom, in making of covenants, to cut a beast in twain, and to pass between the parts of it; and that passing between the parts, respected the falling of the curse of the covenant upon the breaker; Jeremiah 34:18... I will make the men that have transgressed my covenant—the calf which they cut in twain, and passed between the parts thereof; that is, I will make them as that calf which they cut in twain; I will execute the curse on them, cutting them asunder as covenant-breakers (Matthew 24:51).” (View of the Covenant of Grace, pp60-61). And Witsius had written: “Making a covenant, the Hebrews call, karat berith, ‘to strike a covenant’. . . Which doubtless took its rise from the ancient ceremony of slaying animals, by which covenants were ratified. Of which rite we observe very ancient traces (Genesis 15:9-10). . . They also used to pass in the middle between the divided parts of the victim cut asunder (Jeremiah 34:18). . . Nor were these rites without their significancy. The cutting of the animals asunder, denoted, that, in the same manner, the perjured and covenant breakers should be cut asunder, by the vengeance of God. And to this purpose is what God says in Jeremiah 34:18:20: ‘And I will give the men that have transgressed...
We see one example of this in Jeremiah 34:1-22. Here in this passage, the Babylonians had come up against Jerusalem to capture it; and the people in the city are terrified. Many of them had been living lives that didn’t honor the Lord, but suddenly the people decide they want to follow God. One of the ways that they had been violating God’s Word had to do with keeping their Hebrew slaves. The Law permitted them to do so for six years—and no more—but many of the people had been keeping them for much longer; so when the Babylonians come up against the city, the people decide to let them go. They come to the temple and make a solemn covenant before God (verse 15); and as they do so, they slaughter animals and pass between the pieces, telling God that they would be faithful to do what they had said (vv8-10,18). But what happens? The Babylonians go away. And when they do, the people remember that life is hard without their slaves; so they take their slaves back, breaking their word with God (vv10-11,15-16). And Jeremiah comes to them with this message: Do you not remember those animals which you slaughtered and walked between the pieces? God is going to make you like one of them, and the birds of the air are going to feast on your dead bodies; because you have broken your covenant with God (vv17-20). Indeed, a covenant is a life and death commitment—a bond in blood.22

There’s another example in Genesis 15:7-21. Here, God had promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and to his descendants after him. But when Abraham asks for some kind of confirmation, the Lord tells him to bring a heifer, a female goat, a ram, a turtle-dove, and a pigeon. Abraham cuts them in two, laying the pieces opposite of each other; and we read in verse 17: “It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land. . .’” (vv17-18). It’s the same covenant ceremony with the self-maledictory oath; but in this case, it’s not Abraham—but God himself who passes between the pieces. Abraham had actually fallen asleep (verse 12)! It’s God, and Him alone, who takes the solemn vow. When Abraham asks, “How do I know?” God tells him, in effect, “It’s this certain.” And it’s so certain that the Lord uses the past tense: “To your descendants I have given this land” (verse 18); because in making this covenant, God was taking upon himself the blood-bound oath, calling down upon himself the curses of the covenant if He fails to make good on His word: “By this action. . .the Lord assumes to himself the full responsibility for seeing that every promise of the covenant shall be realized.” And friends, this is exactly how certain every one of the promises are that God has made to us in Christ. 23

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22 Example taken from Ligon Duncan, Covenant Theology.
23 The quote is from Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, p145. He describes it in this way: “Contrary to what might be expected, Abraham does not pass between the divided pieces representing the covenantal curse of self-malediction. The Lord of the covenant does not require that his servant take to himself the self-maledictory oath. Only God himself passes between the pieces. . .It is not that Abraham has no obligations in the covenant relation. . .But as the covenant is instituted formally in Genesis 15, the Lord dramatizes the gracious character of the covenantal relation by having himself alone to pass between the pieces. This covenant shall be fulfilled because God assumes to himself full responsibility in seeing to its realization.” (p145). And Alec Motyer says: “[N]otice that in this ceremony, which now centers upon these slaughtered animals, God is the sole agent. A deep sleep fell upon Abraham (15:12). He is immobilized in order that God might be the only one active in this situation. When Abraham was so immobilized and when the sun had gone down a furnace that smoked and flashed passed.
C) A Bond in Blood, SOVEREIGNLY ADMINISTERED. This is the last part of the definition for a covenant. In our survey of human covenants, we learned that a covenant is an oath; and in our brief study of the covenant ceremonies in Genesis 15 and Jeremiah 34, we saw that it's not just an oath, but a blood-bound oath. So far, so good. But when it comes to the covenants that God makes with man, there's also one more aspect that we need to include. **Divine covenants are sovereignly administered.**

What does that mean? It means, first of all, that **it's God alone who initiates His covenant with man.** It's not man who chooses to enter into covenant with God. Nor is it a mutual agreement, as it is in the case of human covenants. Rather, in divine covenants, God alone establishes His covenant with those whom He chooses. We see this in *God's covenant with Noah,* where the Lord comes to him and tells him that He's going to destroy the earth; and He says to Noah: “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. . .” (Genesis 6:18). It's not Noah who chooses to establish this covenant with God; rather, it's God who draws near to Noah and enters into this covenant with him, for his own salvation, and the salvation of his household. God is the One who initiates the covenant. And it's the same thing in *God's covenant with Abraham,* for it's the Lord who comes to him in Genesis 12, telling him to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's house, for the land that He would show him (vv1-3). It's not Abraham who initiates this covenant with God, but God who initiates the covenant with Abraham. Old Testament scholar Alec Motyer sums it up well when he says: “The covenant men were what they were because God chose them to be so. . .What happened to Noah and Abraham happened by divine decision.”

**Secondly, it's God alone who sets the terms of His covenant with man.** In other words, God alone is the One who decides what He is requiring in the covenant, and what He is promising in the covenant. When God established *His covenant with Noah,* He didn't ask for suggestions; nor did He leave any room for negotiations. He simply came to him and told him: “This is how it's going to be.” Again, it was the same way in *His covenant with Abraham.* The Lord sovereignly imposes both the promises and the requirements: Abraham is to leave behind everything he knows and journey to the land which God would show him; that was the requirement. There were also promises that were set before him: God would make him a great nation; and bless him; He would make his name great; and bless all the families of the earth through him. But Abraham has no say in any of it; it's God who sets the terms.

**4. The ELEMENTS of biblical covenants:**

Often, in biblical covenants (both human and divine) there were certain elements that were connected with the making of the covenant. Probably the best example we have to help us understand this today is a wedding ceremony. At the heart of the wedding is the *marriage covenant*—the solemn oath-bound

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24 As you might guess, the fact that God initiates His covenant with those whom He chooses leads us inevitably to the doctrine of election; the truth that God chooses those whom He saves (rather than the other way around). This is what Motyer was saying as well; his full quote comes in the context of declaring that Noah and Abraham were “The objects of divine election: The covenant men were what they were because God chose them to be so. Noah was the man immersed in the world's corruption until grace found Noah. Abraham was the man to whom God said, 'I brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees. What happened to Noah and Abraham happened by divine decision.” (Covenant and Promise). Roberts says: “God alone is the author of the covenant; and His free grace or favor, is the only inward impulsive, or moving cause why He makes a covenant with His people. It's His gratuitous agreement with them. God is a most free agent, and works all things according to the counsel and good pleasure of His own will. It is an act of His grace and mercy to make covenant with His people; but having made a covenant with them, it is an act of His justice, truth and faithfulness to make good and perform covenant. God freely makes himself our debtor, by covenanting. . .” (p13). And Boston draws out how each member of the Trinity is at work in this sovereign administration: “All hands of the glorious Trinity are at work in this building. The Father chose the objects of mercy, and gave them to the Son to be redeemed; the Son purchased redemption for them; and the Holy Ghost applies the purchased redemption unto them. But it is specially attributed to the Son, on the account of his singular agency in the work: Zechariah 6:12, 'Behold, the man whose name is the Branch—He shall build the temple of the Lord’” (Covenant of Grace, p2).

25 As O Palmer Robertson writes: “A long history has marked the analysis of the covenants in terms of mutual compacts or contracts. But recent scholarship has established rather certainly the sovereign character of the administration of the divine covenants in Scripture. . .The sovereign Lord of heaven and earth dictates the terms of his covenant. The successive covenants of Scripture may emphasize either promissory or legal aspects. But this point of emphasis does not alter the basic character of covenantal administration. Whatever may be the distinctive substance of a particular covenant, the mode of administration remains constant. A covenant is a bond in blood sovereignly administered.” (Christ of the Covenants, p15).
vows that are exchanged between husband and wife. But there are often other elements that go along with the wedding as well. For instance, these oath-bound vows, which we just mentioned, usually take place in the context of a marriage ceremony. And in the context of the marriage ceremony there is (at least in the west) the symbolic giving of rings, which function as covenant signs—tokens of the marriage covenant. Often, the ceremony is also connected with the giving of a feast—the guests are summoned to partake together of what you could call a covenant meal. And just as these elements are included as part of the wedding, biblical covenants often include similar elements in the making of a covenant.

A) A covenant was at times accompanied by a covenant CEREMONY: This is what we described in the passages from Genesis 15 and Jeremiah 34, where the animals were slain and cut into pieces, and those who were making the covenant passed between the parts. It served as a visible representation of the oath that they were taking: “May what has happened to these animals also happen to me if I don’t make good on my promise.” We’ve already talked about the significance of the ceremony and how it served to show that a covenant was a bond in blood. But here we can note that though the ceremony was a stark reminder of what a covenant oath really was, it wasn’t something that was truly essential for the making of a covenant. It wasn’t the ceremony that was the heart of the covenant, but the oath.

B) A covenant was often accompanied by a covenant MEAL: Earlier we referenced the covenant that Isaac and Abimelech made with each other in Genesis 26. In this passage, Abimelech and his advisor come to Isaac, saying: “We see plainly that the Lord has been with you; so we said, ‘Let there now be an oath between us, even between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you. . .’” (26:28). And we read of Isaac’s response in verses 30-31: “Then he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. In the morning they arose early and exchanged oaths, then Isaac sent them away and they departed from him in peace.” As we’ve seen, the oath is the heart of the covenant. But this feast that Isaac prepares for Abimelech also plays a significant role in this covenant between them, because what they’re doing is sitting down to partake of a covenant meal. We see the same thing in the covenant between Jacob and Abimelech in Genesis 31. When Jacob tries to get away from his father-in-law, Laban goes after him and takes him in the hill country. After they both argue their cases, Laban proposes they make a covenant. And when they do, this is what we read in verses 53-54: “So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen to the meal; and they eat the meal and spent the night on the mountain.” Here again, what we see is a covenant meal.

C) A covenant could be accompanied by a covenant SIGN: In the context of the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech in Genesis 21, we’re told that Abraham takes seven ewe lambs of the flock and sets them aside by themselves. When Abimelech asks about them, Abraham says to him: “You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well.” (verse 30). In other words, these ewe lambs were functioning as signs of the covenant between them. We see another example once again in the covenant between Jacob and Laban in Genesis 31. For in the context of this covenant, Jacob gathers stones together and makes them into a heap (vv45-46), and

26 A covenant was always an oath, but a covenant oath didn’t always include a ceremony. As Zach Keele says, “There is more to the covenant ceremonies than just the cutting of animals. Clearly, the verbal oath-taking of the parties was the central part.”

27 We’ve mentioned only examples of human covenants here, but we could also think of the Passover (Exodus 12) and the meal which Moses and the elders ate before the Lord (Exodus 24:9-11) as examples of covenant meals in the context of divine covenants. Zach Keele notes: “A common gesture was a shared meal between the parties who made the covenant. Often, they ate the animals cut in the covenant ceremony. . .Such a meal was reflective of their committed relationship.” (Sacred Bond). And Witsius says: “It was likewise a custom, that agreements and compacts were ratified by solemn feasts. Examples of which are obvious in Scripture. Thus Isaac, having made a covenant with Abimelech, is said to have made a great feast, and to have eaten with them (Genesis 26:30). In like manner acted his son Jacob, after having made a covenant with Laban (Genesis 31:54). We read of a like federal feast (2 Samuel 3:20), where a relation is given of the feast which David made for Abner and his attendants, who came to make a covenant with him in the name of the people. . .These feasts were tokens of a sincere and lasting friendship. But when God in the solemnities of his covenants with men, thought proper to use these, or the like rites, the significance was still more noble and divine. . .Those sacred banquets, to which the covenantants were admitted before the Lord, especially that instituted by the Lord Jesus, under the New Testament, do most effectually seal or ratify that intimate communion and fellowship there is between Christ and believers.” (Economy of the Covenants, VI, pp44-45). As Witsius here implies, the Lord’s Supper is to be understood as a covenant meal—indeed, it is the covenant meal of the New Testament church. When we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we’re eating a covenant meal before the Lord. And each time we partake of the Lord’s Supper, the Lord is renewing His covenant promises to us. He wants us to know that His promises are just as real as the bread and wine we can smell and taste. Further, every time we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we’re also pointed to the greatest covenant meal, still yet to come—an eternal feast—the marriage supper of the Lamb (Isaiah 25:6-8; Revelation 19:6-9).
Laban says: “This heap is a witness between you and me this day…” (verse 48). And Laban repeats these words again, saying: “Behold this heap and behold the pillar. . .This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.” (vv51-52). Again, the heap of stones was functioning as a sign of the covenant. And it's the same thing in the covenant that Joshua makes with all the people in Joshua 24. Here, Joshua urges Israel to serve the Lord, and when they assure him they will, Scripture tells us: “So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day. . .And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. Joshua said to all the people, ‘Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.’” (vv25-27). Again, the stone Joshua set up functioned as a covenant sign.

And these covenant signs also serve an important role in divine covenants. When God establishes the covenant with Noah and his sons in Genesis 9, for example, He sets the rainbow in the clouds as “the sign of the covenant” He was making with them (9:12,13,17). The rainbow was the sign of the Noahic Covenant. And in the same way, when God comes to Abraham to confirm His covenant with him in Genesis 17, He gives circumcision as “the sign of the covenant” between them (17:11). Circumcision was thus the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. And later, in the context of His covenant with Israel at Sinai, it seems that the Lord also institutes the Sabbath as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Exodus 31:12-17). What's the function of these signs? When it comes to the divine covenants, these signs are meant, first of all, to give assurance to God's people. As one put it: “covenant signs declare covenant promises to covenant people. [They're] a token and guarantee of the word of God.” The reason God set the rainbow in the clouds was to remind Noah and his sons of the promise He had made to them. Earlier we mentioned that our sacraments are founded on the reality of covenant signs: Baptism and the Lord's Supper are tangible pictures of God's covenant promises to His people. They're meant to remind us of the promises God has bound himself to uphold. God's covenant signs are also meant to exhibit consecration to the world. When Abraham received the sign of circumcision, not only did it remind him of God's promises, but it forever marked him as a man who was now set apart, belonging to the Lord. So it is again with our sacraments: Baptism is a statement of allegiance. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:16 that when we partake of the Lord's Supper, we proclaim the gospel to the world.

**SUMMARY:** So then, these are the primary elements involved in the making of a covenant. But we should note here that though a covenant could certainly include all these elements, it wasn't necessary for all these things to be present in order for a covenant to be established. This is true in the realm of human covenants, for there's neither a ceremony nor a meal in the covenant that takes place between Abraham and Abimelech (Genesis 21); there's neither a ceremony nor a sign in the covenant between Isaac and Abimelech (Genesis 26); and there's no ceremony recorded in the covenant between Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31). It's also true of divine covenants, as there's no ceremony recorded in God's covenants with Noah or David; there's no meal that takes place in God's covenants with Noah, David, or Abraham; and there's no sign that we're told about in the context of God's covenant with David.

**IV. An Overview of Covenant Theology**

Covenant Theology is structured around two distinct covenants that God establishes with man: The first is the *Covenant of Works*, which God established with Adam, together with all who came from him; the second is the *Covenant of Grace*, which God establishes with Christ, together with all who belong to Him.

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28 The quote is from Alec Motyer, *Covenant and Promise*. On covenant signs and assurance, Ligon Duncan says: “When we waver in our faith, about the purposes of God towards us, what has God given us to be strengthened in assurance? The signs of the covenant: Communion, The Lord's Supper, the covenant meal; and Baptism, which we see administered from time after time, reminding us of God's initiative for us.” And on the covenant signs as consecration, Alec Motyer notes: “Abraham cannot look at the mark of circumcision and glory in the promises without at the same time being reminded over and over again in his commitment to God — ‘Walk before me and be thou perfect.’” (*Covenant and Promise*). And Ligon Duncan says: “this sign serves—not only to assure the believer, but it serves a witness function, to show the world whose you are.”

29 As Zach Keele notes: “It is necessary to remember that, even though these covenant ceremonies had numerous common elements, they were still flexible. Parts could be added, subtracted, or fashioned to fit the specific relationship and occasion. We should not impute a false rigidity to the ceremonies, for the form and ceremony of the covenant matched the relationship . . . Both marriage and international treaties are covenants; however, the forms of these covenants differ.” (*Sacred Bond*).
1. The Covenant of WORKS:

_The Covenant of Works_ refers to the covenant relationship that God entered into with Adam in the garden before the fall. We read in Genesis 2:16-17: “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’” God was giving Adam a very specific command. His obedience would have meant life, but his disobedience would result in death.

This relationship that God initiated with Adam is called the _Covenant of Works_, because, as we’ll see, it was a covenantal relationship; and because the condition of this covenantal relationship with Adam was _his works_; that is, God was requiring of Adam perfect obedience to the command He had given. The Westminster Shorter Catechism describes it this way: “When God had created man, He entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.” This is the Covenant of Works.30

One thing that’s vital for us to understand about the Covenant of Works is the relationship that Adam shared with the entire human race who would descend from him. Though God’s command was given only to Adam, at the same time, Adam served as a representative for the entire human race. Indeed, the destiny of all humanity hinged on Adam’s obedience or disobedience. Scripture makes this clear in passages such as Romans 5:12-21. Had Adam obeyed, it would have meant life not only for him—but for all humanity; and in the same way, when he disobeyed, he brought ruin and death upon us all.

2. The Covenant of GRACE:

After Adam had fallen into sin in the garden, and all men with him, the Lord drew near to Adam and entered into a very different kind of covenant with him. Beginning with the promise of Genesis 3:15, God entered into a covenant of grace with fallen man. In the Covenant of Works, God had entered into a covenant with _sinless man_ that was based on _human obedience_. But now, in the _Covenant of Grace_, wonder of wonders, God enters into a covenant with _fallen man_ that is based on _divine grace_.

_The Covenant of Grace_ is set forth in The Westminster Confession of Faith in this way: “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 offers 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.”31

Genesis 3:15 contains the first promise that Scripture makes of the coming of the Savior. Satan had triumphed; mankind had fallen. But that wouldn't be the last word. God would send a Redeemer to save His people from their sins. A seed would come from the woman who would crush the serpent. God would act. _Ruin_ had come through one man. But _redemption_ would come through Another. And through God’s covenants with _Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David_, the Lord continues to expand on this promise more and more. These covenants aren't to be understood as separate dispensations, but as progressive stages of one single, overarching covenant—the _Covenant of Grace_. And with each new stage, we come to learn more about the Savior and the salvation He would win for His people.

So, in its essence, the Covenant of Grace is really just another name for _the gospel_. God’s covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, teach us about _the gospel_. Through _pictures, prophecies, and promises_, these covenants point us forward to Christ and the salvation He would accomplish for His people. And with the coming of Christ and the inauguration of the new covenant, those _pictures_ become _a reality_, and those _promises_ find _their fulfillment_. In the Covenant of Grace, God would do so much more than make salvation _possible_ for us again—He would make it _certain_. In the Covenant of Grace, God redeems sinners—and He does it by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.32

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30 This is from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, _Question #12_. The Covenant of Works is also known by other names, such as the Covenant of Life, the Covenant of Nature, the Edenic Covenant, and the Covenant of Creation. There are some who deny that what took place with Adam was truly a covenant, but we’ll talk more about that in the next lesson of our study.

31 From _The Westminster Confession of Faith, 7.3_.

32 Thomas Boston writes: “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, beholding a lost world, his
3. The Covenant of REDEMPTION:

Though the Covenant of Grace comes after the Covenant of Works chronologically, Scripture makes it clear that God’s plan of salvation was set in place long before the creation of the world. For indeed, before the earth’s foundation, and even from all eternity, the Godhead of the Trinity, foreseeing and ordaining the fall of Adam, was pleased to construct a plan of redemption in which the Father would send the Son into the world to redeem for himself, through the working of the Holy Spirit, particular individuals among Adam’s fallen race. This rescue plan is often called the Covenant of Redemption.

Where do we see it in Scripture? First, we’re told that God’s plan to redeem a people for himself was put into place before the creation of the world. Ephesians 1:3-4 says: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...” (cf. 3:9-11; 2 Timothy 1:9). Secondly, Scripture tells us that the Father commissioned the Son with a special task; the task of accomplishing redemption for His people. Christ is constantly testifying of the fact that the Father sent Him into the world to accomplish a particular work. He says in John 6:38: “I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” And again He testifies in John 10:18, saying: “I have authority to lay [my life] down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.” And in John 17:4, as Jesus prays to the Father, He says: “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.” Thirdly, Scripture tells us that the Father had promised to give the Son a particular people—the same people He was sent to redeem. In Psalm 2, we read of a sacred exchange that took place in eternity past between the Father and the Son: “I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He [the Father] said to Me, You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.” (v7-8). And Jesus speaks of a people that the Father had given Him when He says in John 6:39: “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that all of that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.” Christ also prays again to the Father in John 17:6, saying: “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.”

mercy seeks a vent...” (View of the Covenant of Grace, p5). And: “The foundation on which the building of mercy stands, is a covenant, a divine covenant, a sure one. The first building for man’s happiness was a building of bounty and goodness, but not of mercy; for man was not in misery, when it was a-rising up. And it was founded on a covenant too; namely, on the covenant of works, made with the first Adam; but he broke the covenant, and the whole building tumbled down in an instant. But this is another covenant, and of another nature...The revelation, promulgation, and offer made unto the sons of men, of this covenant which lay hid in the depths of the eternal counsel, is called the gospel...” (p4). Again: “The design of this covenant was life, the most valuable interest of mankind. The first covenant was a covenant of life too; but there is this difference, to wit, that the first was for life in perfection to upright man having life before; the second, for life in perfection to sinful man legally and morally dead,” (p7). And Boston writes: “He taketh not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold (Hebrews 2:16). The original word signifies to take hold of a thing running away, or falling down; and in the same manner of construction, it is used of Christ’s catching hold of Peter sinking in the water (Matthew 14:31). Fallen angels and men were both run away from God, and sinking in the sea of his wrath; and Christ, with the bond of the covenant, takes hold of men; but not of the fallen angels; them he leaves to sink unto the bottom. All the seed of Adam was sinking, as well as the seed of Abraham, which is but a part of the seed of Adam, even some of all mankind; but Christ is not said to have taken hold of the seed of Adam, that is, all mankind; but of the seed of Abraham, that is, all the elect, or the spiritual Israel, called the house of Jacob, (Luke 1:33).” (p28). Again: “God planted Adam a noble vine, made him as a green tree full of sap, for bringing forth all fruits of holiness; but breaking the first covenant, he and all mankind in him withered and died, under the curse; upon which ensued an absolute barrenness, that no fruit of holiness could be expected from them more. But the second Adam having engaged to satisfy the law, by bearing the curse; there was thereupon made a promise of raising them up again...” (1:49).

Historically known as the Pactum Salutis, it’s also sometimes referred to as the Eternal Covenant, or the Counsel of Peace. Berkhof notes: “The name ‘counsel of peace’ is derived from Zech 2:13. Cocceius and others found in this passage a reference to an agreement between the Father and the Son. This was clearly a mistake, for the words refer to the union of the kingly and priestly offices in the Messiah. The Scriptural character of the name cannot be maintained, but this, of course, does not detract from the reality of the counsel of peace.” And Packer says: “Scripture is explicit on the fact that from eternity, in light of human sin foreseen, a specific agreement existed between the Father and the Son that they would exalt each other in the following way: the Father would honor the Son by sending him to save lost sinners through a penal self-sacrifice leading to a cosmic reign in which the central activity would be the imparting to sinners through the Holy Spirit of the redemption He won for them; and the Son would honor the Father by becoming the Father’s love-gift to sinners and by leading them through the Spirit to trust, love and glorify the Father on the model of His own obedience to the Father’s will.” (Witsius’ Introduction).

Packer notes: “All Jesus’ references to His purpose in the world as the doing of His Father’s will, and to His actual words and works as obedience to His Father’s command...and all His references to the Father ‘giving’ Him particular persons to save, and to His acceptance
So, to summarize: Before the foundation of the world, and long before Adam sinned in the garden, God had constructed a plan of salvation. The Father was delighted to set apart particular individuals to redeem for himself from every tribe and tongue and nation under heaven; and He promised them to the Son. The Father would send the Son into the world for them; the Son would lay down His life for them; and the Spirit would draw each and every one of them to the Son, according to the Father's promise. This is what theologians call the Covenant of Redemption. How does it fit together with the Covenant of Grace? Before the foundation of the world, God planned to redeem a particular people; that's the Covenant of Redemption. After the fall, God began putting this plan into action, redeeming sinners like Adam and Eve, Noah and Abraham, Joseph and Moses and David; that's the Covenant of Grace. In other words, the Covenant of Redemption is the foundation of the Covenant of Grace; and in the same way, the Covenant of Grace is the practical outworking of the Covenant of Redemption.  

What Scripture clearly affirms is that long before the creation of the world, God had constructed this plan of redemption. What's not as clear is if this arrangement between the persons of the Trinity can properly be called a covenant. And though there's agreement as to how this Covenant of Redemption relates to the Covenant of Grace in general terms, it's also not entirely agreed upon how it is that they relate to one another more specifically. Some take the Covenant of Redemption as being something quite distinct from the Covenant of Grace, contending that the first of these was a covenant which was made between the persons of the Trinity, whereas the second is made between God and man. Others contend that the Covenant of Redemption isn't separate at all, but is rather one and the same with the Covenant of Grace. According to this view, the Covenant of Redemption is simply Jesus' unique task as the head and representative of the Covenant of Grace. In other words, as the Covenant of Works was made with Adam, and in and through him extended also to his posterity, so too, the Covenant of Grace is made with Christ as the head of all who belong to Him. But whether we see the Covenant of Redemption as being distinct from the Covenant of Grace or as part of the Covenant of Grace, there are some sweet applications for us as we meditate on the implications of God's plan of redemption.
The first application is: **our security in Christ.** The fact is, our salvation isn't ultimately contingent on us at all. It's contingent on a promise the Father made to the Son. The Father has promised His Son a place in the Covenant of Redemption—and if God's Word to man is certain because God cannot lie—how much more certain is the promise of God the Father to God the Son? An application of the Covenant of Redemption is **God's love for us in Christ.** The truth is, God loved you, not just at

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with all those whom He represented. This second view is expressed in the Westminster Larger Catechism #31: "**With whom was the covenant of grace made?**" The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in Him with all the elect as his seed." Charles Hodge sets forth the statement of the question in this way: "At first view there appears to be some confusion in the statements of the Scriptures as to the parties [of the Covenant of Grace]. Sometimes Christ is presented as one of the parties; at others He is represented not as a party, but as the mediator and surety of the covenant; while the parties are represented to be God and his people. As the old covenant was made between God and the Hebrews, and Moses acted as mediator, so the new covenant is commonly represented in the Bible as formed between God and his people, Christ acting as mediator. He is, therefore, called the mediator of a better covenant founded on better promises. Some theologians propose to reconcile these modes of representation by saying that as the covenant of works was formed with Adam as the representative of his race, and therefore in him with all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation; so the covenant of grace was formed with Christ as the head and representative of his people, and in Him with all those given to Him by the Father. This simplifies the matter, and agrees with the parallel which the Apostle traces between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21, and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22,47-49." This is the essence of the second view, represented in the Larger Catechism. Hodge, however, opts for the first view, which he describes in this way: "There are in fact two covenants relating to the salvation of fallen man, the one between God and Christ [IE, the Covenant of Redemption], the other between God and his people [IE, the Covenant of Grace]." Many reformers theologians (including Witsius, Vos, Bavinck, and Berkholz) adopt this same view, arguing for a distinct Covenant of Redemption (made between the Father and the Son), which functions as something separate from the Covenant of Grace (made between God and elect sinners). Both views are held by reformers theologians, but Thomas Boston argues convincingly for the position of the view expressed in the Larger Catechism, in his **View of the Covenant of Grace.** We mentioned that one of Hodge's hangups with this view was the fact that Scripture sets forth Christ as mediator of the Covenant of Grace, and, as he says, in the old covenant where Moses was the mediator, the covenant was made directly with the people. But if Hodge had read Boston, he might have had the answer to his question, for Boston speaks to this very thing when he says: "Jesus Christ...listed himself Mediator between an offended just God, and offending men guilty before him. And so the covenant of grace, which could not be made immediately with sinners, was made with Christ the last Adam, their head and representative, mediating between God and them; therefore called Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, to whom we come by believing (Hebrews 12:22-24). The Lord is not, to my observation, applied in the holy Scripture to any other, except Moses (Galatians 3:19). And of him, a typical mediator, it is worth observing, that he was not only an inter-messenger between God and Israel; but, in God's renewing his covenant, in a way of reconciliation, after the breaking of the tables, the covenant was made with him, as their head and representative: 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.' (Exodus 34:27)." (pp13-14). In other words, Boston draws out that Moses wasn't just the mediator of the old covenant, but at the same time also its head and representative. The most compelling argument for the view expressed in the Larger Catechism is the parallel that Scripture sets forth between Adam and Christ as the two covenant heads and representatives. Boston draws this out helpfully in his volume: "Christ is...the second federal head, or the representative in the second covenant; as Adam was the first federal head, or the representative in the first covenant. Wherefore, as the first covenant was made with Adam, as the head and representative of his natural seed; so the second covenant was made with Christ, as the head and representative of his spiritual seed." (pp15-16). And again: "The covenant of works having been made with Adam as a representative of his natural seed, upon the breaking thereof, sin and death are communicate to them all from him as a deadly head. This being so, it was not agreeable to the method of divine procedure with men, to treat with those predestined unto salvation severally [IE, individually] as principal parties, each contracting for himself in the new covenant of life; but to treat for them all with one public person, who, through his fulfilling of the covenant, should be a quickening head to them, from whence life might be derived to them, in as compendious a way, as death was from the first Adam." (p21). And, "As in the covenant of works, God promised life to Adam's natural seed, upon condition of his perfect obedience, which is evident from death's coming on them by his disobedience; so in the covenant of grace, he has promised life to Christ's spiritual seed, upon condition of his obedience; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22). But that promise of life for Adam's natural seed was primarily made to Adam himself; while as yet none of them were in being; and they were to partake of it only through him, to whom it was made as their representative. Therefore the promise of life to Christ's spiritual seed, was made chiefly to him." (p105). Thus, "The covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace, are not two distinct covenants, but one and the same covenant. . .So the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace are but two names of one and the same second covenant, under different considerations. By a covenant of redemption, is meant a bargain of buying and selling; and such a covenant it was to Christ only; forasmuch as he alone engaged to pay the price of our redemption (1 Peter 1:18-19). By a covenant of grace, is meant a bargain whereby all is to be had freely; and such a covenant it is to us only, to whom the whole of it is of free grace." (p22).

37 John Flavel writes: "God's single promise is security enough to our faith, his covenant of grace adds...further security; but
your conversion, and not just from your mother's womb, but before the foundation of the world. This means that God loved you not just long before you loved Him, but long before you ever even existed; long before anything existed. It also means that He loved you knowing full well all the sins you would ever commit. And the last application in thinking through the Covenant of Redemption is the Great Commission. Jesus said to His disciples in John 20:21: “as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” God's rescue mission is happening even as we speak, and Jesus is calling us to be a part of it. And we can go with great confidence, because the Father has promised to give a people to the Son. We don't announce the gospel hoping that some might come—we do so knowing that Christ's sheep will come.

V. An Introduction to the Covenant of Grace

1. The STAGES of the Covenant of Grace:

A) The Inauguration of the Covenant of Grace (Genesis 3:15): This is the first promise we're given in Scripture of a redeemer who would come into the world to save God's people from the sin and death into which they were plunged in Adam. All the successive divine covenants are built on this promise.

B) The Noahic Covenant (Genesis 6,9): In God's covenant with Noah, we have both a continuation and enlargement of the same gospel mercies which God had announced to Adam in Genesis 3:15. This covenant with Noah, we come to learn even more about this redeemer and the salvation that He would accomplish for God's people. In the Noahic Covenant, we're pointed to Christ and the gospel primarily through pictures, as both Noah himself and his ark are meant to teach us truths about Jesus.

C) The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12,15,17): In God's covenant with Abraham, we're once again given a continuation and enlargement of the same gospel mercies which God promised to Adam and confirmed to Noah. But whereas God's covenant with Noah sets forth Christ primarily through pictures, here with Abraham we're pointed to Jesus and the gospel primarily through promises; for the promises that the Lord makes to him of a land, a seed, and blessing are ultimately fulfilled in Christ.

D) The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 20-24): In God's covenant with Israel under Moses, we have once again a continuation and enlargement of the same gospel mercies which God promised to Adam and confirmed to Noah and to Abraham. Through the Law that God gives at Sinai, we come face to face with the righteous character of our Creator; but there's also more, for in the person of Moses himself, as well as in God's redeeming His people from Egypt, and in the manna, the rock, the sacrifices, and the tabernacle, we're also pointed ahead once again to the person and work of the coming Redeemer.

E) The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89): In God's covenant with David, we have once again both a continuation and enlargement of the same gospel mercies that have gone before. Here in this covenant with David, God comes to him, promising to raise up for him one of his descendants, who would sit on his throne, and who would build for the Lord a house, and whose kingdom would never

38 We have some friends living in Asia who adopted a little girl from another country. And the girl that they adopted was mentally handicapped. But it didn't come as a surprise to them. In fact, they sought after this little girl and brought her home to them, knowing full well about her condition from the very beginning. And this is exactly how God has loved us: Our sin doesn't take Him by surprise! Our failings and weaknesses aren't alarming to Him. When He predestined us to adoption as sons from all eternity, He knew all about our imperfections. But He chose us anyway, because He loved us in spite of them all.
end; and though it seems at first glance all these promises find their fruition in David's son Solomon, we come to learn that these promises of David's seed and throne are ultimately fulfilled only in Jesus.

F) The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31 and Luke 22:20, etc): In the new covenant, we have the ultimate fulfillment of everything that has gone before. All the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament pointed us forward to Jesus. Now, with the coming of Christ, the pictures have finally become a reality; the shadows have truly taken on their substance; and the promises have at last found their fulfillment. Jesus came into the world as the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, and the seed of David, in order to reverse the work of the snake and accomplish redemption for His people.

2. The UNITY of the Covenant of Grace:

So, to be sure, there are various stages or manifestations, but all these manifestations are part of one single, over-arching covenant—the Covenant of Grace. These various manifestations aren't separated or isolated from each other; and they don't replace or nullify each other, but they're unified and build upon one another. So, the Covenant of Grace isn't to be understood as a series of isolated or separate covenants, but rather as a single, unified covenant that contains various stages and manifestations. We can see the unity of the Covenant of Grace being set forth in Scripture in at least a few different ways:

A) Scripture ties together the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace LINGUISTICALLY: Psalm 25:14 says this: “The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant.” (notice the singular tense). We read again in Psalm 74:20: “Consider the covenant” (notice again it's in the singular). And in the same way, Psalm 111 says, “He has given food to those who fear Him; He will remember His covenant forever”; and, “He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever.” (vv5,9). Which covenant is it that all these Scriptures are speaking of? It's the Covenant of Grace. Because though it's true there are many distinct manifestations of the Covenant of Grace, Scripture speaks of the Covenant of Grace as one single over-arching covenant.

It's also significant that the same phrase, “My covenant,” is used to describe each and every successive stage in the Covenant of Grace. In Scripture, God uses these words, “My covenant,” to describe His covenant with Noah (in both Genesis 6:18 and 9:9ff), His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:2-21), His covenant at Sinai (Exodus 19:5), and His covenant with David (Psalm 89:28,34). I have a favorite coffee mug hanging adjacent to our kitchen. It's always the mug that I use to drink my morning coffee and afternoon tea. If I asked my wife to bring “a mug,” she'd bring any of the other ones we have, but if I ask her about “my mug,” she knows exactly which one I'm talking about. And it's similar with how God speaks in Scripture, when He calls this Covenant of Grace, with which He enters into with man, “My covenant.” This isn't just one covenant among many; it's one-of-a-kind. After Adam violated the Covenant of Works, there's just one covenant to speak of. The covenant which God makes with His people is His covenant—it's His very own, one-of-a-kind, personal and exclusive, Covenant of Grace.

39 John Gill explains Psalm 25:14 in this way: “And he will show them his covenant: the covenant of grace, which was made with Christ for them from eternity, [and] is made known to them in time, when they are called by the grace of God, and made partakers of the grace of the covenant; then the Lord reveals himself as their covenant God and Father; shows them that his Son is their surety, Mediator, Redeemer, and Savior; puts his Spirit into them to implant covenant grace in them, to seal up the blessings of it to them, and bear witness to their interest in them, as pardon, justification, and adoption; and to apply the exceeding great and precious promises of it to them.” And again, Gill clarifies Psalm 74:20 in this way: “not the covenant of works, which being broken, no good thing was to be expected from it, not liberty, life, nor eternal salvation, but all the reverse; but the covenant of grace, made with Christ before the world was, and made manifest to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to David, and others. This God has a respect unto, and does look unto it; he looks to the surety and Mediator of it, which is Christ, for the fulfillment of all conditions in it; to the promises of it, that they may be made good; to the blessings of it, that they be bestowed upon the persons to whom they belong; to the blood of it, for the delivering of the church's prisoners, and the salvation of them from wrath to come; and to the persons interested in it, that they be all called and brought safe to glory; and particularly to the things in it, respecting the glory of the church in the latter day, and increase of its members, and of its light, which seem chiefly designed here.” And Charles Spurgeon says of Psalm 111:5,9: “He will ever be mindful of his covenant. No promise of the Lord shall fall to the ground, nor will any part of the great compact of eternal love be revoked or allowed to sink into oblivion. The covenant of grace is the plan of the great work which the Lord works out for his people, and it will never be departed from: the Lord has set his hand and seal to it, his glory and honor are involved in it, yea, his very name hangs upon it, and he will not even in the least jot or tittle cease to be mindful of it...” (from The Treasury of David).

40 This is also true for the other names and titles Scripture uses for the Covenant of Grace. Aside from simply calling it, “My covenant”, we'll show later that the Lord also refers to the Covenant of Grace as His “covenant of peace” and “the everlasting
**B) Scripture ties together the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace HISTORICALLY:** There's a fundamental unity between the stages of the Covenant of Grace in their historical outworking; and we can see it, first of all, in the unity between the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. For one thing, the whole reason God sent Moses to deliver His people from Egypt [IE, the Mosaic Covenant] was that He “remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Exodus 2:24). So then, the Mosaic Covenant didn't nullify the Abrahamic Covenant at all; rather, God's covenant at Sinai was established in order to bring fulfillment to the promises He had spoken to Abraham. Further, when the people of Israel rebel against the Lord by making a golden calf, and God threatens to destroy them, the way Moses delivers them is by reminding the Lord of the promises He had established in the Abrahamic covenant: “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever” (Exodus 32:13).

And we see the same unity between the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants, for when God establishes His covenant with David, He identifies himself as the God who had “brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt” (2 Samuel 7:6); and David also, having just received the promises God had made to him in the Davidic Covenant, responds by glorifying in the promises God was continuing to uphold to His people Israel in the Mosaic Covenant, saying, “For You have established for Yourself Your people Israel as Your own people forever, and You, O Lord, have become their God.” (vv23-24). And later, as David lay on his death-bed, the charge which he gives to his son Solomon has everything to do with the Law that God had given under the Mosaic Covenant; for he says: “Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do. . .” (1 Kings 2:3). So again, the Davidic Covenant in no way nullified the covenant God had established at Sinai.

We even see a fundamental unity between the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, for Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, binds these two covenants together at the beginning of the gospel of Luke, and sees the coming of the Christ as the fulfillment of both of them, as he sings: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant. . .to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father. . .” (Luke 1:68-73).

And indeed, as Zacharias understood, all the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace are unified together as they find their fulfillment in Christ. We see this most clearly in Ezekiel 37:24-28, where the prophet weaves together all the Old Testament manifestations, looking forward to their ultimate fulfillment in the new covenant. He says: “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd [the Davidic Covenant]; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them [the Mosaic Covenant]. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever [the Abrahamic Covenant]; and David My servant will be their prince forever [the Davidic Covenant]. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them.” So again, the successive manifestations of the Covenant of Grace don't nullify or replace one another, but they're bound together and brought to fulfillment with the coming of the new covenant in Christ.

**C) Scripture ties together the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace THEMATICALLY:** Not only are the various manifestations of the Covenant of Grace bound together linguistically and historically; they're also woven together with a single phrase that truly embodies what God's covenant relationship covenant”); and both of these names are used to refer to various distinctive manifestations of the Covenant of Grace: 1) The name “covenant of peace” refers to the new covenant in Ezekiel 34:25 and 37:26; but in Isaiah 54:9-10, Scripture emphatically links together God's covenant of peace with the Noahic Covenant. Likewise, “the everlasting covenant,” another title for the Covenant of Grace, is used to describe the Noahic Covenant (Genesis 9:16); as well as God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 17:7ff; Psalm 105:10); His covenant with David (Isaiah 55:3); and the new covenant (Isaiah 55:3; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 16:60; 37:26). And actually, in the last reference (Ezekiel 37:26), the “everlasting covenant” is linked together with God's “covenant of peace” in describing the coming of the new covenant as the fulfillment of the Covenant of Grace.

Many of the insights from this section are gratefully gleaned from Robertson's, *Christ of the Covenants* (pp28-45). Robertson concludes his section in this way: “The covenant structure of Scripture manifests a marvelous unity. God, in binding a people to himself, never changes. For this reason, the covenants of God relate organically to one another. From Adam to Christ, a unity of covenantal administration characterizes the history of God's dealing with His people.” *(Christ of the Covenants, p45).*
with His people is all about: “I will be their God, and they will be My people.” This is the essence of the Covenant of Grace, and we see it throughout God’s covenantal dealings with His people. We see this same phrase in God’s covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:7), in His covenant with Israel at Sinai (Exodus 6:6-7; 19:5); and in His covenant with David in the context of speaking of the new covenant in Christ (Ezekiel 34:23-24). This is the essence and goal of God’s covenant; for Him to be our God, and us to be His people. Indeed, “the heart of the covenant is the declaration that God is with us.”

3. The PROGRESSION of the Covenant of Grace:

So then, there’s a fundamental unity between each of the successive manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. But there’s also a progression in each successive stage. The manifestations of the Covenant of Grace (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Sinai, David) aren’t just bound together; but they also build on each other. In each successive covenant in the Covenant of Grace, we come to learn more and more about the redemption God would accomplish for His people. A few examples might be helpful for us here:

A) A seed growing into a tree: We might say the story of redemption began in “seed form” with the promise to Adam in Genesis 3:15. And with each successive manifestation of the Covenant of Grace, that seed begins to grow more and more; we come to better understand God’s plan of redemption as it progressively unfolds through the Scriptures. The new covenant is the full grown tree—the tree in its fullest and final form. But now, as we look back on that tree as it was a sapling, a sprout, and merely a seed, we understand it was always the same tree from the very beginning, but it was moving through progressive stages of visible growth. The truth is, the gospel that is so clear in its full form in the new covenant is equally present in the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Sinai, David), but it is so in seed (or sprout or sapling!) form. With each successive manifestation, we learn more about Christ and the redemption He would accomplish for His people.

B) A musical symphony: Each successive covenant in the Covenant of Grace is like another track in the masterpiece of redemption. It starts with the bass; then you add the synthesizer, then the strings, then the percussion, then you throw in the vocals—and it’s absolutely breathtaking. Each layer of an orchestra unifies, complements, and builds upon the whole. So too, each successive manifestation of the Covenant of Grace unifies, complements, and builds upon the whole of the story of redemption.

4. The DYNAMICS of the Covenant of Grace:

So, again, the Covenant of Grace is about the gospel. It’s about Jesus and the redemption He would provide for His people. The Old Testament stages of the Covenant of Grace—God’s covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David—all point us forward to the Savior. But if that’s so, why is it...
so hard to see Him? Because they do so softly; in whispers; through pictures and types. They're like shadows of Jesus' figure, or reflections of Him on the water. He's there, but if we don't look carefully, we might miss Him; and this is because each successive manifestation of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament contains the temporal as well as the eternal. Think about a kernel of rice. It has an outward shell, the husk; and the husk is there to protect the kernel of grain on the inside as it grows. Well, from the outside, you only see the husk. But inside lies the grain. And at the right time—when the rice is ready—the husk is opened up. Then the grain is taken—and the husk is no longer needed.

This is what it's like with the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. We see Jesus, but through shadows and reflections. The gospel is there, but it's wrapped with an outer husk. God's covenant with Noah is meant to teach us about Jesus and His redemption, but it does so through the outward husk of a world-wide flood. God's covenant with Abraham is meant to teach us about Jesus and His redemption, but it does so through outward-husk promises about a land, a seed, and blessing. God's covenant with Israel through Moses is meant to teach us about Jesus and His redemption, but it does so through the outward husk of the Passover, the tabernacle with its sacrifices, the feasts, and God's Law. And God's Covenant with David is meant to teach us about Jesus and His redemption, but it does so through the outward husk of temporal promises about David's kingdom and the house of the Lord. All of these point us to Christ—but we have to look past the husk to get to the kernel.  

5. The ESSENCE of the Covenant of Grace:

The covenants are wrapped with an outward husk, but the inner kernel is the gospel. And as we saw earlier, the essence of the gospel promise is summarized throughout the Old Testament stages of the Covenant of Grace in this way: “I shall be your God, and you shall be My people.” The heartbeat of the Covenant of Grace is that God would come to accomplish redemption on behalf of a sinful and helpless human race. He would redeem a people for himself. He would do it by sending Christ into the world to shed His blood for guilty sinners. He would save them by grace alone (not their merit). He would save them through faith alone (not their good works). And He would save them in Christ alone. Salvation would come as a person. In Adam, humanity was ruined. But in Christ, God would redeem a people from Adam's fallen race. And we would be His people; and He would be our God.

It's important to see that God's provision of salvation has been the same from the very beginning. Old Testament believers weren't saved any other way than we are today. They were saved by God's grace through faith in Christ, the same way that we are. It's just that they looked forward to Him; while we look backward. Up until the coming of Jesus and the inauguration of the new covenant, salvation was promised; now in the new covenant, salvation has been performed. But God's provision of salvation has always been the same. It was no different for Old Testament believers. Whether Old Testament or New, we enter into God's covenant mercies by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.  

44 As the Westminster Larger Catechism #34 puts it: “The covenant of grace was administered under the Old Testament by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the passover, and other types and ordinances, which did all fore-signify Christ then to come, and were for that time sufficient to build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they then had full remission of sin, and eternal salvation.” And Robertson notes: “some distinction must be made between the abiding kernel of Old Testament realities and the temporary husk which surrounded them.” (p74). Pink says: “Each covenant that God made with men shadowed forth some element of the everlasting covenant which He entered into with Christ before the foundation of the world on behalf of His elect. The covenants which God made with Noah, Abraham, and David as truly exhibited different aspects of the compact of grace as did the several vessels in the tabernacle typify certain characteristics of the person and work of Christ. Yet, just as those vessels also had an immediate and local use, so the covenants respected what was earthly and carnal, as well as what was spiritual and heavenly.” (Divine Covenants). And Vos also: “The covenant. . .had a double side, one that had in view temporal benefits—like the promise of the land of Canaan, numerous descendants, protection against earthly enemies—and one that had in view spiritual benefits. Nevertheless, this is to be so understood that the earthly and temporal were not for their own sake, but rather so that they would provide a type of the spiritual and heavenly.” (V2, p128).

15 Herman Hoekema helpfully draws out the essence of the covenant as he defines the Covenant of Grace in this way: “this covenant is not conceived as a means to an end, as a way unto salvation, but as the very end itself, as the very highest that can ever be reached by the creature: not as a way to life, but as the highest form of life itself; not as a condition, but as the very essence of religion; not as a means unto salvation, but as the highest bliss itself. . .as the proper essence of religion and salvation. . .If the essence of the covenant in God is the communion of friendship, this must also be the essence of the covenant between God and man. . .Then the essence of the covenant is the very essence of religion. . .The essence of the covenant is the relation of the most intimate communion of friendship, in which God reflects his own covenant life in his relation to the creature, gives to that creature life, and causes him to taste and acknowledge the highest good and the overflowing fountain of all good. . .the
6. The REQUIREMENTS of the Covenant of Grace:

There's one question in particular that arises here: Does the gospel have any conditions? Does grace mean that there's nothing I must do to enter into God's peace and blessing? The Covenant of Grace makes wonderful promises—but does it also contain certain requirements? Theologians would ask it this way: Is the Covenant of Grace conditional or unconditional? Does God's grace have conditions?

In short, Scripture tells us the gospel has no conditions—but it does have requirements. For instance, our Savior warned that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, we will not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20; cf. 13:43). So, righteousness is a requirement in the gospel. Likewise, Jesus said that unless a man is born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:3,5). So, the new birth—regeneration—is required in the Covenant of Grace. The Scriptures also make it clear that both faith and repentance are necessary for salvation, for Hebrews 11:6 tells us, “Without faith it is impossible to please [God]” and Jesus says, “unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3,5). So, there's no question that there are requirements in the Covenant of Grace. 46

The distinction between conditions and requirements is important. Conditions usually look to ourselves for fulfillment, but requirements can be met by God. Turretin highlights the massive range of meaning concerning the definition of a condition: a) “A condition can be regarded as something that has meriting power and by its own nature confers a right to the benefits of the covenant, but also as prerequisite and means, as an accompanying disposition in the member of the covenant.” And: b) “A condition can be regarded as to be fulfilled through natural capabilities, or to be fulfilled through supernatural grace.” (Quoted in Vos, V2, p112). We affirm: a) “The covenant of grace is not conditional in the sense that in it there would be any condition with meriting power.” And further: b) “The covenant of grace is not conditional in the sense that what is required of man would have to be accomplished in his own strength. . .[for] What is a condition for all is thus for them also a promise, a gift of the covenant. . .Everything that is required of us toward God is at the same time a gift from Christ to us. . .” (Vos, V2, p113, 116). "To eliminate any confusion we have opted for the language of "requirements" over the language of "conditions." God requires certain things of us (the new birth, faith, repentance, etc), but since these are also things He himself freely provides to His people, it's better to call them requirements. They're not conditions that God expects us to perform. They are indeed requirements—but those that God himself has promised to provide for His blood-bought people. Witsius says: "A condition of a covenant, properly so called, is that action, which, being performed, gives a man a right to the reward. But that such a condition cannot be required of us in the covenant of grace, is self-evident; because a right to life neither is, nor indeed can be founded on any action of ours, but on the righteousness of our Lord alone; who having perfectly fulfilled the righteousness of the law for us, nothing can, in justice, be required of us to perform, in order to acquire a right already fully purchased for us. And indeed, in this all the orthodox readily agree." (V1, p284). And again: "Here [in the Covenant of Grace] conditions are offered to which eternal salvation is annexed; conditions, not to be performed again by us, which might throw the mind into despondency; but by him who would not part with his life before he had truly said, 'It is finished.'" (V1, pp164-65). John Gill says in his Body of Divinity: “Some, indeed, make it to be a conditional covenant, and faith and repentance to be the conditions of it. But these are not conditions, but blessings of the covenant, and are as absolutely promised in it, as anything else; the promise of a ‘new heart’, and of a ‘new spirit’, includes the gift of faith, and every other grace; and that of taking away the ‘stony heart’, and giving an ‘heart of flesh’, is fully expressive of the gift of the grace of repentance (Ezekiel 36:26). Besides, if these were conditions of the covenant, to be performed by men in their own strength, in order to be admitted into it, and receive the benefits of it; they would be as hard, and as difficult to be performed, as the condition of the covenant of works, perfect obedience; since faith requires, to the production of it, almighty power, even such as was put forth in raising Christ from the dead, (Ephesians 1:19,20); and though God may give men means, and time, and space of repentance, yet if he does not give them grace to repent, they never will. Christ's work, and the Spirit's grace, supersede all conditions in the covenant, respecting men; since they provide for everything that can be thought of, that is required or is wanting.” And Thomas Boston writes: “The covenant is described to us, by the Holy Ghost, as a cluster of free promises of grace and glory to poor sinners, in which no mention is made of any condition [Hebrews 8:10-12]. These promises with their condition, having been proposed to, and accepted by Christ as second Adam, and the condition performed by him; the covenant comes natively, in the gospel, to be set before us in them, to be by us received and embraced in and through Christ, by faith. . .And in this indeed, the covenant of grace is not conditional, but consists of absolute promises; that is, promises become absolute, through the condition thereof actually performed already; but being considered in its full altitude, and in respect of Christ, the covenant, and all the promises thereof, are properly and strictly conditional.” (Boston, View of the Covenant of Grace, pp99-100).
But the beautiful, freeing, wonderful thing about the Covenant of Grace is that everything which God requires of us He also freely provides for us. Indeed, every requirement in the Covenant of Grace is also freely promised as a gift to God's people. There are certain things God requires in His covenant, but since man is completely unable to fulfill those requirements, God has taken the work of fulfilling those requirements upon himself. That's why we call God's covenant with man the covenant of grace. God requires a perfect righteousness, and God's very own righteousness is given to us in justification (see Isaiah 46:13; 51:6; 59:16; Jeremiah 33:16; Romans 5:17; Philippians 3:8-9). God requires a new heart—a circumcised heart—and His Spirit does this work in us in regeneration (Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 36:26-27). God requires of us faith and repentance, and the Scriptures speak of both of these as gifts that God himself gives to His people (cf. Acts 5:31; 2 Timothy 2:25; Ephesians 2:8-9). Indeed, everything that God requires of us, He himself also freely provides for us in the Covenant of Grace. 

7. The NAMES of the Covenant of Grace:

The name “Covenant of Grace” is a helpful phrase to describe God's covenant with men because this is what God's covenant is all about—it's truly a covenant of grace. Under the Covenant of Works, God gave Adam what he deserved—but in the gospel, God deals with His people according to grace. So, the name is good. But you won't find this exact phrase in Scripture. Rather, when the Bible speaks of the Covenant of Grace, it usually uses these expressions, which also teach us more about its attributes:

A) My covenant (Genesis 6:18; 9:9-15; 17:2-21; Exodus 19:5; Psalm 89:28-34): As we noted earlier, God often refers to the Covenant of Grace as simply, “My covenant.” This phrase reminds us of the fact that God is the sole AUTHOR of the Covenant of Grace. It's not a covenant we make with God; it's a covenant, rather, that God makes with us. This will become crystal clear as we study through the divine covenants together. It's God's covenant—and He establishes it with those whom He chooses.

B) My covenant of peace (Isaiah 54:10; Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26): This phrase describes the NATURE of the Covenant of Grace. It's called a covenant of peace because it results in peace with God. God reconciles real sinners to himself; establishing peace through the blood of the new covenant: “For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in [Christ], and through Him to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross...” (Colossians 1:19-20).

C) The everlasting covenant (Genesis 9:16; 17:7-19; Psalm 105:10; Isaiah 24:5; 55:3; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 16:60; 37:26): This phrase highlights the DURATION of the Covenant of Grace. When the Lord enters into covenant relationship with someone, it's forever. This means that God's covenant is absolutely irrevocable; when God covenants with you, it's for all eternity. And it's for this reason that the Scriptures tell us: “Israel has been saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” (Isaiah 45:17).

So, to summarize, you are hand-chosen by God in the Covenant of Grace. You are wholly reconciled to God in the Covenant of Grace. And you are eternally secure in God in the Covenant of Grace. I hope this is an encouragement, and I pray for God's blessing as we begin our study of the covenants.

17 John Ball writes: “The covenant in Scripture does sometimes signify an absolute promise of God, without any stipulation at all. Of this kind is the covenant wherein God promises that He will give His elect faith and perseverance, to which promise no condition annexed can be conceived in mind, which is not comprehended in the promise itself (Hebrews 8:10).” (Treatise, p3). And Boston likewise: “According to the Scripture, the elect's believing, repenting, and sincere obedience, do belong to the promissory part of the covenant. If we consider them in their original situation, they are benefits promised in the covenant, by God, unto Christ the Surety, as a reward of his fulfilling the condition of the covenant.” (View, p58). Witsius notes: “Here conditions are offered to which eternal salvation is annexed; conditions, not to be performed again by us, which might throw the mind into despondency; but by him who would not part with his life before he had truly said, 'It is finished.'” (V1, p165). And again, “For whatever can be conceived as a condition, is all included in the universality of the promises.” (V1, p286). Bavinck writes: “In the covenant of grace, that is, in the gospel, which is the proclamation of the covenant of grace, there are actually no demands and no conditions. For God supplies what he demands. Christ has accomplished everything, and though he did not accomplish rebirth, faith, and repentance in our place, he did acquire them for us, and the Holy Spirit therefore applies them.” (Dogmatics, V3, p230). And Berkhof concludes: “That which may be regarded as a condition in the covenant, is for those who are chosen unto everlasting life a promise, and therefore a gift of God.” (Systematic Theology).
The Covenants of Works & Grace
The Covenants of Works and Grace

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The Covenant of Works and The Covenant of Grace

I. The Creation Ordinances

In this lesson we're going to be looking at the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace in more detail. Some take the Covenant of Works to refer exclusively to the command God gave to Adam in the garden. But though this command was an extremely important part of the Covenant of Works (as we will see), there was more to God's covenant with Adam than just this single command. The command was given in the context of a covenant relationship that God had entered into with Adam. So, before we look at the command, we're going to take some time to look at the context in which that command was given.  

In particular, God's covenant with Adam included what some have called the “creation ordinances.” After God had created the world, and before man had fallen into sin, there were three ordinances (foundational life-principles) that God established for man. These three ordinances are vital for us to understand because they are laws that God has built into the very structure of the world as He created it. They are as essential to the well-being of man as the law of gravity—and just as essential for us as Christians. Each has far-reaching implications for what it looks like to glorify God as believers in Jesus.

1. THE SABBATH as a creation ordinance:

   A) The INAUGURATION of the Sabbath: After God had created the heavens and the earth and everything in them, Scripture tells us that, “He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” (Genesis 2:2-3). This was the inauguration of the Sabbath.

   B) The PERMANENCE of the Sabbath: The Sabbath rest that God initiates here is something that He also has established as a principle for created man, and in particular, for His people. So, when God gave Israel the 10 Commandments, the 4th Commandment was, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). When the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of breaking the Sabbath, 1

1 Robertson describes the Covenant of Works (which he terms the Covenant of Creation) from a two-fold point of view: “The creation bond between God and man may be discussed in terms of its general and its focal aspects. The general aspect of the covenant of creation relates to the broader responsibilities of man to his Creator. The focal aspect of the covenant of creation relates to the more specific responsibility of man arising from the special point of probation or testing instituted by God.” (p67). He goes on, “The requirement concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil must not be conceived of as a somewhat arbitrary stipulation without integral relation to the total life of man...All that Adam did had direct bearing on his relation to the covenant God of creation...His life as a covenant creature must be viewed as a unified whole.” (p82). Still, it's also true that “the response to the particular prohibition concerning the tree was crucially determinative. The focal point of the covenant rested specifically on this single test. If Adam succeeded in submitting to God at this point, his blessing under the larger provisions of the covenant of creation was assured.” (p83). We need to tread very carefully here, but perhaps an example of this same principle is Judges 2:1-2. God had commanded His people to make no covenants with the Canaanites: And yet, this command in no way began their relationship; it was given in the context of an existing covenant relationship.

2 The great bulk of this section is gratefully taken from O Palmer Robertson's book, The Christ of the Covenants, along with his audio lectures on the Covenants. Much was taken also for the section on Marriage from Wayne Mack (see below).

3 O Palmer Robertson pointed out a truth that helped me a great deal here. In the initial giving of the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20, the Sabbath is rooted in God's creation: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” But in the repetition of the 10 Commandments in Deuteronomy 5, the Sabbath is rooted in God's redemption: “Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy...You shall remember that you were a slave in the land...”
Jesus’ response was; “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27). Jesus' words were given as a stern rebuke to correct a corrupted view of the Sabbath. But though Jesus rejects the Pharisees’ wrong ideas about the Sabbath, Jesus’ answer upholds the institution of the Sabbath itself. What was to be rejected wasn’t the Sabbath—but the Pharisees’ false conception of it.

C) The FUNCTION of the Sabbath: Jesus' words in Mark 2 also teach us about the purpose of the Sabbath: “The Sabbath was made for [the sake of] man. . .” Jesus’ words here serve as a commentary for why God had created the Sabbath in the beginning. Scripture had told us in Genesis 2:3 that the Lord, “blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” Now here, Jesus’ words teach us that this blessing had to do with mankind. God made and blessed the Sabbath for man's sake—that is—in order that it might be an instrument of blessing to man. It was for man's good that God established the Sabbath.4

A lot of Christians today are confused about the Sabbath and what role it should play. But what Scripture wants us to understand is that the Sabbath is a wonderful thing. Think about it this way: how would you like it if you began working at a new job where you started every year by getting a month and a half of paid vacation? In essence, this is what the Sabbath is (52 days a year). It's the Lord promising seven days of provision for six days of labor. Too often we look at the Sabbath from a negative perspective: “You shall not . . .” But actually, in the 10 Commandments, this is one of the few commandments that is set in positive language. It isn’t set in “You shall not” language, but rather, “Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy.” The Sabbath was given to be a blessing—not a burden!!

In particular, the Sabbath is a blessing because it is a day to stop, rest, and delight.5 First, 1) it’s a day to STOP. The Sabbath is a day to stop all the work we’re busy with the rest of the week. This is a pretty significant lesson for us. That God wants us to stop our work on the Sabbath is a) a reminder for us of what God really cares about: not so much doing, but being; not producing, but abiding. It's the same lesson Jesus was teaching Martha in Luke 10. Martha was concerned with all her service. Actually, the Greek word used there is the same word for ministry.6 Martha was too busy with all her ministry to actually stop and listen to Jesus. The Sabbath is a reminder for us of what God really cares about the most. It’s also b) an invitation for us to embrace our limits: the Sabbath reminds us that “the world continues working fine when I stop.”7 God doesn't actually need us. He's in control and taking care of the universe just fine without us. The Sabbath is an invitation to “be still and know” that God is God (Psalm 46:10). The call to stop our work on the Sabbath is also c) an opportunity for us to trust in the God who has promised to supply all our needs (Philippians 4:19).8 So the Sabbath is a day to stop. It’s also, 2) a day to REST; physically, spiritually, emotionally. We’re not super-heroes. God made us with bodies, with souls, and minds that need rest.9 Lastly, 3) the Sabbath is a day to DELIGHT. It’s worth noting that the Sabbath begins with God looking over all He had made and basking in the reality that “it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).10 What is God doing? He's delighting in His creation. So the Sabbath is a day set apart to delight in God, but also to delight in His creation: “we are to slow down. . .and take the time to see the beauty of a tree, a leaf, a flower, the sky. . .to see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. . .” To experience and delight in God's creation.11

of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day” (vv12,15). So the Sabbath principle isn’t just rooted in creation—it’s also rooted in redemption. Redemption didn’t abolish the Sabbath—it rather gave God’s people the best reason to celebrate it.

4 This seems to be drawn out by the “behold” preceding it; this word functions as almost an italics kind of emphasis.
5 Quote from Pete Scazzero's article. He gives an amazing example of this in his article: never forgetting the day when he

6从Pete Scazzero article (see above).
7 In the words of Trip Lee: “Though God was pleased with the creation of man, We still gotta understand the limitations of man; Many of us stuck in the days of the truce, Man, thinking we can do some things that we can’t. You may be thinkin’ you a beast but believe me, you still gotta sleep in the evening; yeah you still gotta eat, need heat when it’s freezing; you peak for a season but peep what we speakin’; This is the way that life will be; limitless You put limits on me; by Your grace help us see. . . This is the way that life will be, Infinite You made finite me; by Your grace help us see this is Your design.” (Limitations).
8 This seems to be drawn out by the “behold” preceding it; this word functions as almost an italics kind of emphasis.
9 Quote from Pete Scazzero's article. He gives an amazing example of this in his article: never forgetting the day when he
D) The SCOPE of the Sabbath: It's also important to note that the Sabbath wasn't just meant to be a single day—it was (and is) a principle of life for God's people. We see this in passages such as Leviticus 25, where God commanded Israel not only to celebrate a weekly Sabbath—but also to celebrate a Sabbath year once every seven years (Leviticus 25:1-7). Likewise, every 50th year (Lit. “seven sabbaths of years”) there was to be a Jubilee year of Sabbath rest (Leviticus 25:8-12). \[12\]

These passages speak of having a time of Sabbath for the land—a time for the land to rest.\[13\] On one hand, the land was to have rest because the land belonged to the Lord. On the other hand, God was teaching His people that man wasn't meant to be captive to his creation. God doesn't want us to be workaholics—neglecting our families for the purpose of endless work (even if we call it “ministry”). It doesn't honor God. God wants us to take time to rest in Him and enjoy His blessings. So the Sabbath isn't just about one day in seven. It's a principle that God established for all of life.\[14\]

E) The FULFILLMENT of the Sabbath: When God established the Sabbath, it was on the seventh day of the week. The Sabbath was the last day of the week, which meant that God's people looked forward to it all week. There was some deeper significance to this. All throughout the Old Testament, God's people were looking forward to a lasting, an eternal Sabbath rest. Moses spoke of a future rest that God would give His people in the land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 12:9-10). But even when they entered into the land and took possession of it, Joshua could not give them the kind of rest that Moses anticipated (Hebrews 4:3,8-9). Hundreds of years later, Isaiah used the imagery of the Sabbath rest of Jubilee to speak of the One who would bring true and lasting rest to God's people (Isaiah 61:1-3)—and it was this very passage that Jesus turned to at the inauguration of His earthly ministry, and declared, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18-21).

There’s a reason that we now celebrate the Sabbath on the first day of the week instead of the last day of the week: it was the day that Jesus rose from the dead. It was on the first day of the week that the women came to the tomb bringing spices—and found it empty—and heard the angel's words: “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen” (Luke 24:5-6). It was the first day of the week that the Lord appeared for the first time to His disciples (John 20:19ff); then later to Thomas who hadn't been there the week before (21:26ff). It was the first day of the week that the early church began to meet together for worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). Why? Because Jesus' resurrection changed everything about the Sabbath. The true, eternal Sabbath rest that had been anticipated for so long had finally come through Jesus' death and resurrection. And the fact that we now celebrate the Sabbath on the first day of the week also carries with it great significance:

“[The Christian] does not only look forward to a redemption yet to come. He does not merely hope for a future Sabbath rest. He looks back on a redemption fully accomplished. He stands confidently on the basis of what the past already has brought. . .The current believer in Christ does not follow the Sabbath pattern of the people of the old covenant. He does not first labor six days, looking hopefully toward rest. Instead, he begins the week by rejoicing in the rest already accomplished by the cosmic event of Christ's resurrection. Then he enters joyfully into his six days of labor, confident of success through the victory which Christ already has won.”\[15\]

2. MARRIAGE as a creation ordinance:

A) The INAUGURATION of marriage: The second ordinance that the Lord established in the early chapters of Genesis was the institution of marriage. We see this in Genesis 2:18-25. After God intentionally really took the time to delight in washing his hands with warm soapy water on the Sabbath (in a public restroom)!

\[12\] This principle of Sabbath rest is also reflected in the appointed feasts of Israel, where we read that on certain days during the feasts God's people were not to engage in any laborious work. See Leviticus 23:7,8,21,25,35,36; Numbers 28:26; 29:1,7.

\[13\] See Leviticus 25:2,4; 26:34,43; Judges 3:11; 2 Chronicles 36:21.

\[14\] O Palmer Robertson notes here: “By the way, why was it that Israel went into captivity? Well, in 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 we read: “Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon. . .until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.” Because Israel had neglected the Sabbath principle, God had to take them forcibly into the Sabbath. Even the historical numbering of the captivity is to be understood according to the Sabbath principle, as God's people were in exile in Babylon for seventy-seven-year Sabbaths (cf. Daniel 9:24).

\[15\] From O Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Covenants, p73.
had made the woman and brought her to the man, Scripture tells us: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” (v24).

**B) The ESSENCE of marriage:** This verse (Genesis 2:24) is quoted another three times in Scripture (Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7-8; Ephesians 5:31). It is this verse that the Scripture itself constantly refers back to in order to help us understand the essence of marriage. It's also significant that this statement about marriage was first given before man had fallen into sin, and yet it continued to be referred back to as a blueprint for marriage even after Adam's sin in the garden. So, Genesis 2:24 is quite foundational for understanding the meaning of marriage—both for sinless man and for sinful man.\(^{16}\)

So, what is the essence of marriage? There are three things that we can draw out of this passage. **First**, husband and wife are to **LEAVE** mother and father: “for this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother. . .” In marriage there is a radical change that takes place in one's relationship to their parents. The husband-wife relationship becomes the main priority. This is true for both the woman and the man. The man is to prioritize his wife (her ideas, opinions, wishes) above all other relationships (including those of his parents). The woman is to prioritize her husband (his ideas, opinions, wishes) above all other relationships (including those of her parents). **Second**, husband and wife are to **CLEAVE** to one another: “. . .and be joined [or cleave] to his wife. . .” Cleaving means that marriage is “a total and irrevocable commitment of two people to each other.”\(^{17}\) What this means is that marriage isn't to be based on a feeling of love—but on the commitment to love. **Finally**, in marriage husband and wife **BECOME ONE FLESH**: “. . .and they shall become one flesh.” Becoming one flesh means complete and total oneness. This oneness includes sexual union but it isn't limited to that (in fact, often the sexual union serves as a gauge for oneness in other areas). As one put it: “Marriage is a total commitment and a total sharing of the total person with another person until death.”\(^{18}\) So, at the heart of marriage is leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh.\(^{19}\)

**C) The DIGNITY of marriage:** The account of the institution of marriage begins with Genesis 2:18: “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’” This is actually quite a powerful statement if we put it in context. God had seen that the light was good (1:4), the dry land and the seas were good (1:10), the vegetation on the earth was good (1:12), the sun and moon were good (1:18), the sea creatures and the beasts of the field were good (1:21,25) — in fact, Genesis 1:31 tells us that, “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” But then the Lord saw that Adam was alone, and for the first time He declared: This is NOT good. The whole reason marriage exists is that God created it, and the reason God created it is that it was not good for man (even sinless man!) to remain alone. So, marriage is very, very good in the sight of the One who created it. This doesn't mean that there’s no place for believers remaining single in the Lord (1 Corinthians 7). There's a place of honor for those who remain single in the kingdom of God (Isaiah 56:3-5; Matthew 19:12). But it's vital for us to understand that marriage was never a second-class concession for sinful man.\(^{20}\) God himself has created it. He created it because man was not good without it. And He has crowned it with great honor and dignity (Hebrews 13:4).

**D) The DESIGN of marriage:** Genesis 2:18 also teaches us about God's design for marriage. Again, we read in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” So then, “the woman was created by God to be a helper to the man in the marriage relationship.”\(^{21}\) This is echoed in the New Testament, where Paul says that the man was not created for the woman, but the woman was created for the man (1 Corinthians 11:9). In other words, the purpose of the wife's existence is to glorify God by being a help to her husband. This never meant

\(^{16}\) Much of this section gleaned from Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage.*

\(^{17}\) *Strengthening Your Marriage*, p.5.

\(^{18}\) Ibid, p.6.

\(^{19}\) To put it simply, to leave denotes priority; to cleave denotes commitment; and to become one flesh denotes unity.

\(^{20}\) Again, the Lord instituted marriage when man was yet in his sinless state.

\(^{21}\) In Hebrew, this reads literally, “a helper corresponding to him.”

\(^{22}\) Quote from O Palmer Robertson, p.76. The key phrase here is “in the marriage relationship.” This is all in the context of a marriage union. The Bible is not teaching that all women should be helpers for all men or submit to the authority of men indiscriminately; but that God designed wives to be helpers for their husbands in the context of their marriage.
the woman is inferior to man in any way. The difference between the man and the woman is not in their equality, but in their God-given roles. “Woman is similar to man, yet somewhat different. She is man’s complement, not his carbon copy. She is to man what a key is to a lock and what a film is to a camera—indispensable (1 Corinthians 11:11).” Without her, man is incomplete. The wife is to be a helper to her husband specifically for the task of filling the earth with the glory of God (Genesis 1:28).  

E) The DEFINITION of marriage: Jesus’ words on the subject of marriage help to correct three corruptions of the institution of marriage. The Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking what conditions were necessary for a man to divorce his wife. We read Jesus’ response in Matthew 19:4-6:

“Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

First, Jesus is declaring that DIVORCE contradicts the creational order of marriage. Elsewhere in Scripture, Jesus clarifies that divorce is permissible (for the offended party) in situations of unchastity (or willful desertion), where the marriage covenant has already been broken (Matthew 5:31-32). But aside from this, divorce is clearly unacceptable: “what God has joined together, let no man separate.”

Second, though the passage is speaking about divorce, we also learn that POLYGAMY contradicts the creational order of marriage. Genesis 2:24 is unmistakable: “a man shall. . .be joined to his wife.” Wife is singular. When God established marriage, He gave Adam only one wife. And it’s clear that this was to be the lasting pattern for marriage: “the two and only two shall become one flesh.”

Lastly, we learn through Jesus’ words that HOMOSEXUALITY contradicts the creational order of marriage. In a matter of just one generation, this particular truth has gone from being a view nearly universally accepted in the west to a view nearly universally condemned. This reminds us that though our culture will sway back and forth, only God’s Word is unchanging and true. Jesus here recalls that when God created marriage, it was between “male and female” — between a man and his wife.

F) The PICTURE of marriage: God not only established the institution of marriage. He also put it forth as a picture of His covenant with us. God’s people are likened to the bride of Christ. And in laying down His life for her, Christ has modeled the way in which every husband is to love his bride (Ephesians 5:25ff). A husband is to love his own wife in the way that Christ has loved the church.

In fact, it’s been rightly pointed out that the Hebrew word for “helper” here (ezer) is the same word used to refer to the role of God himself acting on behalf of His people; IE, God is our helper or helper (see Psalm 33:20; 70:5; 115:9-11). Where we serve in the SE Asian context, the wife resembles more of a servant. But biblically, if husbands are to love their wives as Christ has loved the Church, it’s the husband who is the servant. I love how Wayne Mack puts it: “A leader must have a servant’s heart. And if he has a servant’s heart he will act like a servant and react like a servant when he is treated like a servant.” (p33).

Think about the Trinity. The Father and the Son are equal in power and glory, but they have different roles in the process of redemption. The Father planned out redemption. The Son was sent into the world to accomplish it. The Father and the Son share perfect equality in divinity—but they have different particular roles in the work of redemption.

This last aspect is quite significant. The command that God gave in Genesis 1:28 to fill the earth with His glory was never given exclusively to the man; it was clearly given to both of them, the man and the woman alike. So, it’s not just that though man and woman have different roles, they nonetheless possess equal value; there’s more: though man and woman have different roles, they nonetheless share equal significance in extending the kingdom of God and filling the earth with His glory.

The three specific applications in this section were gleaned from O Palmer Robertson’s, The Christ of the Covenants. We might also note that the Matthew 19:4-6 passage has a good bit to say when it comes to modern gender issues.

One practical exhortation here: “Leadership means we must take the lead in reconciliation. I don’t mean that wives should never say they are sorry. But in the relation between Christ and his church, who took the initiative to make all things new? Who left the comfort and security of his throne of justice to put mercy to work at Calvary? Who came back to Peter first after three denials? Who has returned to you again and again forgiving you and offering his fellowship afresh? So husbands, your headship means: Go ahead. Take the lead. It does not matter if it is her fault. That didn’t stop Christ. Who will break the icy silence first? Who will choke out the words, ‘I’m sorry, I want it to be better’? . . .Headship is not easy. It is the hardest, most humbling work in the world.” (Gleaned from Jay Sklar’s notes; quote from John Piper). A few other practical examples of what it means that husbands are to love their brides as Christ has loved the Church: Jesus has voluntarily made himself her servant (see above); He is patient with her; He prays for her; he forgives her and doesn’t bear grudges; He is always seeking her deepest joy and greatest good in all that He does. Further, He gave himself up for her so that He might sanctify her
it possible? I know I fail every day. But because of the finished work of Christ, there's hope not just for every new day, but for every new moment. Christ has covered us, and His Spirit changes us.

3. WORK (LABOR) as a creation ordinance:

A) The INAUGURATION of work: There are two passages in the early chapters of Genesis that speak of the institution of work as a third ordinance God established at creation. In Genesis 1:28, the Lord said to the man and the woman: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it. . .” Later, Genesis 2:15 tells us, “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” These two passages establish work as a third creation ordinance.

B) The BLESSING of work: Just like the Sabbath and marriage, God created work to be a blessing for man. Though the Lord did curse the ground on account of Adam’s sin (Genesis 3:17-19), labor itself is not a bad thing, but a good thing for man; it's the way God designed us. It's important to note that labor was established before the fall of man. So, labor is a good thing. God made us to work.

Labor is good for man—and in the same way—not laboring is bad for man. It was when king David began to be slothful and slack in his kingly work that he fell into that great sin with Bathsheba: “Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel. . .But David stayed at Jerusalem” (2 Samuel 11:1). In the New Testament, when Paul heard about some Christians who didn't want to work anymore, he had stern words for them (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). This is because God created us to be a people who work.

So again, labor is a good thing for man. We can see this also in the way that labor is intimately related to the Sabbath principle: “Six days you shall labor. . .” (Exodus 20:9). Just as man is commanded to rest once every seven days, he's also commanded to work the other six. It's only in the context of six days of work that man enters into meaningful rest.29 As Ecclesiastes 5:12 says, “The sleep of the working man is pleasant.” So again, labor is not a curse, but a blessing for man.

C) The GOAL of work: We also learn here in the earliest verses of Genesis about God's single overarching purpose for us in and through our daily work. After the Lord created man, He said to them in Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” God is telling man here that his purpose in life is to fill the whole earth with the glory of God, and to bring all things into subjection to His rule. And it's the same for us: “We are re-made in God's image in order to bring the whole of God's creation in subjection to the Creator.”30 Whatever specific vocation God has called you to, He's given you the same overarching task that He gave to Adam: to fill the earth with His glory. The Great Commission wasn't anything new—the call to fill the whole earth with the glory of God and bring all things into subjection to Him began in Genesis 1:28.

D) The LOCALITY of work: The purpose of our existence is to fill the earth with God's glory. But if Genesis 1:28 teaches us about our purpose, Genesis 2:15 teaches us about our locality: “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” Having instructed Adam in the great purpose of his existence (1:28), the Lord then gives him a particular vocation and a local place in which to live out that calling: he is to serve God in a place called Eden. Adam was to live out God's great global mission in the context of a local place. This teaches us something pretty important: “The great work to be done is right in front of you with the persons and

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29 John Murray put it this way: “The stress laid upon the six days of labour needs to be duly appreciated. The divine ordinance is not simply that of labour; it is labour with a certain constancy. There is indeed respite from labour, the respite of one whole day every recurring seventh day. The cycle of respite is provided for, but there is also the cycle of labour. And the cycle of labour is as irreversible as the cycle of rest. The law of God cannot be violated with impunity. We can be quite certain that a great many of our physical and economic ills proceed from failure to observe the weekly day of rest. But we can also be quite sure that a great many of our economic ills arise from our failure to recognize the sanctity of six days of labour. Labour is not only a duty; it is a blessing.” (From his Principles of Conduct, p83).

30 Taken from O Palmer Robertson audio lectures on the covenants. See 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 2:8.
places that [God's] providence has granted you.”

When we think of glorifying God we can tend to think in terms of climbing some high mountain far away. But the way God is calling us to fill the earth with His glory is by doing the work He's given us to do in the place He's called us to be.

E) The DIGNITY of work: There are a lot of people who think that to really glorify God, you have to become a preacher, a pastor, or a missionary. Though they may not admit it, many Christians believe that having a job in “full-time ministry” glorifies God more than having a “normal job.” But look with me again at Genesis 2:15: “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” What was Adam's job? Adam was a gardener. He wasn't a preacher, a pastor, or a missionary. Adam brought great glory to God by being a gardener. And think about the rest of Genesis. Noah was a farmer. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were herdsmen. And Jesus brought as much glory to God being a carpenter as He did an itinerant preacher. In other words, you don't have to be involved in “full-time ministry” to be significant or bring glory to God. This is so important (and so freeing). You don't have to be a pastor or missionary to live a life of significance for God. You glorify God by loving and worshiping Him in the context of whatever it is that He's called you to do. God isn't asking us, “What's your job?” He looking into our hearts.

4. SUMMARY:

If the God who created us is the same as the God who has redeemed us, then we ought to give a lot of thought to the three institutions that He established at creation. Work, marriage, and the Sabbath are the most fundamental principles that God has given to define how He has designed us to live in this world. This was true for Adam and Eve—but it's just as true for us as new creatures in Christ.

These things sound so basic and ordinary to us: work, marriage, and the Sabbath. We want to ask, When do we get to the deeper stuff? But there's an important lesson here. For many of us, when we think of living a life that glorifies God, we can tend to think about doing extraordinary things for God. But what extraordinary things did Adam and Eve do for God in Eden (while still sinless, remember)? “They ate food. They cared for animals. They planted seeds. They needed to be anything other than who they were, nowhere other than where they were, and possessing nothing more than what they had for God to be glorified by their lives. God was enough. Nothing more was needed. Holding hands, mowing the lawn, resisting foul temptations, and learning to love the one who created them was enough for a significant life.”

Let that sink in. For Adam and Eve, God was glorified in the midst of the ordinary. This might be hard for us: “We have trouble seeing how it is glorifying to God to eat food, learn to love, go to bed, and get up the next day for work.” But one of the things we learn in Genesis 1-2 is that living a life of significance, living a life that glorifies God doesn't mean doing extraordinary things. What we learn from Adam and Eve is that the way we live a life of significance and glorify God is rather by walking intimately with our God in the midst of the ordinary.

II. The First Created Being: Who was Adam?

1. Adam was a HISTORICAL FIGURE:

It has become a popular trend recently to deny the fact that Adam was a true historical figure. Many people assume that the theory of evolution has shown the creation narrative to be nothing but a mythical account of how the world came into being (myth rather than history). Others claim that the early chapters of Genesis are meant to be read as a poetic account of how the world came into being (poetry rather than history). As a result, there are even some professing Christians that believe the

31 Zack Eswine, Sensing Jesus, p52.
32 This may be convicting for some of us but it can also be quite freeing: Even when Adam was sinless, he was limited. God didn't expect or ask Adam to cultivate the entire known world. The plan was to fill the earth with God's glory, yes; but Adam's unique role in that grand mission was to be responsible for one place, the garden of Eden. God knows we are limited. He isn't calling us to be everywhere and do everything. He's just calling us to be faithful in the place where He's put us.
33 This truth gratefully gleaned from Jay Sklar's course on the Old Testament History Books at Covenant Seminary.
34 Insight from Zack Eswine, Sensing Jesus, pp34-35.
Scriptural account of Adam and Eve to be a mythical or poetical story rather than a historical reality. They claim that the story of Adam and Eve contains theological truths, but not historical facts. They say that we can affirm the spiritual truths of the creation and fall of man, without needing to affirm their historical reality. In other words, they claim that we don't need to affirm the fact that Adam and Eve were two literal human beings who did, indeed, violate God's command in the garden of Eden.

This viewpoint, however, directly contradicts what Scripture itself teaches about Adam and Eve. The Scriptures clearly portray Adam and Eve as literal, historical figures. We see this in several ways:  

A) The GENEALOGIES of the Scriptures: There are three genealogies in Scripture that trace back to Adam: Genesis chapter 5 is a record of the genealogy of the human race from Adam until Noah. 1 Chronicles 1-6 traces the genealogies of David back to Abraham, Abraham back to Noah, and Noah back to Adam. Then the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3 traces back to Adam, showing that Jesus was the direct physical descendant of a literal Adam (Genesis 5:3; 1 Chronicles 1:1; Luke 3:38).

B) The TEACHING of Jesus: Jesus clearly understood Adam and Eve to be a literal historical figures as He taught on marriage in Matthew 19: “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” (Matthew 19:4-6).

C) The PREACHING of Paul: As he preached in Athens, Paul affirmed that God had made every nation on earth “from one man” (Acts 17:26). Paul believed in and preached a historical Adam.

D) The DOCTRINE of Justification: The basis of our justification in Christ is fundamentally rooted in the existence of a literal historical Adam. Paul parallels Adam and Christ in Romans 5, showing how through one man life and justification came into the world, in exactly the same way as through one man death and condemnation had come into the world (Romans 5:12-19). So, in Paul's mind, the historicity of Adam is not only just as real—but also just as important—as the historicity of Christ.

So then, the Scriptures are quite clear on this point: Adam and Eve are not to be understood as figurative or mythical characters. The Scriptures put them forth as literal, concrete, historical figures.

2. Adam was an UNIQUE CREATURE:

A) Adam was set apart from ALL OTHER ANIMALS: In Genesis 1:26 we read: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. . .’” This was much different than all the other creatures God had made, because Scripture says that God made them “after their kind.” It was only man who was made in God's very image and likeness. But what exactly does that mean?

When Scripture says that God made Adam in His image, it's referencing both Adam's rationality on the one hand: his reason, intellect, conscience and will—the things that set him apart from the beasts; and his possession of true holiness and righteousness on the other: he wasn't just in a state of spiritual neutrality—he knew and loved and walked with God. Adam was both set apart from unreasoning

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36 Most of the following section and Scripture proofs taken from John Stott's commentary on Romans, p163.

37 Many early theologians saw a distinction between man being made in God's image on the one hand and in His likeness on the other. Some believed that image referred to man's body, while likeness referred to man's rationality and morality. Others (such as Augustine) claimed that image related to man's rationality, while likeness related to man's morality. But the best understanding of Scripture here, which is now the majority view, is that likeness simply is a further explanation of image.

38 Berkhof puts it: “We are told that God made man “very good,” Gen. 1:31, and “upright,” Eccl. 7:29. The New Testament indicates very specifically the nature of man’s original condition where it speaks of man as being renewed in Christ, that is, as being brought back to a former condition. The condition to which he is restored in Christ is clearly not one of neutrality, neither good nor bad, in which the will is in a state of perfect equilibrium, but one of true knowledge, Col. 3:10, righteousness and holiness, Eph. 4:24. These three elements constitute the original righteousness, which was lost by sin, but is regained in Christ. . . Mane creation in the moral image implies that the original condition of man was one of positive holiness, and not a state of innocence or moral neutrality.” Robert Peterson puts it thus: “Since the restoration of man in Christ which accords with God involves righteousness and true holiness, the original imago dei must have included the same.” (Class Notes, p37).
beasts and set apart in holiness to God. As made in God's image, Adam was also created as a spiritual and immortal being, for he was endowed with an immortal soul that would never perish.

We could think of man being created in the image of God as a person standing in front of a mirror; as he does so, we can say two things: 1) the person is not the same as the image (man is not God); yet, 2) the image in the mirror is the exact representation of the person (man bears the image of God). In the same way, there are, on the one hand, some characteristics that man does not share with God: He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable; we are not. We are not God. Man was never meant to be everywhere (omnipresent), know everything (omniscient), or do everything (omnipotent). That man was made in God's image never meant that man was God. On the other hand, when God created Adam, He endowed him with attributes such as wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. It's in these ways that man shows himself as having been created in the image of God.

An important question arises here: Has humanity lost God's image because of Adam's fall into sin? The short answer is no. But though God's image has not been completely lost through the fall, it has been greatly corrupted and defiled. Fallen man is now a mix of great dignity on the one hand but also profound depravity. As one put it, fallen man is like a glorious ruin. A ruined castle tells the story of both great glory and great decay. But Scripture tells us that in Christ, God is transforming us even now into His image day by day, and He will conform us completely to His image at glory.

B) Adam was set apart from ALL OTHER MEN: Adam was also completely unique from other men in that he was the only human being (besides the Savior) to come into the world without the poison of sin already running through his veins. As Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, “God made man upright.”

Now, above all, we need to understand that we are not born into an “upright” state. We are not born in the same state in which Adam was created. Because of the fall (we're getting to this soon), we are born as sinners. And understand this: we're not sinners because we sin—rather—we sin because we're sinners. We sin because we're born with a nature that loves sin. But it wasn't this way with Adam. The chart below may help us think about man's nature as created, fallen, redeemed and perfected:

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39 Some limit the image of God in man to his reason and intellect: God's image is evidenced in the ways he differs from the beasts that perish (IE, the Greek theologians). Others limit the image of God in man to his true holiness and righteousness: God's image is evidenced by what was lost by the fall and which is restored in Christ (IE, Lutheran theologians). According to this second view, man lost God's image entirely through the fall. But Reformed theologians argue that Scripture speaks of both. On the one hand, Colossians 3:10 tells us that believers are being renewed after the image of God. Ephesians 4:24 adds that God's image in man included true righteousness and holiness. So, being renewed after the image of God is equated to being conformed to Christ. But, the image of God also includes man's reason and intellect—the things that set him apart from the beasts. After all, even after the fall, in Genesis 9:6, God affirmed that man was yet in the image of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:9). In light of these passages, we cannot say that man has lost God's image completely through the fall.

40 So to summarize: the image of God includes 1) rationality and 2) righteousness; as well as 3) spirituality and 4) immortality.

41 Theologians call these attributes “non-communicable” or “incommunicable” attributes. This insight was gleaned from Zack Eswine's, Sensing Jesus, and has profound implications for how we do ministry as a human being made in God's image.

42 Theologians call these attributes “communicable” attributes.

43 These insights were gleaned from G.I. Williamson's explanation of The Westminster Shorter Catechism, p18.

44 The simple observation of one English writer speaks volumes: “Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be.” (William Hazlitt, On Wit and Humor). For Scripture references on this subject see the last footnote in the second paragraph under section A.

45 Calvin put it this way: “Therefore, even though we grant that God's image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in him, yet it was so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity. . . Now God's image is the perfect excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before his defection, but was subsequently so vitiated and almost blotted out that nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, and disease-ridden. Therefore in some part it now is manifest in the elect, in so far as they have been reborn in the spirit; but it will attain its full splendor in heaven.” (Institutes, 1.15.4).

46 C.S. Lewis. Thomas Boston, many years before, put it this way: “Here was a stately building, man carved like a fair palace, but now lying in ashes: let us stand and look on the ruins, and drop a tear.” (Human Nature in its Fourfold State, p27).

47 See Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:9-10; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 3:20-21. All this summed up so well in the Reformation Heritage Study Bible: “When man fell into sin, knowledge gave way to ignorance, righteousness to iniquity, and holiness to ungodliness. The Creator had made man ‘a little lower than the angels’ and had crowned him ‘with glory and honor’ (Ps.8:5), but man by his own act cast himself down into sin, guilt, misery, and shame and cast away his glorious, honorable crown. The good news of the gospel is that fallen man can be cleansed from sin, renewed by grace, and restored to honor.” (p1733). An important application here that Zack Eswine draws out in Sensing Jesus is that recovering a resemblance to God in our humanity is actually what it means for us to grow in grace: We could say, “The goal of life and ministry is for his grace to recover us to our intended humanity in Him.” (p24).

48 The bottom row is my own explanation; as it seems to me we need further clarity between Pre-fall man and Reborn man:
1. The ESSENTIAL NATURE of the Covenant of Works:

III. The Covenant of Works

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When God created Adam, he entered into a covenant relationship with him. It was in the context of this covenant relationship that God gave Adam the blessings of work, sabbath rest, and marriage. Adam and Eve enjoyed the blessing and favor of their covenant God (Genesis 1:28). His smile was a COVENANT REPRESENTATIVE:

This is something we're going to be spending a lot of time looking at as we move forward in our study of Genesis 2-3 and the corollary passage in Romans 5:12-19. We're going to see that when Adam was given the test in the garden, he wasn't just acting as a single individual but as the representative for all humankind. What this means is that Adam's obedience or disobedience to God's command would have profound lasting consequences—not just for himself—but for the entire human race.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Fall Man</th>
<th>Post-Fall Man</th>
<th>Reborn Man</th>
<th>Glorified Man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able not to sin/ Able to sin</td>
<td>Not able not to sin/ Able to sin</td>
<td>Able (prone) to sin/ Able not to sin</td>
<td>Not able to sin/ Able not to sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporally free from sin</td>
<td>Enslaved to sin</td>
<td>At war with sin</td>
<td>Eternally free from sin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So then, Adam wasn't created in a just a morally neutral state. We can tend to think this way sometimes. But God didn't just make Adam “not bad” — He made him “upright.” God didn't make Adam “neutral” — He made him “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

This doesn't just mean the absence of evil, but the embodiment of true righteousness: Adam loved the Lord his God with all of his heart.

It might be asked, “If God made Adam and Eve upright, how did they fall into sin?” This is where we have to acknowledge that some things we will only know “in part.” What we do know is that God “made them after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it, and dominion over the creatures; yet subject to fall.”

And this should make our own salvation all the more precious. Our condition in Christ is infinitely better than Adam's condition, because though we struggle with sin, our position is secure:

Our security doesn't rest upon us not sinning (as with Adam)—but upon the merit and blood of our Savior.

3. Adam was a COVENANT REPRESENTATIVE:

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Pre-fall man had no sin to speak of; Reborn man possesses radically new desires but continues to struggle with remaining sin. Further, though it is true that reborn man is at war with his sin, and thus able (or prone) to sin, I believe it is incorrect to affirm that he is able not to sin as a Christian. Paul address this very issue in Romans 7, and if Paul was never able to rise completely above his indwelling corruptions, neither can we. Indeed, to grow in Christ is to see more and more of our hidden corruptions! If it is not so, we are deceiving ourselves. For this was Paul's own testimony in his letters: from “least of the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:9; written in 53-55 A.D), to “least of all saints” (Ephesians 3:8; written in 62 A.D) to finally “chief of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15; written in the mid-60's A.D). As Edward Fisher put it in the Marrow of Modern Divinity: “Yea, indeed, it is impossible for any mere man in the time of this life to keep [the law] perfectly; yea, though he be a regenerate man; for the law requireth of man that he 'love the Lord with all his heart, soul, and might;' and there is not the holiest man that lives, but he is flesh as well as spirit in all parts and faculties of his soul, and therefore cannot love the Lord perfectly.”

The Scriptures would later testify of fallen man that, “There is none righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:11), but before man fell, Adam was upright. Of fallen man the Scriptures testify that “there is none who does good, there is not even one” (Romans 3:12), but before man fell, Genesis 1:31 tells us that after God had created man, what He had made was “very good.”

Thomas Boston put it this way: “Now the spirit may be willing, but the flesh is weak. But there was no such thing with Adam; there was no mixture of corruption in his soul, and nothing from the body to hinder his course of obedience” (From Boston's, A View of the Covenant of Works).

Westminster Larger Catechism #17.

Thomas Watson put it this way: “If we once get to be heirs of the covenant of grace, we are in a better state than before. Adam stood on his own legs, and therefore he fell; we stand in the strength of Christ. Under the first covenant, the justice of God, as an avenger of blood, pursues us; but if we get into the second covenant we are in the city of refuge, we are safe, and the justice of God is pacified towards us.” (From his Body of Divinity).

See the footnote at the very beginning of this lesson. As Herman Hoeksema put it: “From the very first moment of his existence, and by virtue of his being created after the image of God, Adam stood in covenant relation to God and was conscious of the living fellowship and friendship which is essential to that relationship.” (Reformed Dogmatics, p315).
rested upon them. It was in the context of this covenant relationship that God gave Adam one specific command.\textsuperscript{54} We read in Genesis 2:16-17, “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in that you eat from it you will surely die.’” Adam and Eve enjoyed the blessing and favor of God in Eden; but that would all change if Adam disobeyed God’s command.\textsuperscript{55}

It's for this reason that this covenant with Adam is called The Covenant of Works:\textsuperscript{56} The continued blessing and favor of God rested upon Adam's obedience (upon his works). His position was not secure. He could be thrust out of life into death, and he indeed would be if he did not continue to live before God a life of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience.\textsuperscript{57} Adam's standing before God hinged upon his obedience. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism summarizes it: “When God had

\textsuperscript{54} As O Palmer Robertson says: “In considering the prohibition of Genesis 2:17, it is essential to appreciate the organic unity between this commandment and the total responsibility of man as created. The requirement concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil must not be conceived as a somewhat arbitrary stipulation without integral relation to the total life of man. . . All that Adam did had direct bearing on his relation to the covenant God of creation. . . His life as a covenant creature must be viewed as a unified whole. . . If the covenant of creation is thought not to exceed Adam's probation-test, a curious brand of Christianity ultimately emerges. It is a brand of Christianity greatly at odds with that in which the probation-test is understood as the focal point of a total life-embracing covenantal relationship.” (The Christ of the Covenants, pp81-82).

\textsuperscript{55} We say Adam because the command was given to Adam alone: the Hebrew second person pronoun is singular in Genesis 2:16-17; 3:17. It was Adam alone who was the covenant representative for the entire human race. Witsius says: “Though Eve had the first hand in this crime, yet it is usually in scripture ascribed to Adam: by one man sin entered into the world (Romans 5:12). . . Adam was the head of the covenant, with whom, even before the creation of Eve, God seems to have transacted. . . nor was the covenant judged to be entirely broken, till Adam also added his own crime to that of his wife’s.” (Economy, pp137-36).

\textsuperscript{56} Kevan helps us understand the history of the concept in covenantal thought. He says: “The concept of a Covenant of Works was relatively new [for the Puritans], being no part of the theological formulation of Calvin and those who labored with him. The Reformers never went beyond the belief in one covenant, namely, the Covenant of Grace. The idea of the Covenant of Works was introduced into British theology by William Perkins and others at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and was intended to serve as a kind of bridge linking revealed theology to natural theology.” (The Grace of Law, p111). As we mentioned earlier, there are also other names for the Covenant of Works. It has been called the Covenant of Nature because nature hadn't been infected yet with sin at the time the Lord established the covenant with Adam. It has also been called a Covenant of Life because it held out the promise of life in the tree of life in the garden. More recently it's also been called the Covenant of Creation (O Palmer Robertson prefers this designation). Some object to the name Covenant of Works for especially two reasons. First, it is said that there was also grace in the Covenant of Works with Adam. Second, it is said that this terminology narrows all attention in God's dealings with Adam to the single command given to him in Genesis 2:16-17, to the neglect of the whole of the covenant relationship between God and Adam. In response, I would tentatively agree with the reasoning of the second objection. It is true that God's covenant with Adam was not exclusively limited to the command of Genesis 2:16-17. The command was there and the command carried massive implications; but the command was not the entirety of the covenant relationship between God and Adam. As to the first objection, along with others, I would draw a very distinct line between the goodness and kindness of God on the one hand, and the grace of God on the other. Grace in Scripture is always in the context and against the background of sin. True biblical grace cannot be properly understood apart from sin. So the fact that Adam had yet no sin to speak of before the fall renders it impossible, in my understanding, to speak of the presence of God's grace towards Adam in the garden in Genesis 1-2. There is another third issue that can be mentioned in respect of the phrase Covenant of Works. It is not necessarily in the phrase itself, but in the phrase as it relates to its counterpart, the Covenant of Grace. From Adam's perspective alone, these two phrases very accurately describe God's two great covenants. For Adam was the covenant head for the first, the Covenant of Works; and after that covenant had been broken, he was then a recipient (but not the covenant head) of the Covenant of Grace.\textsuperscript{57} From Adam's perspective, these two terms would describe God's dealings with him, with Adam the man, perfectly. For his own righteousness (IE, works) was the basis and foundation of the Covenant of Works; but it was the grace of God and God's own righteousness that was the basis and foundation of the Covenant of Grace. So, from Adam's perspective, the terms fit perfectly. But there is a lack of preciseness when it comes to the two phrases being used in general. For the Covenant of Works is named so as it relates to God's relationship with the covenant head (Adam); but the Covenant of Grace is named so as it relates—not to the covenant head (Christ Jesus)— but to the recipients and beneficiaries of the covenant head (believers in Jesus). Louis Berkhof explains it this way: “Basically, the Covenant of Grace is simply the execution of the original agreement by Christ as our surety. He undertook freely to carry out the will of God. He placed Himself under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, and were no more in a position to obtain life by their own fulfillment of the law. He came to do what Adam failed to do, and did it in virtue of a covenant agreement. And if this is so, and the covenant of grace is, as far as Christ is concerned, simply the carrying out of the original agreement, it follows that the latter must also have been of the nature of a covenant.” Thomas Boston reflects thus: “But that time being so expired, he [Adam] would have been confirmed in goodness, so that he could no more fall away, as a part of the life promised. And the covenant of works would have forever remained as man's eternal security for, and ground of his eternal life; but no longer as a rule of his obedience, for that would have been to reduce him to the state of trial he was in before, and to have set him anew to work as a title to what he already possessed, by virtue of his supposed keeping of that covenant. . . after Adam's standing out the set time, all mankind then standing with him, would have been confirmed; and those who should afterwards have come into the world, would not only have had original righteousness conveyed to them from him, but have been confirmed too in holiness and happiness, so
created man He entered into a covenant of life with him upon the condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil upon the pain of death.”

Now, it's important to understand that though God required perfect obedience from him, Adam's relationship with God wasn't based on fear. Adam was the friend of God. Adam shared intimate communion with God. God didn't just command Adam not to eat of the one forbidden tree; He invited him to eat freely of any of the other trees of the garden. “In all his life and work Adam was to be busy as the friend-servant of God, not as a slave who works from the motive of fear for the whip, nor as a wage earner who puts in his hours merely for his wages, but freely from the love of God. . .” Still, in the Covenant of Works, it was absolutely essential for Adam to obey in order to enjoy God's favor. Continuing in the Lord's blessing was wholly contingent upon Adam's obedience.

2. The SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION for the Covenant of Works:

It's important to note that the word “covenant” is never used in Genesis 2-3. Still, this relationship between God and Adam in the garden is considered to be a covenant for the following reasons:

A) Scripture doesn't always use the word for covenant when a covenant takes place. We have one example of this in the Davidic Covenant: Psalm 89 makes clear that what was happening in 2 Samuel 7 was a covenant—God was confirming His covenant with David. But there is actually no mention of a covenant in 2 Samuel 7 itself. Another example is with the Patriarchs: Psalm 105:8-10 tells us that the covenant God made with Abraham was also confirmed (as a covenant) to Isaac and then to Jacob—but the word covenant isn't actually used in Genesis as it relates to God's dealings with Jacob. Maybe the best example of this is right in Genesis 2-3: Genesis 2:18-25 describes Adam and Eve coming together in marriage. Biblically, marriage is a covenant. Scripture elsewhere refers to marriage as a covenant relationship (Malachi 2:14). But the word covenant wasn't used in Genesis 2.

B) It is called a covenant in Hosea 6:7. Hosea 6:7 seems to tell us quite explicitly that God made a covenant with Adam. It says this: “like Adam they have transgressed the covenant.” This is the most

that they could not have fallen.” (A View to the Covenant of Works). Edward Fisher, in his famous The Marrow of Modern Divinity, puts it this way: “And thus did our Lord Jesus Christ enter into the same covenant of works that Adam did to deliver believers from it: Our Lord Jesus Christ became surety for the elect in the second covenant. Heb. 8:22; and in virtue of that suretyship, whereby he put himself in the room of the principal debtors, he came under the same covenant of works that Adam did; in so far as the fulfilling of that covenant in their stead was the very condition required of him, as the second Adam in the second covenant. ...How then is the second covenant a covenant of grace? In respect of Christ, it was most properly and strictly a covenant of works, in that he made a proper, real, and full satisfaction in behalf of the elect; but in respect of them, it is purely a covenant of richest grace, in as much as God accepted the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them; provided the surety himself and gives all to them freely for his sake.” (p43). Vos says: “The covenant of grace is nothing other than a covenant of works accomplished in Christ, the fulfillment of which is given to us by grace. . .The covenant of grace is the implementation of the covenant of works in the surety for us.” (Dogmatics, V2, pp33,36). And again: “When we say that it is a covenant of grace, then we must consider specifically the relationship of guilty man before God in this covenant. When one considers the Mediator of the covenant, then naturally no grace is shown to Him. Considered in Christ, everything is a matter of carrying out the demands of the covenant of works according to God's strict justice, though in another form. . .God shows grace to us when He demands from Christ what He can demand from us. Considered in Christ, everything is strict justice; considered in us, everything is free grace.” (p120). Because of this, it seems to me that there might be a better designation for these two great covenants than Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace (though I have used these terms myself here). Perhaps it is best to distinguish them (as the Westminster Confession at times) as the first covenant being the Covenant of Life, the second as the Covenant of Grace. Or, as O Palmer Robertson, the first the Covenant of Creation, the second the Covenant of Redemption. Or perhaps simply the Covenant in Adam and the Covenant in Christ. I don’t object to the present terminology (again, I’ve used it myself here), but do think it to be helpful and necessary to understand the things written above. I’ve also included a simple chart on all this after Section III, Point 5, Sub-point D.

37 The language of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience is the language of the Westminster Larger Catechism #20.

38 Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 12.

39 This phrase is literally in Hebrew, “eating you shall eat.” Henry Ainsworth explains the Hebrew phrase, “That is, ‘mayest (or shall) freely eat.’ Thus God first shoveth his love and liberality before he makes any restraint. The doubling of words is often used in Scripture for more earnestness and assurance . . .” (From his Annotations on the Pentateuch, pp1-1-5). John Gill describes the Hebrew phrase the same way: of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: “a very generous, large, and liberal allowance this; or ‘in eating thou mayest eat; which was giving full power, and leaving them without any doubt and uncertainty about their food; which they might freely take, and freely eat of, wherever they found it, or were inclined to, even of any, and every tree in the garden, excepting one, next forbidden.”

40 Herman Hoeksema, Reformed Dogmatics, p316.
straightforward reading of the passage. Just as Adam transgressed the covenant that God had made with him, so Israel transgressed the covenant that God made with them at Mount Sinai. In other words, God must have made a covenant with Adam. It is true that the verse can also be translated, “like man” (cf. Psalm 82:7), since the Hebrew word for Adam can refer either to mankind or to the person Adam. But even if “man” was the right translation, it would attest to the fact that mankind in general is in some way bound in covenant relation to God. And so: “In either case, Hosea 6:7 would appear to apply covenantal terminology to the relation of God to man established by creation.”

C) It is a necessary implication from Paul's words in Romans 5:12-19. In this passage, Paul parallels Adam and Christ as two covenant heads. Here he argues that life and justification come to all through one man (Christ) in the same way that death and condemnation had come to all through Adam. So, Adam was just as much a covenant representative as Christ. The difference is that Adam brought death and condemnation to all those he represented (through his disobedience), whereas Christ brought life and justification to all those He represented (through His obedience). Since a covenant representative is by definition the representative of a covenant, it seems strange to say that Adam was a covenant representative while at the same time claiming there was in fact no covenant.

D) Summary and Significance: Because of the reasons we've mentioned, we take God's relationship with Adam in the garden to be a covenant relationship. It's true that there are some who disagree, and it's also true that we can't claim this was indeed the case with absolute certainty; there are some things we need to hold more tightly than other things. But at the same time, we believe the biblical evidence does indeed point to the fact that God's relation to Adam was a covenantal relationship.

Why does it matter? Because it helps us to understand the nature of the relationship between God and Adam. The command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil wasn't just a random stipulation. It was a command given in the context of an intimate covenant relationship between God and Adam. There was a living, covenant bond between them. God's dealings with Adam were so much more than: “I created you so don't do this.” As a marriage covenant is deeply personal as well as legal, so it was with God and Adam in the garden. The requirement was given in the context of covenant intimacy. It's one thing for someone to tell a stranger, “Don't eat my lunch.” It's another thing for a man to tell his wife, “Don't be unfaithful to me.” When Adam disobeyed, it wasn't just the transgression of a random command, it was the shattering of a covenant relationship.

3. The BINDING REQUIREMENT of the Covenant of Works:

So again, in the context of the covenant, God required of Adam simple and perfect obedience to His command: In Genesis 2:16-17 we read, “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” God's clear command was that Adam was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now, it doesn't seem that there was anything intrinsically evil about this tree: “There was in itself nothing sinful in eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Only God's forbidding word made it wrong for Adam to eat of the tree.” The command that God gave Adam was a simple test of obedience that focused on whether or not he would obey the Lord. Would he submit to the Word of God? Would he obey simply because God told him to? Would he acknowledge that he is the creature and not the Creator?

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61 O Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Covenants, p23.
63 See also 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.
64 IE, all those whom Christ represented, who are safe in Christ; not all indiscriminately.
65 Ligon Duncan notes here that Adam was already in a state of blessing. It wasn't that Adam would be transferred from a state of non-blessing to a state of blessing if he obeyed God's command; it was whether he would continue in that state of blessing (and receive even greater blessing), or fall from that state of blessing, that was at stake in his obedience.
67 Berkhof says that in this one command, “the demands of the law were, so to say, concentrated on a single point.” Edward Fisher (Marrow of Modern Divinity) says: “That one commandment was in effect a summary of the whole duty of man. . .”
68 Reformed theologians have been decisively split over the question: Had Adam obeyed, would he have merited life through his obedience? The emphasis is on merit. On the one side of the debate is Charles Hodge, who affirms that Adam would...
4. The UNIVERSAL SCOPE of the Covenant of Works:

Once again, though it is not immediately apparent in Genesis chapters 2-3, Scripture later makes it very clear that Adam was acting as a covenant representative for the entire human race. It’s as if every single person who has ever lived was loaded together into one massive airplane, and Adam was the pilot. Or all humankind was together on one enormous ship, and Adam was the captain. If the pilot takes the plane down, everyone perishes; if the captain sinks the boat, all those aboard are lost. Romans 5:12-19 makes it clear that the fate of the entire human race was at stake in Adam's obedience or disobedience to the command God had given him (we'll talk about this more later).69

5. The PRESENT SIGNIFICANCE of the Covenant of Works:

A) The Covenant of Works has been completely shattered: It's been shattered in so far as it relates to Adam and all those whom he represented.70 Remember, it wasn't just Adam's personal destiny indeed have merited life he had obeyed: "The word 'condition', however, is used in two senses. Sometimes it means the meritorious consideration on the ground of which certain benefits are bestowed. In this sense perfect obedience was the condition of the covenant originally made with Adam. Had he retained his integrity he would have merited the promised blessing. For to him that worketh the reward is not of grace but of debt. In the same sense the work of Christ is the condition of the covenant of redemption. It was the meritorious ground, laying a foundation in justice for the fulfillment of the promises made to Him by the Father." On the other side of the debate is Louis Berkhof, who denies Adam would have merited anything from God had he obeyed: "And while transgression of the law would render him liable to punishment, the keeping of it would not constitute an inherent claim to a reward. Even if he did all that was required of him, he would still have to say, I am but an unprofitable servant, for I have merely done that which it was my duty to do. Under this purely natural relationship man could not have merited anything." These are the two lines of thinking. They are both compelling. On the one hand, it is compelling to say that even Adam would have to say he was merely an unprofitable servant doing the will of his heavenly Master. The other side is also compelling, especially if one considers the parallels between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21 and its logical ramifications for Adam's obedience. Under this line of thinking Herman Witsius is also very compelling, when having established the fact that God had made promises to Adam upon his obedience, he observes two things from Scripture. First, Witsius observes: "It is universally allowed, that Paul, in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, where he treats on justification, does under that name comprise the adjudging to eternal life; he in many places proves that a sinner cannot be justified, that is, lay claim to eternal life, by the works of the law; but never by this argument, because the law had no promises of eternal life...". On the contrary, the apostle teaches, that the commandment, considered in itself, was ordained to life, Romans 7:10; that is, was such as by the observance thereof life might have once been obtained; which if the law could still bestow on the sinner, verily righteousness should have been by the law. Galatians 3:21... If Adam therefore had persevered in obedience, the law would have given him that same inheritance, which now in Christ is allotted not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth." Second, Witsius observes: "We are above all to observe how the apostle distinguishes the righteousness, which is of the law, from the evangelical. Of the first he thus speaks, Romans 10:5, 'Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doth those things shall live by them.' Of the second, he writes as follows, Romans 1:17, 'The just shall live by faith.' On both sides, the promise of life is the same, and proposed in the very same words. Nor does the apostle in the least hint that one kind of life is promised by the law, another by the gospel. But to what man, thus working, were the promises made? Was it to the sinner? Was it not to the man in a state of innocence? And was it not then, when it might truly be said if thou continuest to do well, thou shalt be heir of that life upon that condition? And this could be said to none but to innocent Adam. Was it not then, when the promise was actually made? For after sin, there is not so much a promise as a denunciation of wrath, and an intimation of a curse, proposing that as the condition of obtaining life, which is now evidently impossible to be performed. I therefore conclude, that to Adam, in the covenant of works, was promised the same eternal life, to be obtained by the righteousness which is of the law, of which believers are made partakers through Christ." So Witsius concludes (see Economy of the Covenants, V1, pp73-75). I tend to side with his arguments. However, I wonder if much of this is purely speculative, especially in light of the fact that so many good Reformers disagree. It is our portion now to know in part. The fact is, Adam didn't obey. So maybe instead of wondering what would have happened if he had, we ought to simply glory in what has happened. What we do know for sure is that sin, condemnation and death were imputed to us in Adam. But now, in Jesus, the Lord is our righteousness. "The very truth is, Adam by his fall threw down our whole nature headlong into the same destruction, and drowned his whole offspring in the same gulf of misery, and the reason is, because, by God's appointment, he was not to stand or fall as a single person only, but as a common public person, representing all mankind to come of him." (Fisher, Marrow of Divinity).

69 I want to be really clear about this. When we say that Adam represented all his posterity, we mean that he represented every single person who would ever live—except one—Christ Jesus. For every single one of them, the Covenant of Works has been shattered beyond recognition. It's not some standing invitation for anyone who wants to give it a try. Adam represented us all when he sinned and fell. The test was given, Adam failed, and the sentence was pronounced: death and condemnation for Adam and all his posterity. Christ, however, was never included in Adam's posterity. It is for this reason that he could redeem His people by means of himself perfectly fulfilling the Covenant of Works (Section D below). So when Adam sinned, the Covenant of Works was shattered as it respected Adam and all his posterity. For them the door of the Covenant of Works has been slammed shut forever. But those ancient doors might be opened by Another. For Him alone was it written: "Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the king of glory may come in" (Psalm 24:7, 9).
that was on the line—it was all humanity with him. He didn’t just represent himself; he represented all of us. So when Adam disobeyed—that was it—the covenant was shattered, and there was no going back. The covenant still stands. It’s vital for us to understand that “no one can stand in Adam’s place to try to merit favor with God.” Adam already stood in our place (and mine), and he failed and fell, and we fell with him. So there’s no longer any hope for us to attain eternal life this way. When Adam disobeyed, the Covenant of Works was shattered in such a way that it could never be put back together again.

B) The Covenant of Works carries with it lasting effects: When Adam disobeyed, the Covenant of Works itself was completely shattered—but its effects continue to this day. All humanity fell with Adam into condemnation and death. Because of his transgression, every single one of us is born with hearts that are both unable and unwilling to love and obey God: we’re both enslaved to our sin (unable) and in love with our sin (unwilling). Because of Adam’s sin, every one of us is born as a guilty sinner under God’s wrath and condemnation. So, Adam’s sin absolutely carried lasting effects.

C) The Covenant of Works represents what man still owes to God: When Adam disobeyed, the Covenant of Works was shattered. And because of that, we are wholly unable to live before God the way that He commands. But this in no way lets us off the hook. God still demands perfect obedience to His Law. Jesus tells us that we are to be perfect, as our heavenly father is perfect. All men are still commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. The standard hasn’t changed just because we can’t attain to it anymore. God still demands our perfect obedience.

D) The Covenant of Works prepares the way for redemption: It does this in two ways. First, the Covenant of Works exposes our need for redemption: Without an understanding of what happened in Genesis 3, we will never understand why it is that we so desperately need a Savior. The only reason anyone comes to Christ is that they have first been confronted with the reality of their condition: that we stand presently and personally under God’s eternal wrath and condemnation. So, the Covenant of Works exposes our need for redemption. Secondly, the Covenant of Works provides the hope of our redemption: Christ came as the second Adam to do exactly what Adam couldn’t do—be perfect (in every way) and die for our sins.

As Charles Hodge puts it: “If Adam acted not only for himself but also for his posterity, that fact determines the question, whether the covenant of works be still in force. In the obvious sense of the terms, to say that men are still under that covenant, is to say that they are still on probation; that the race did not fall when Adam fell. But if Adam acted as the head of the whole race, then all men stood their probation in him, and fell with him in his first transgression. We are by nature, i.e., as we were born, the children of wrath. This fact is assumed in all the provisions of the gospel and in all the institutions of our religion. Children are required to be baptized for the remission of sin. But while the Pelagian doctrine is to be rejected, which teaches that each man comes into the world free from sin and free from condemnation, and stands his probation in his own person, it is nevertheless true that where there is no sin there is no condemnation. Hence our Lord said to the young man, ‘This do and thou shalt live.’ And hence the Apostle in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, says that God will reward every man according to his works. To those who are good, He will give eternal life; to those who are evil, indignation and wrath. This is only saying that the eternal principles of justice are still in force. If any man can present himself before the bar of God or set aside. The obligation of this covenant, continues in all its force, in time and through eternity, upon every sinner who is bound to obedience. Man, even after the violation of the covenant, continues bound, not only to obedience, but to a perfect performance of duty...The law therefore remains as the rule of our duty; but abrogated as to its federal nature; nor can it be bound to obedience...man, even after the violation of the covenant, remains under all its obligation. For though the law in its covenant form, is broken; yet, it is far from being repealed, or set aside. The obligation of this covenant, continues in all its force, in time and through eternity, upon every sinner who is not released from it, by God the other Party. The awful consequence is, that every unrepentant sinner is bound, at once to perform perfect obedience, and also to endure the full execution of the penal sanction.”

Julian Zugg from his Covenant Theology course (From the MINTS website).

Again, as Edward Fisher puts it: “The very truth is, our father Adam falling from God, did, by his fall, so dash him and us all in pieces, that there was no whole part left, either in him or us, fit to ground such a covenant upon.” (Marrow).

Witsius says: “It is indeed a most destructive heresy to maintain, that man, sinful and obnoxious to punishment, is not bound to obedience...man, even after the violation of the covenant, continues bound, not only to obedience, but to a perfect performance of duty...The law therefore remains as the rule of our duty; but abrogated as to its federal nature; nor can it be the condition by the performance of which man may acquire a right to the reward (Economy of the Covenants, V2, pp151-59). As William Strong explains: “to all those who are in the first Adam, the first Covenant stands in force to this day...Every unregenerate man is under the Law as a Covenant of Works.” (The Two Covenants, pp2,38). Fisher says: “though strength to obey be lost, yet man having lost it by his own default, the obligation to obedience remains still; so that Adam and his offspring are no more discharged of their duties, because they have no strength to do them, than a debtor is quit of his bond, because he wants [i.e., lacks] money to pay it.” (The Marrow, p39). And Colquhoun says: “In consequence of God’s having proposed the law in its covenant form, to Adam, [who stood] as the representative of all his natural descendants...all the children of men, while they continue in their natural state, remain firmly, in the sight of God, under the whole original obligation of it; even those of them, who, as members of the visible church, are under an external dispensation of the covenant of grace, remain under all its obligation. For though the law in its covenant form, is broken; yet, it is far from being repealed, or set aside. The obligation of this covenant, continues in all its force, in time and through eternity, upon every sinner who is not released from it, by God the other Party. The awful consequence is, that every unrepentant sinner is bound, at once to perform perfect obedience, and also to endure the full execution of the penal sanction.” (Treatise of Law and Gospel, p19).
had failed to do: “Jesus Christ entered into the same covenant of works that Adam did to deliver believers from it. He came under the same covenant of works that Adam did; in so far as the fulfilling of that covenant in their stead was the very condition required of him, as the second Adam in the second covenant.”

So, the Covenant of Works also provides the hope of our redemption. Jesus is our righteousness. It’s His obedience—and not ours—that is the only basis of our salvation and security. So then: “The covenant of works is the basis of our need of redemption (because we have violated it) and our hope of redemption (because Christ has fulfilled its terms for us).”

### EXCURSUS: COMPARING THE COVENANT OF WORKS AND THE COVENANT OF GRACE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVT.</th>
<th>REPRESENTED</th>
<th>REQUIRED</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>RESULT</th>
<th>FOCUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADAM Cov. of Works</td>
<td>All those from Adam</td>
<td>PERFECT OBEEDIENCE</td>
<td>Disobedience</td>
<td>Death for all from Adam</td>
<td>The term “works” used with respect to the requirement of the covenant head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRIST Cov. of Grace</td>
<td>All those in Christ</td>
<td></td>
<td>Obedience</td>
<td>Life for all in Christ</td>
<td>The term “grace” used with respect to the benefits for the covenant members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. The Fall of Adam

Let’s turn together now to Genesis 3. As we turn there we can note that since Satan is present here in the garden, that lets us know that the fall in the angelic world must have already taken place. There couldn’t have been a tempter if Satan and his angels hadn’t already fallen. This is also a stark reminder for us, that what God is about to do for Adam and Eve something that He didn’t have to do. He didn’t give the fallen angels a second chance. But God would put into motion a plan of redemption for fallen humanity.

But before we can talk about what God would do to redeem fallen humanity, we have to understand why it is that fallen humanity needs to be redeemed. The passage that we’re going to be looking at together is absolutely essential, because without a true understanding of our sin, we can never really understand or embrace God’s grace. And we can learn a few things in particular about sin in Genesis 3:1-13.

1. The ENTRANCE of sin: How Satan Tempts

   A) He questions God’s CHARACTER (v1): Here in verse 1, Satan begins with insinuation rather with an argument: “Has God really said...?”. What’s He doing? He’s questioning God’s character. How? By making God’s command seem much harsher than it really was. What was God’s command? To eat of any tree in the garden except one. But what did Satan insinuate? “Eve, did God really say you couldn’t eat any of the fruit trees in this whole garden?? Gosh, that seems pretty stern and unreasonable, doesn’t it...?” Satan is insinuating that God is a harsh and domineering God. He’s calling into question God’s character. He’s insinuating that God isn’t really, truly, good.

   And Satan hasn’t changed. Isn’t it true that one of his favorite ways to draw our hearts away from Christ is still to call into question God’s goodness to us? Just like Absalom drew away the hearts of the people by whispering lies about the King (remember that?). The snake’s still whispering lies to us about our God. One pastor put it really simply: “In time of temptation, believe Christ rather than the devil. Believe truth from truth itself. Hearken not to a liar, an enemy, and a murderer.”

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75 Fisher, Marrow, p43. Witsius says: “The covenant of grace is not the abolition, but rather the confirmation of the covenant of works, in so far as the Mediator has fulfilled at the conditions of that covenant, so that all believers may be justified and saved, according to the covenant of works, to which satisfaction was made by the Mediator.” (Economy, V1, p160).
77 The outline of this section gleaned from Ligon Duncan’s course on Covenant Theology.
78 Octavius Winslow applies this particularly to difficult seasons in the Christian life: “Hard and harsh thoughts of God will be the effect of wrong interpretations of his dealings. If for one moment we remove the eye from off the heart of God. ..we are prepared to give heed to every dark suggestion of the adversary; that moment we look at the dispensation with a different mind. ..we view. ..the covenant God. ..as unkind, unloving, and severe.” (Personal Declension and Revival, p58).
79 See 2 Samuel 15:1-6. Absalom here serves as a picture of how Satan whispers lies to us about the King.
80 And still so subtly; not now coming to us in the form of a snake, but doesn’t he often come to us in the form of a thought?
53

B) He contradicts God's WORD (v4): Now in verse 4, Satan directly contradicts what God had said.
In particular, Satan lies about what God had said concerning the consequences of sin. In verse 4,
Satan lies to Eve about what will happen if she eats the fruit : “You surely will not die!” Satan is telling
Eve that there won't be any consequences for doing this—there won't be any consequences for sin.
That sounds familiar too, doesn't it. The whole world seems to be captivated by the lie that the only
kind of sin that would endanger anyone eternally is reserved for people like Hitler or Stalin or ISIS'
“Jihadi John.” The world recklessly affirms just like the snake: “You surely will not surely die!” God
tells us different: “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). The smallest sin merits God's wrath.

C) He perverts God's WAYS (v5): In verse 4, Satan lied to Eve about sins' consequences. Now in
verse 5 he lies to her about sins' pleasures: “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes
will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” What's Satan doing? He's
whispering to Eve the lie that sin will make her happy. He's telling her that sin is something desirable
and good. He's feeding her the lie that happiness isn't found in following God—but in defying Him.
Has he ever whispered that lie into your ears? Did you believe it? If you believed it and took and
ate that poisonous fruit (whether it was lust or unforgiveness or anything else), did it really make you
happy? Satan always feeds us this lie that sin will make us happy—but we only end up miserable.
In particular, Satan tells Eve that she and Adam 82 would “be like God.” It's ironic that Satan uses this
lie in particular for at least two reasons. First, Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and
embodied that image in the fullest sense possible. It was only when they disobeyed God's command
that that image was frightfully corrupted. So, never was humanity more “like God” than Adam and
Eve before their fall into sin. Secondly, Satan's lie here is ironic because it was exactly the desire to
be like God that caused Satan himself to fall from heaven. 83 Satan here implants into Eve's heart the
same deadly covetousness that had led him to rebel against the Lord and fall from Him forever. 84
So, here we see Satan luring Eve by declaring that she (and Adam) would be like God. We saw that
it was a lie (sin would make man profoundly unlike God). But why was it that this sounded so good
to Eve? To be like God? How sobering that Eve began to think that knowing God wasn't enough—
that it was a more preferable thing to actually be God. Eve was willing to trade in knowing God for
being God. What about us? What ways are we tempted like Eve to try to be like God (be God)?85
We all know what happened.86 We read in Genesis 3:6, “When the woman saw that the tree was
good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise,
The Hebrew second person pronouns here are plural.
This is alluded to in Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-17. See also 1 Timothy 3:6 and Jude 6.
84
So, though Satan pretended to have Eve's best interest in mind, his real motivation was to make her just as miserable as he
was. A good thing for us to remember: Satan doesn't have your best interest in mind; he just wants to make you miserable.
85
Let's get really practical for those who are called to the ministry in particular: Ambition comes straight from the pit of hell.
But it can so often appear in sheep's clothing: being remarkable, exceptional, extraordinary, noteworthy, set apart from others.
These can be attractive, alluring qualities for a minister of the gospel. And they can flow from pure desires: IE, “I don't want
my life to be ordinary: I want to really make a difference for Jesus.” But when our goal in life and ministry begins to transition
from simply knowing God and walking with Him to being radical or extraordinary, something has gone terribly wrong.
Amidst the ooh-ing and ahh-ing of the religious crowd of his day, John the Baptist took his stand and said, “I am not the
Christ.” It's a truth we ought to engrave on our hearts. Much of these applications are taken from Zack Eswine's Sensing
Jesus, pp21-25. Let me quote one more section here at length: “Whatever he once was—earnest, or zealous, or genuine—Jesus
teaches us that a breach within the being of this teacher has grown. But what's scary is that the teacher does not know this. He
believers that what he sees in the mirror accurately reflects his true and not his false self. . .So he says the awful thing with
conviction and, of all places, in prayer: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men' (Luke 18:11). And there it is: the
deadly air; the poisoned belief that in comparison to other men we can become exceptional in God's eyes. This Pharisee
doesn't have to surrender to the same human reality that others do. So somewhere along the line this man of God began to
say to himself statements such as, 'For God's sake, I will not be ordinary.' 'Mine will be no usual life and no routine ministry.'
'I will do what no others can for God.' 'God will treat me more favorably than he does others.' 'I will preach, pray, and serve
in a way that sets me apart from my neighbors and colleagues.' 'I do not sin like other men do.' ” (From Sensing Jesus, p21).
86
We know Adam fell. But why? Vos makes the following clarification: “One may not say that Adam fell because the grace
of God left him, but through his fall, one must say, Adam fell in an incomprehensible way from the grace of God.” (p53).
82
83


she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”

Some scholars have compared the description of Eve’s fall into sin to what Scripture says in 1 John 2:16:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENESIS 3:6</th>
<th>1 JOHN 2:16</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The woman saw that the tree was good for food...</td>
<td>Sin as the lust of the flesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . .and that it was a delight to the eyes. . .</td>
<td>Sin as the lust of the eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . .and that [it] was desirable to make one wise. . .</td>
<td>Sin as the pride of life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We might well ask, where was Adam when all this was happening? Even Eve’s falling into sin was ultimately Adam’s fault. It was Adam’s duty to protect his wife. And by the way, if you are a husband, this is exactly what your duty is. But Adam was silent. So, we read in Genesis 3:6 that Eve ate of the fruit and Adam ate with her. And death was unleashed. But before we judge Adam and Eve, let’s remember that we are just as foolish and fickle. We fall prey to the lies of sin every day.

We’re no better than our fathers. But the time would come in which God himself would mend everything that happened on that day. A second Adam would come into the world. In the wilderness, Jesus was likewise tempted by the serpent in three ways to give into sin (Luke 4:1-13). But where Adam fell, Jesus stood. And because He stood, we stand in and through Him. Death had come into the world through one tree; but life would come into the world through another. In one garden, it was death that was unleashed; but later—in another garden—it would be resurrection.

2. The NATURE of sin: What Sin Is

From this account of man’s fall in Genesis 3, we also learn about what sin is. What are Adam and Eve doing when they start to listen to Satan’s lies? They are setting themselves up as judges to decide for themselves what’s right and wrong. And in doing so, they’re rebelling against God’s rightful authority over them. This is the essence of what sin is: it’s rebellion against God’s authority (vv4-6).

Psalm 8 is a psalm that David wrote reflecting on creation and man’s place in creation. David asks in the psalm, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him...?” In other words, David’s asking, “Who are we, O God? Who are we that You should take thought of us?” It’s a good question. But when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden it was because they went from asking, “Who are we?—to asking “Who is He?” They went from asking “Who are we that God should do anything for us?”—to asking, “Who is He that He should tell us what to do or how to live?” Wow. That’s what sin is.

It was this issue of authority that was the major theme of the book of Judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). This is the essence of sin—making ourselves the judge of right and wrong instead of submitting to God’s authority. And, if you remember, this is precisely the opposite of what the Savior did. Jesus submitted himself in every way to the Father, “becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8).

Maybe we need to let God search us here. Are there any ways we’re refusing to surrender ourselves to Him and His Word? Are we submitting our heart and life fully to the scrutiny of the Bible.

We could note here that these same three Hebrew verbs (saw, coveted, took) are used to describe Achan’s sin in Joshua 7:21. Achan’s sin seems to serve as a picture for us of this first sin in the garden, for his whole family is put to death with him on account of the sin which only he himself committed (stealing the bar of gold during the conquest of Jericho).

For example, Henry Ainsworth (Annotations on the Pentateuch); Herman Hoeksema (Reformed Dogmatics).

Some believe these temptations can also be described as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

John 19:41 says, “Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”

Berkhof: “Starting from the pre-supposition that he had certain rights as over against God, man allowed the new center, which he found in himself, to operate against his Maker.” Hoeksema: “Here sin is revealed in its deepest principle: to negate God, to deny his sovereignty, and to be our own God, determining for ourselves what shall be good and what shall be evil.”

Insight gleaned gratefully from Tim Cain, pastor of Kaleo Church in San Diego.

This question convicted me. Taken from The Reformation Heritage Study Bible, pXII (Reading the Bible Experientially).
The EFFECTS of sin: What Sin Does

Satan had told the woman that eating the forbidden fruit would bring enlightenment and happiness. Instead, sin brought nothing but shame and estrangement. Satan had told them that their eyes would be opened (3:5). The father of lies is an expert at telling half-truths. It’s true, when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, Scripture tells us that, indeed, at that moment, “the eyes of both of them were opened” (3:7). Their eyes were opened. But not in the way that they had thought or wanted. Instead of stepping into a dreamworld, they found that they had woken up into a living nightmare.

A) Sin created DIVINE discord: It brought SHAME and DEFILEMENT: In Genesis 2:25 we read, “the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” But after eating the fruit the Lord had forbidden, the two of them realize they’re naked and begin to sew fig leaves together to cover themselves (3:7). They were once naked and unashamed. But now they find themselves defiled and shame-filled. Sowing together the fig leaves was a feeble attempt to cover over the shame they were newly experiencing.94 And this is what sin continues to do: it promises life but in the end it only leaves us dirty and ashamed. Sin also resulted in GUILT and FEAR: When the Lord comes into the garden, Adam and Eve hide themselves (3:8-10). Before, they had enjoyed sweet fellowship with their Creator, but now they run from Him. Sin had created a massive chasm between God and man.

B) Sin created HUMAN discord: Sin didn’t only create estrangement between God and man. It also created estrangement between the man and his wife. As the Lord speaks with them, they now begin to blame each other. Adam admits to eating the fruit, but puts the blame directly on Eve—and not only on Eve—but even on the Lord himself when he says: “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate” (3:12). It may have been that Adam himself couldn’t believe the words as they were coming out of his mouth. Up until now he had only defended Eve with his words. Now he’s using words to attack and condemn her. Adam blames Eve, then Eve in turn blames the snake (3:13). In effect, she says, “Satan made me do it.” Making excuses for sin would be a characteristic of mankind from that day onward: “Yes, I did it—but it wasn’t my fault. . .”

V. The Fall of Mankind

1. The REALITY of Adam’s Covenant Headship: Adam was the covenant representative for us all

Adam was representing the entire human race when he sinned in the garden. We see this most clearly in Romans 5:12-21, where Paul shows us that when Adam sinned, he acted on behalf of all men in such a way that his actions had direct consequences for us all. Paul declares in this passage:

Verse 12: “through one man sin entered into the world. . and so death spread to all men,”
Verse 15: “by the transgression of the one the many died,”
Verse 16: “the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation,”
Verse 17: “by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one,”
Verse 18: “through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men,”
Verse 19: “through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners,”

In other words, Adam wasn’t just a single individual acting for himself in the test God gave him. It wasn’t just his own destiny that was at stake in obeying God’s command or disobeying it—the destiny of the entire human race was at stake. When Adam sinned, he brought condemnation and death not just to himself—but to the entire human race. When Adam fell, all of humanity fell with him: “The very truth is, Adam by his fall threw down our whole nature headlong into the same destruction, and drowned his whole offspring in the same gulf of misery, and the reason is, because, by God’s appointment, he was not to stand or fall as a single person only, but as a common public person,

94 As Herman Hoeksema puts it: “The first result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve was that their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked (v7). This does not mean that they now passed from a state of childish innocence or naivete into a state of moral self-consciousness, but that they realized their sinful condition; they knew and were conscious that their bodies had become the instruments of sin.” (Reformed Dogmatics, pp364-65).
representing all mankind to come of him...and as that covenant which was made with him, was made with the whole of mankind; even so he by breaking covenant lost all, as well for us as for himself.”

We see this in the following ways in particular. . .

A) Adam’s CORRUPTION was IMPARTED to us all when he sinned:

Adam was created “upright” (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Before Adam fell in the garden, he had no sin. He loved God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength. But when Adam disobeyed God, a radical change took place—he became morally corrupt. And ever since Adam's fall, every single one of us has been infected with this moral corruption from birth. We are not born more or less innocent until we, like Adam, make the decision to sin against God. No—ever since the fall of Adam, every single one of us is born with moral corruption. Every single one of us is born with a heart that is deeply infected with the poison of sin. This is what we call original or inherent sin.

This is what Scripture is describing when we read in Genesis 6:5, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” That wasn’t just talking about the days of Noah—it’s a synopsis of the human race. This is why Jesus taught that men “love the darkness rather than the Light” (John 3:19). The truth is, every single one of us is born with a heart that loves sin rather than God.

Again: we’re not sinners because we sin; rather, we sin because we are sinners. We aren’t sinners because we have all sinned against God; rather, we sin against God because it’s our nature to sin. Sinfulness isn’t a condition we contracted the first time we sinned, rather sinfulness is a disease we were born with; our particular sins are just the symptoms of that disease. Scripture teaches that because Adam fell, every single one of us has been born with the poison of inherent corruption.

B) Adam’s GUILT was IMPUTED to us all when he sinned:

When Adam fell into sin, the whole world fell with him into moral corruption. But much more than just that happened in the fall. We looked briefly at Romans 5 earlier. But it’s important for us to know that while Adam's fall into sin infected the entire human race with moral corruption, that is actually not what Paul is focusing on in Romans 5. In Romans 5:12-19, Paul is not talking about how we are inherently corrupt because of Adam’s sin. He’s rather talking about how we are judicially guilty because of Adam’s sin. In Romans 5, Paul is not talking about how Adam’s corruption was imparted to us. He’s actually talking about how Adam’s guilt was imputed to us.

In this passage in Romans, Paul’s saying that the entire human race was condemned when Adam sinned. Not just corrupted—but condemned. In other words, Adam’s sin was judicially reckoned to all men when he disobeyed God's command. As the covenant head of the human race, Adam represented all men in such a way, that through his sin, all humanity has been plunged along with him into guilt and condemnation. When he was condemned, we were condemned with him. His sin is reckoned to every one of us; his transgression is legally charged to our account. He sinned, but we are guilty with him; he transgressed, but we are condemned with him. What Paul is saying here is that before you and I ever sin personally, we stand condemned before God solely

95 Edward Fisher, The Marrow of Divinity, p34. As also A.W. Pink put it: “God did not act with mankind as with a field of corn, where each stalk stands on its own individual root. Rather He has dealt with our race as with a tree—all the branches of which have one common root. While the root of a tree remains healthy and unharmed, the whole of it flourishes. But if an ax strikes and severs the root, then the whole of the tree suffers and falls—not only the trunk but all the branches—and even its smallest twigs wither and die. Thus it was with the Eden tragedy.” (Pink, The Total Depravity of Man).

96 Vos puts it this way: “And here the rule holds that originally in Adam the actus [act] determined the status, but that subsequently for all his posterity status has determined actus.” (Dogmatics, V2, p25). And again, “With us, the disposition determines the deed, both in the natural state and in regeneration; with Adam, the deed determined the disposition.” (p53).

97 This is what we call Total Depravity. Total Depravity means that there is no spiritual good in us. It means that all of us are by nature both enslaved to our sin and in love with our sin; both unable and unwilling to love and follow God. “By it is not meant: 1) “That everyone is as bad as he can be or become.” 2) “Nor does it mean that the sinner carries about no knowledge of the will of God in his conscience.” 3) “Nor thereby is it meant that the one man cannot be more selfish than [another].” 4) “Sin has different forms in which it can manifest itself. No one ever has displayed all these forms in himself.” (Vos, pp57-58).
on account of Adam's sin. We are inherently corrupt because the nature of Adam was imparted to us. But we are judicially condemned because the transgression of Adam was imputed to us.

C) Adam's PUNISHMENT was DEALT OUT to us all when he sinned:

Actually, these two truths of inherent corruption and imputed guilt fit closely together. Think back to what God had said to the man before the fall in Genesis chapter 2. The Lord had told Adam that, “from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17). And despite what the serpent had told Eve, that's exactly what happened. And, as it turned out, death didn't just come to Adam; it came to us all.

Now, part of this was PHYSICAL DEATH. Adam would now die physically, and all humanity with him. This is emphasized in Genesis 5, where we read the constant refrain: “and he died. . . and he died. . . and he died. . .” So yes, Adam's sin brought physical death—not just to himself—but to every one of us.98 Physical death has come upon the world as punishment for Adam's sin.

But when God said this to Adam, He wasn't just talking about physical death. He was talking about SPIRITUAL DEATH.99 Adam would die spiritually. And do you know what inherent corruption is? It's spiritual death: The inherent corruption that came upon Adam when he fell into sin was spiritual death. The punishment for Adam's sin wasn't just physical death, it was spiritual death. And so it is for us in Adam. In other words, Adam's corruption was imparted to us because Adam's guilt was imputed to us. Moral corruption is the penalty for imputed sin:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOME SAY</th>
<th>WE SAY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adam sinned → Adam's nature corrupted → we inherit this corrupt nature → we are thus punished</td>
<td>Adam sinned → Adam's sin reckoned to us → we are punished with Adam → we are thus corrupted</td>
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INTRODUCING THE TWO VIEWS OF WHY WE ARE PUNISHED FOR ADAM'S SIN

2. Some ILLUSTRATIONS of Adam's Covenant Headship: How to understand covenant headship

The fact that Adam was a covenant representative for the entire human race may sound like a foreign or strange concept to our ears. But it's really not something that ought to sound foreign or strange to us at all. There are actually a lot of parallels to help us understand the idea of covenant headship:

A) From OUR WORLD . . .

*Your NATIONALITY: We do not determine our nationality. We personally have nothing to do with whether we are born Indian or Bangladeshi or American or Mexican; it's just the way it is.

*Your GOVERNMENT: The congress or parliament represent the people, and it is their decisions that determine what happens to everyone who lives under them. When your leaders decide to go to war against another country, you are part of it whether you like it or not.

*Your HOUSEHOLD: The father, as head of the house, makes decisions that will dramatically affect—not just himself—but the entire family. He is the “covenant head” for the whole family.

98 “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die’ (Gen. 2:17). . .That death which now seizes fallen man is no mere natural calamity, but a penal infliction. It is not a 'debt' which he owes to 'nature,' but a judicial sentence which is passed upon him by the divine judge. Death has come in because our first parent, our federal head and representative, took of the forbidden fruit, and for no other reason.” (Pink).

99 Actually, it seems that the Lord was talking mostly or primarily about spiritual death. As Dr. S. Lewis Johnson points out: “Now God said, Adam, on the day that you eat of that fruit you will die. . .But he was just the same person physically afterwards as before apparently, but he had died. God said he died. 'In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.' It is clear he didn't die physically, so, he must have died spiritually.” (Sermon: The Imputation of Adam's Sin).

100 Vos puts it this way: “Original pollution, inherent corruption, was both for Adam and for us a punishment for the first sin. For Adam it appeared immediately; for us it can only appear when our persons come into being.” (Reformed Dogmatics, V2, p34). Don't panic if this doesn't make perfect sense yet. We'll see the following chart again in Lesson 3 and will study this more in detail then; the names of the two views are mediate (top) and immediate (bottom) imputation.
B) From THE SCRIPTURES . . .

*Ham, Canaan, and the Canaanites (Genesis 9:20-27): It was Ham who sinned against his father Noah in Genesis 9. But instead of cursing Ham, Noah curses his son Canaan—and not only him—but the nation that would come forth from him (the Canaanites; cf. chapter 10). Though Ham was the one who was guilty, Canaan is the one who is cursed. In the biblical narrative, Canaan himself is presented as innocent—but he finds himself cursed on account of the sin of his father.

*Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Exodus 1-11): It was Pharaoh who sinned by hardening his heart against the Lord—but all the people of Egypt suffered because of his sin—both through the devastation the plagues wreaked on the land and the final plague of the loss of the firstborn.101

*Achan and his family (Joshua 7:22-26; 22:20): Though it was Achan alone who stole the bar of gold during the conquest of the land in the days of Joshua, it was the entire nation that was reckoned guilty: “Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel?” Further, it’s not just Achan, but his whole family—his sons and daughters along with him—who were punished for the sin he alone had committed.102

*The Amalekites in the days of Samuel (1 Samuel 15:1-3): Here we see that these Amalekites were to be held fully responsible and slaughtered—men and women, children and infants—not for their own sin—but for the sin of their forefathers hundreds of years earlier (1 Samuel 15:1-3).

*Seven descendants of Saul in the days of David (2 Samuel 21): Israel had made a covenant with the Gibeonites in the days of Joshua, but when Saul was king he violated the covenant by seeking to kill them. To satisfy justice, seven of Saul’s descendants are given over to the Gibeonites to be hanged—not for crimes they themselves had committed—but for the crime of Saul their forefather.

*The disobedient kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:7-10): God tells Jeroboam, king of Israel, that because of his sin, his entire line would be wiped out (14:7-10). Jeroboam alone sinned, but his descendants would be punished together with him. The Lord then proceeds to declare the same truth to Baasha, king of Israel (1 Kings 16:1-4), and to Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kings 21:20-22).

*The leprosy of Naaman (2 Kings 5:27): After the Lord had healed Naaman’s leprosy through Elisha, and refused to take any money in return, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, went after Naaman trying to get the gold his master had refused. When he returns home, Elisha tells him that the leprosy of Naaman would now cling not only to Gehazi but also to his descendants forever.

*The gallows of Haman (Esther 7:10; 9:13-14): Haman was the enemy of God’s people during the days of Esther who had constructed a gallows in order to hang righteous Mordecai. But his plan backfires. And when justice comes for Haman, it is not only Haman himself who is hanged, but his ten sons are hung with him—again, not for their own sin—but for the sin of their father.

*Daniel’s accusers and the lions’ den (Daniel 6:24): After the Lord preserves Daniel in the lions’ den and he is drawn out, it is not only those who had maliciously accused him that are thrown into the den, but also their wives and children. Again, they were not being punished for their own personal sin—but rather for the sin of their covenant representatives (their husbands and fathers).

3. Answering OBJECTIONS about Adam’s Covenant Headship: “Is it fair?”

It’s often objected that the human race being punished for Adam’s sin isn’t fair. It simply wouldn’t be fair of God to punish all of us for the sin of one man. To this objection we may say the following:103

101 See also 2 Samuel 24:15-17 and Israel suffering because of the sin of king David.
102 This whole passage (Joshua 7) contains imagery of Adam’s sin in the garden. Besides what was mentioned above, we could note that the Lord speaks of Achan’s sin as transgression of His covenant (vv11,15), reminding us of Hosea 6:7 which almost certainly refers back to Adam. Further, the way Achan later confesses his sin sends us back to the first sin in the garden, in that the 3 verbs Achan uses (saw, coveted, took; Joshua 7:21) are the same 3 Hebrew verbs used to describe Eve’s falling prey to the serpents lies in Genesis 3:6. Further, as a result of his one sin all the people become “accursed” (vv11-12; cf. Gal.3:10).
103 Much of this is gleaned from Ligon Duncan’s course on Covenant Theology.
A) We had the absolute best chance possible in Adam: Adam was the greatest human chance we had—much greater than anyone else. He was better equipped to come out victorious for all those he represented than any other person that has ever lived. You and I had a much, much, much better chance of keeping the Covenant of Works with Adam representing us than anyone else in our present condition. So God was gracious in even giving us the representative that He gave us.

B) We're in no place to argue about sin: We're not innocent victims in the matter. Our sin is not just original, but it is quite actual. Yes, it's true that Adam's sin was imputed to us. But the guilt of sin was not just passively imputed to us. Every time you and I sin, we do so willingly, freely, actively taking part in it ourselves. So then, we're not innocent victims of Adam's sin; we are just as guilty.

C) We're in no place to argue about fairness: If we are going to talk about what's fair and what's not fair, the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ to sinners is the most unfair thing that has ever happened in the universe. What wasn't fair wasn't the imputation of sin—it was the imputation of Christ's righteousness. That's what isn't fair; because with Adam God operated exclusively on justice; but with us, in Christ, He operates upon sheer grace. If you are a believer in Jesus, Christ received the justice that you deserved, and you received grace that you had no business receiving. So, if we're going to allow God to operate that way in imputing righteousness to us in Christ, is it right to say He can't operate that way in imputing sin to the world? If we happily allow Him to do it in the Covenant of Grace, is it right for us to object that He did it the same way in context of the Covenant of Works?

D) We're in no place to argue with God: It's not wise to question God in an accusing way. Who are we to question God? Job tried this once, if you remember, and when God finally answered him, his response was to shut his mouth and lie in the ashes. Remember again, Paul imagines people having this same objection (IE, that's not fair) in his discussion about election in Romans 9. He imagines people objecting that it's not fair that God chooses some and doesn't choose others, and Paul's words there are simply: "who are you, O man, who answers back to God?...does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?" In other words, God does what He pleases; and it's right, whether we like it or not.

E) We can trust in the character of God: Our duty is to submit to God with reverence and worship. And we can do this all the more knowing God's character. We're not submitting to a cruel tyrant the way a wife submits to an abusive husband or the way that poor women and children are being forced to submit to ISIS in Iraq. We are not even submitting to a good earthly father the way a child does to his father who is seeking his best interests in love. We are submitting to our heavenly Father, who always does what is right, who always does what is good; who is "righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds" (Psalm 145:17). Whenever we approach mysteries like this, we have to ground ourselves in the character of God. We may never fully, in this life, know why God has done something, but we can rest in who we know God to be. And this is what we have to do here.

VI. The Lord's Words to the Serpent, the Woman, and the Man

1. An Introduction:

God doesn't leave man alone after his fall into sin. God knew what Adam had done, but He still comes to him in the midst of his fallen condition. It's not Adam and Eve that seek after God, it's God who draws near to them in grace. The Lord begins with searching questions (3:9,11,13), not because he doesn't know the answers, but in order to help Adam and Eve understand what they had done, in order to woo them back to Himself. The Lord comes to fallen man—not to curse him, but...
to restore and redeem him. Through His questions, the Lord is showing Adam and Eve their sin and the severity of their fallen condition—and He's doing it because that's the only way to real healing.

Then the Lord begins to address each party in order—first the serpent who deceived the woman; next the woman who was deceived; and finally Adam himself who disobeyed God's command.

One of the main things we learn here in Genesis 3:14-19 is that Adam's fall into sin would have massive consequences—not just moral and spiritual and eternal consequences (we've talked about those)—but physical consequences as well. Adam's fall would affect child-bearing; it would affect the marriage relationship between a man and his wife; and his fall into sin would even affect creation itself—Scripture teaches that from now on the earth itself would be cursed (3:17; cf. Romans 8:18-25).

But even though sin would have devastating physical consequences that would affect all of creation, we also see the Lord reaffirming the creational ordinances here in Genesis 3:14-19. Adam's fall into sin would have lasting effects on marriage, procreation, and work. But here in this passage the Lord, in His goodness, reaffirms the continuance of these original institutions. We see the creational ordinance of marriage and procreation reinforced in Genesis 3:16, and the creational ordinance of labor reinforced in verses 17-19. Man was now like a ruined castle—a tragic reminder of what he once was. But though the fall had greatly marred the image of God in man, the foundational pillars that God had established at creation (marriage, procreation, and labor) were still firmly in place.

2. God's Word to THE SERPENT (Genesis 3:14-15):

"Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life...." (3:14).

What is especially significant here is that the Lord curses the serpent: "cursed are you...." but the Lord does not curse Adam and Eve. Only Satan is cursed. Neither Adam nor Eve were cursed, though the land is cursed because of Adam's sin. God comes to fallen man and woman—but He doesn't come to curse them—rather He comes to curse the serpent. There would be consequences, massive consequences, for their sin. But the Lord didn't come to them to curse them—He came to them to redeem them. Sin merits the curse of God. But they were not cursed—why? Because a Redeemer would come to fallen man who would take their curse upon himself (Galatians 3:13-14).

So, the Lord begins by cursing the serpent, and this curse symbolizes the ultimate fate of Satan himself. What is Satan's fate? Banishment to the lake of fire. But know that the devil will not rule over the lake of fire (as many seem to think); rather, he himself will be thrown into the lake of fire: Jesus says in Matthew 25:41: "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.' " Again, Revelation 20:10 says: "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

We will come back later to look at verse 15 in depth.

3. God's Word to THE WOMAN (Genesis 3:16):

The Lord then said to the woman, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (3:16).

There are two aspects to the Lord's words here to the woman:

A) First, there will be a great increase of pain in childbirth. The woman will still have children, but now it will be with great travail. Now, we have to understand that child-bearing and child-rearing are not the curse being spoken of here. We know this because Psalm 127:3-5, which was written well after the fall, says, "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like

107 It is actually the Lamb that rules over the lake of fire according to Revelation 14:10-11.
arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them..." Having children is a blessing (and raising children is a blessing). Children are a blessing. But because of the fall, there will now be pain and grief—both physical and emotional—in having (and raising) children that was not there before. Our children are conceived in sin, born with pain into a fallen world, and begin their march to death the minute they take their first breath; perhaps worst of all, some of them may in the end reject the Savior we've raised them to embrace.108

B) Second, the Lord tells the woman that her desire will be for her husband, yet he will rule over her. What is the desire spoken of here? The Hebrew word is the same word used in Genesis 4:7, where the Lord told Cain that sins' desire was for him, but he must master it. So the desire meant here is the desire of a woman to dominate her husband. In turn, he would “rule” over her. In other words, the wife will now desire to dominate her husband, and in return, he will behave harshly towards her, lording it over her. What we have here is the exact opposite of God's intended design for marriage. Ephesians 5 talks about wives wholeheartedly submitting to their husbands, and husbands unconditionally loving their wives. This is God's design for marriage. But because of the fall, our automatic sinful response is now to do the exact opposite. And so as believers we are called to fight against the sinful tendencies of our flesh in the context of our marital relationship. Wives are called to fight against their sinful tendencies and by the Spirit submit to their husbands as Christ submitted himself to His Father; and husbands are called to fight against their sinful tendencies and by the Spirit's power to love their wives sacrificially and unconditionally, just as Christ did the church.


After addressing the woman, the Lord then says to Adam, “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (3:17-19).

Notice again that Adam himself is not cursed, but the ground is now cursed on account of Adam's sin (v17). We've seen that work itself isn't a curse—it was instituted by God before the fall. It's rather the toil and pain that go along with work that the Lord is speaking of here. Adam had listened to the voice of his wife instead of the voice of the Lord (v17). And as a result, there will now be three ways in particular in which man's work will be radically affected: its nature, its result, and its duration.109

A) The NATURE of work: There will now be toil in work: “in toil you will eat of it. . .by the sweat of your face you will eat bread. . .” The word for toil is the same Hebrew word used for the woman’s pain. Just as the woman would have pain in bringing forth fruit from the womb; so too the man would now have pain in bringing forth fruit from the earth. Work will now be painful; it will be hard.

B) The RESULT of work: From now on, work wouldn't just be strenuous and toilsome for man, but “thorns and thistles” would be the result of his strenuous labor. In other words, man's work will now be impaired; there won't be the incredible fertility that there had been in Eden before the fall. As one writer put it: Before the fall, Adam ate to work; but from now on, he would work to eat.110

C) The DURATION of work: Man will labor until he returns to the ground (v19). In other words, there will be no earthly rest from the burden of work. It's the same truth we read of in Ecclesiastes 2:23, which says: “all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest.”111

108 Insights gleaned from O Palmer Robertson audio lectures and Ligon Duncan's course on Covenant Theology. Matthew Henry says it this way: “The sorrows of childbearing are multiplied, for they include not only the travailing throws, but the indisposition before and the nursing toils and vexations afterwards. And after all if the children prove wicked and foolish, they are more than ever heaviness to her that bore them.”

109 These insights gleaned from Ligon Duncan's course on Covenant Theology.

110 Insight gleaned from Herman Hoeksema, Reformed Dogmatics, V1, p374.

111 We might wonder, why the need for the temporal judgments of Genesis 3:14-19 as well as the eternal judgment of death? Perhaps one reason is to teach us the truth that sin carries temporal consequences as well as eternal. God would save Adam and Eve from their sin. But the temporal, physical consequences wouldn't just go away; they would have to live with them. It's the same with us: God is able to completely forgive our sin; but that doesn't mean our sin won't carry very real consequences.
5. God's Blessing IN CHRIST:

Jesus said in Revelation 21:5, “Behold, I am making all things new.” How does this relate to the judgments that came upon the world because of the fall? Well, first, it gives gospel HOPE to our marriages: It means that now, in Christ, believing husbands and wives don't have to give in to their inherent sinful tendencies—they can strive, through the power of the Spirit, to live out their marriages according to God's original design (Ephesians 5:22-33). And it gives gospel MEANING to our work: In Christ, we can find satisfaction and fulfillment in our work as we do it to the glory of God (Colossians 3:23-24). God commanded Adam to subdue the earth (the “creation mandate,” Genesis 1:28), and Christ has likewise commanded us to subdue the earth—to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations (the “missionary mandate”). Whatever our vocation may be, as believers, our work has now taken on eternal significance as we do it unto the Lord. So in Christ, even these curses that were pronounced after the fall are being redeemed and made new. Believers in Jesus are remade in God's image in order to bring the whole of God's creation in subjection to the Creator.112

But, there's also a sense in which we are living in a fallen world that won't fully be set free until Christ comes again and establishes the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness reigns. This is what Paul was talking about in Romans 8:18-25, when he wrote: “For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.” (Romans 8:22-25; cf. 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4).

VII. The Promise of Redemption: The Inauguration of the Covenant of Grace

We've been looking at Genesis 3:14-19 and considering the judgments that God pronounces upon the serpent, the woman, and the man, because of their respective roles in disobeying the command God had given to Adam. But here we want to focus in on what is one of the most beautiful texts in all the Bible. It is the first promise Scripture records of the coming of the Messiah and the redemption He would accomplish for His people. And it is the inauguration of what we call the Covenant of Grace. It is the seed of the gospel, because from this seed promise spoken in Genesis 3:15 would sprout and grow all the promises that Scripture would make about Christ and the redemption He would accomplish for His people. They would all grow out of and be traced back to this first promise, recorded in Genesis 3:15.

So, lets read together Genesis 3:15. God said: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”

1. The SUBSTANCE of the promise:

   A) Enmity Between the Serpent and the Woman:

   The Lord said to the serpent: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman. . .” What do we make of this? Well, Romans 8:7 says that, “the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God.” Every single person, since the fall of man, was born into this condition—hostility toward God—enmity toward God. And the reason every single one of us is born into this condition, is because when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, it was into this condition that they plunged themselves (and all humanity along with them). Adam and Eve's sin brought them into a state of being at enmity with God. But here the Lord is telling the serpent that now He will put enmity between the serpent and the woman. In other words, the Lord is promising here to reverse what Satan

112 Insight gleaned from the O Palmer Robertson audio lectures on Covenant Theology. We will see this again in our study of Noah, where the Lord reaffirms the creation mandate to him (Genesis 9:1). The creation mandate, given originally to man in his unfallen state—is there repeated to those who have become inheritors of a new world. It had been given to those He had created in His image—now it is given to those who are being recreated in His image.
had done: “Adam and Eve had aligned themselves with Satan. But now the Lord would put enmity between the woman and the serpent.” Eve had been at war with God—now she would be at war with Satan. She had fallen into sin, but that would not be the end of the story. Eve had known the Lord as her Creator—now she would come to experience Him as her Redeemer.

This is what God does when He saves us. He doesn’t just forgive our sins—He gives us a new heart with new desires. The sin that we used to love, we now hate. Our sin used to be like an old friend—now it’s our worst enemy. Why? Because we made a decision to follow Jesus? No. Because God made a promise: “I will put enmity between you and the woman.” Scripture is making it crystal clear here in Genesis 3:15 that “salvation is God’s initiative.” It is God alone that would do this work in the woman and in us: “This is what God promises to man. . .that, by the insurmountable efficacy of his power he would perform and bring [this] about.” So if you have a new heart with new desires; if you find that you hate the sin you used to love—it’s not because you made a decision to choose God. It’s because God made a promise to redeem you.

Another quick word of application here: Don’t be discouraged because of your struggle with sin. Your struggle with sin isn’t a sign of spiritual death or even decay. Quite the contrary: It’s actually a vital and necessary sign of spiritual life. There ought to be enmity between you and your sin if you belong to Jesus. If you're at peace with your sin there's something wrong: “It is when I am trying to deny that I have sin to deal with that I am in trouble, not when I am grieving over the continual fight against sin. . .This kind of warfare is the very evidence of life and grace.”

B) Enmity Between the Seed of the Serpent and the Seed of the Woman:

The Lord continues, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed.” What’s God saying? Who is the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman?

I) The Seed of the SERPENT: Here the Lord is not referring to the serpent itself, but to the seed of the serpent: “I will put enmity. . .between your seed and her seed.” Who is the seed of the serpent? The seed of the serpent are the children of the serpent—the children of the devil—all those who are at peace with Satan (though they might never say that—or even think that). In 1 Samuel 2:12 we read a description of Eli’s sons: “Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the Lord,” but the literal Hebrew reads, “sons of Belial” (another name for the devil). John the Baptist called the Pharisees a “generation of vipers” (Matthew 3:7). Christ himself spoke of them in John 8:44, saying, “You are of your father the devil, and do the works of your father” (cf. John 8:38,41). So who are the seed of the serpent? The children of the devil.

II) The Seed of the WOMAN: Who is the seed of the woman? It wouldn't make sense to say the woman’s seed is everyone who would come forth from the woman, as many of them are of the seed of the serpent. Even the woman’s very first child, Cain, was said to be of the evil one (1 John 3:12). Cain was physically the offspring of Eve—but spiritually the offspring of the serpent.

In one sense, the seed of the woman is referring to believers—those whom God has chosen among the woman’s seed who, by God’s grace, would be turned from enmity with God to enmity with Satan. We have an analogy of this in Revelation 12, where we read of a woman and a

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113 From the O Palmer Robertson audio lectures on Covenant Theology.
114 Herman Hoeksema: “The positive meaning of the enmity against Satan, which was announced by God, is the covenant fellowship of the Most High. As the friendship of the world is enmity against God (James 4:4), so also the enmity against the serpent and his seed is friendship of God. . .The promise of God in the protevangel is that God will put enmity in the heart of man against Satan and his seed. This implies regeneration.” (Reformed Dogmatics, pp369-70). Vos: “Enmity between the woman and her seed, on the one hand, and the serpent and its seed, on the other, points to a relationship of friendship with God. After all, man had renounced friendship with God and had allied himself with Satan. Where friendship with Satan has now turned into enmity, this can mean nothing other than that friendship with God has been restored.” (p125). Waltke: “In sovereign grace God converts the depraved woman’s affections for Satan to righteous desire for himself.” (Genesis, p93).
115 Julian Zugg from his Covenant Theology course (From the MINTS website).
116 From Witsius, Economy of the Covenants.
117 Application and quote taken from Ligon Duncan's course, Covenant Theology.
118 Witsius explains this double meaning of “seed” in this way: “Just as the seed of Abraham is sometimes to be understood...”
great red dragon who hated her. The woman was about to give birth to a unique child (representing Christ), and the dragon wanted to devour that child. But when he couldn't, we read: “So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” (12:17).

So, there are two seeds — and there's only two — the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And this is exactly what we see played out in Genesis 4-5: two lines; two seeds. The seed of Cain—who was of the seed of the serpent, and the seed of Abel—who was of the seed of the woman (and after Abel was murdered by his brother, the seed of Seth). Then in Genesis 4 we have a record of the genealogy of the unbelieving seed of Cain; and in Genesis 5 we have a record of the genealogy of the believing line of Seth, from whom eventually Noah would come.

Why is it that some men receive the offer of the gospel, while others sitting right next to them reject that offer? The ultimate answer is found in Genesis—some are of the seed of the woman; but others are of the seed of the serpent. This is the reason our Savior gave for why some responded to His preaching and others didn't. Jesus said to the Jews, “you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish. . .” (John 10:26-28). Only those who are regenerated through the power of the Holy Spirit will respond to the call of the gospel.

So, in one sense, the seed of the woman is referring to believers. But in the truest and most proper sense, the seed of the woman is Christ. We know this because the last clause in verse 15 understands the seed of the woman to be referring to a singular individual: “He shall bruise you on the head. . .” So, in the most proper sense, the seed of the woman is Christ. And enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman is the enmity of the sons of the devil against Jesus Christ. The children of the serpent will ever be at war with Jesus (see Psalm 2).

C) Enmity Between the Seed of the Woman and the Serpent:

Returning once again to our text, we read in Genesis 3:15, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” How are we to understand the last clause here in this verse?

It's speaking of the one particular seed of the woman who would defeat Satan: Jesus, the unique seed of the woman, would come to destroy the serpent—He would crush the devil—but in doing so, He would be bitten on the heel. This is a reference to the cross. Christ would accomplish victory, but He would suffer a blow from Satan in the process. Christ would accomplish redemption for His people, but it would come at a great cost. Satan would “bruise” the promised Messiah, even as He dealt the crushing blow to Satan through His atoning death and resurrection.
There’s an allusion to this verse in Romans 16:20: “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” In Genesis 3:15 the seed is referring explicitly to a single individual, but the victory that Christ accomplishes in crushing the head of the serpent is on behalf of a great multitude of the seed of the woman. Christ triumphs, but we reap the benefits of His victory.

So, we see how this promise in Genesis 3:15 is the seed of the gospel. As another put it: “This promise of Christ, the woman’s seed (verse 15), was the gospel; and the only comfort [of the Old Testament people of God].” Old Testament believers weren’t saved because they had a faith in God in just a general sense. Adam and Eve, and Abel, and Seth and Enoch, Noah, and the patriarchs, and all who would come after them were saved just as we are: By grace alone through faith alone in the Messiah—the Messiah whom God had promised to send them in Genesis 3:15.

2. The BREADTH of the promise:

So, we can learn at least this much from Genesis 3:15: “In this promise was revealed, [that]: 1) Man’s restoration unto the favor of God, and his salvation; [was] not to be effected by man himself, and his own works, but by another. . . 2) That this Savior was to be incarnate, to become man, ‘the seed of the woman’ . . . 3) That he [would have] to suffer; his heel, namely his humanity, to be bruised to death. . . 4) [and] that by his death he should make a full conquest over the devil. . . and so recover the captives out of his hand, ‘he shall bruise thy head’. . . This encounter was on the cross; there Christ treading on the serpent, he bruised his heel, but he bruised its head. . .” Praise be to God.

3. The RESPONSE to the promise:

We read in Genesis 3:20, “Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.” What’s the significance of what we read here in Genesis 3:20? Well, it could be that Adam’s merely making the statement that all humankind would come forth from Eve. Now, even if this is all that is meant here, that alone is something of massive significance. Why? Think about all the things he could have named his wife after what had just happened. He could have named her “Gullible,” or “Susceptible,” or “Conspirator.” But he doesn’t. He names her “Eve,” which means “living,” or “life.” In the name he gives her, Adam is dealing kindly with her; he is looking past her part in the offense; he is showing her respect and honoring her (cf. 1 Peter 3:7).

But it’s very possible that in this new name, Adam’s referring to more than just physical life. He had already given her the name “woman” in Genesis 2:23; why give her another name now? And why would Adam name her “Eve” — what significance would the meaning have now that it didn’t before?

It’s likely that Adam is referring back to the promise God had made in Genesis 3:15 when he names his wife Eve. Because of their sin, Adam and his wife expected (and deserved) nothing but death. But instead of giving them over to death, God gave them a promise of life. And so, it seems that Adam “called his wife Eve, from his faith in God’s promise, believing, according to the word of God, that no man should have true life, but what would be derived from her.” Eve would be the mother of all the living, because from her would come forth the One who would bring life to all the world.

4. The SIGN of the promise:

Finally, we read in Genesis 3:21, “The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.” After Adam and Eve had sinned, they sewed fig leaves to cover themselves. But the coverings they tried to make for themselves wouldn’t do. Like them, we sense our guilt and feel the
shame of sin; and though we try to fix things ourselves, we can't. Only God can truly and completely cover the guilt and shame we carry because of our sin. And so here in Genesis 3:21, God himself makes coverings for Adam and Eve to replace the ones they had tried to make for themselves.

God deals with our first parents in grace. Instead of leaving them in their guilt and shame, the Lord covers them with garments that He himself provided. It's significant what God is doing here. In Genesis 3:15, God had made a promise to send a Savior; here in Genesis 3:21 God is giving a picture of how that Savior would accomplish redemption. Hebrews tells us, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness” (9:22). And so, when the Lord clothes Adam and Eve, it came at a cost. Scripture tells us that God clothed them with animal skins. This means that an innocent animal was slain in order to clothe Adam and Eve. Innocent blood was shed on behalf of the guilty.

The blood of the animal signified that God was atoning for the guilt of their sin; the skin of the animal signified that God was covering them from the shame of their sin. This is what God does for us in justification; He clothes us with the garments of His righteousness: Isaiah 61:10 says, “I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness.” In Genesis 3:15, God had promised to put enmity between the woman and Satan; God would perform a radical, inward change. But the Lord wouldn't just do a work of grace in Adam and Eve—He would do a work of grace for them.

A Savior would come. He would save His people from their sin. He would cover us from the shame of our sin. He would atone for the guilt of our sin. He would be pierced through for our transgressions, He would be crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace would be upon Him, and by His scourging we would be healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord would cause the iniquity of us all to fall upon Him.
Adam and Christ:

Romans 5
A Study of Romans 5:12-21

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I. An Introduction to Romans 5:12-21

We’ve been studying Genesis 3 in a lot of detail, and now we’re going to switch gears a little bit. In this lesson we’re going to continue to study the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, but we’re going to look at these two covenants from a different passage of Scripture: Romans 5:12-21. We’re going to do this because this passage in Romans 5 helps to clarify some questions that Genesis left unanswered. As one theologian put it: “Moses tells us the history of Adam’s fall, and Paul explains the mystery and the consequences thereof.”

It’s almost as if God gave us Romans 5 as a commentary on Genesis 3.

At the heart of the Scriptures are two different men acting as representatives of two different covenants. Scripture speaks of two Adams—the first Adam (Adam) and the second (or last) Adam (Christ).

The first Adam acted as a covenant head and representative for the entire human race in the Covenant of Works. The fate of all humanity hinged on whether Adam obeyed or disobeyed God's command. And so, as we saw earlier, when Adam sinned, he plunged not only himself, but the whole world along with him into condemnation and death. You see, “the truth is that,” because of Adam, “every member of our race enters this world a guilty sinner before he ever commits a single transgression.”

This is the first thing that Paul is going to prove in Romans 5:12-21. But he's also going to prove something else: Paul is going to show us that Christ—the second Adam—is also a covenant head and representative. Just as Adam was the covenant head representing all humankind in the Covenant of Works, so too Christ is the covenant head representing all His people in the Covenant of Grace.

Now, the main thing Paul wants to show us here in this passage is that we are justified in Christ under the Covenant of Grace in exactly the same way that we were condemned in Adam under the Covenant of Works. Paul wants to show us that just as our condemnation in Adam was actually not based on us or what we did or didn't do at all—but solely upon what Adam did—so too, our justification in Christ is actually not based on us at all and what we do or don't do—but solely upon what Christ has done.

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1 Thomas Goodwin, in referring to Romans 5:12-21.
2 One helpful illustration here: Many of us have been on airplanes, but very few of us know how it is that they actually work. We know enough to believe that the plane is able to safely carry us from one place to another, but we know very little about how it is that it actually does so! The same is true of our salvation. When we're saved, we understand enough to know that we're sinners who need Jesus to save us; we come to know that we're condemned sinners before a holy God, but that in and through Christ we might be justified in His sight. But even as Christians, many of us are still a bit fuzzy on how it all actually works. Well, in our airplane analogy, Romans 5 is like taking a tour of the Boeing factory where the planes are put together. This chapter teaches us the “nitty-gritties” about both how we were condemned in Adam, and how it is we're justified in Christ.
3 1 Corinthians 15:45.
4 I noted in Lesson 2 that when I use this language I'm including everyone except Christ. Technically, it's more proper to say that Adam was the covenant representative and head for all his posterity—which was the entire human race—except One.
5 A.W. Pink, Divine Covenants. We might here remember our biblical illustrations from Lesson 2: We see the principle of imputed sin all throughout the Scriptures in stories such as the cursing of Canaan (Genesis 9), the story of Achan (Joshua 7), and the fate of Haman's sons (Esther 9:13-14) and Daniel's accusers (Daniel 6:24). To freshen our memory: what we saw was that the families of those who sinned were punished—not for their own sin—but for the sin of the one representing them. To take the example of Achan: his entire family suffered punishment along with him—not because of their own sins—but because of the sin of their covenant head (Achan). Achan alone sinned—but his entire posterity was punished along with him. They were put to death—not for their own sins—but for his sin. He alone sinned—but they were counted guilty with him. He alone transgressed, but they were punished with him. Achan's posterity was punished for a sin that they did not personally commit. So it was with Adam, the appointed covenant head for all humanity: we were punished with him for a sin he alone committed.
6 This same truth is echoed over and over in the writings of Reformed theologians: Vos: "representation in Adam..."
We see this most clearly in Romans 5:18, the heart of this passage, where Paul emphatically declares: “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.” One writer explained it this way: “Paul is speaking to people who think that in order to be right with God they’ve got to do certain things. They’ve got to do this ritual, they’ve got to obey this command. They’ve got to commend themselves to God. And what’s Paul trying to do? He’s trying to draw their attention away from their singular acts, from their individual acts, from their individual righteousness, to think about one act, one obedience, one righteousness done by Jesus Christ...In other words, the one place to look for salvation is not our own works, or the works of other men, even saintly men. But to the one man, the right man, Jesus Christ...Because just as...one act got us into this mess, one act, and one act only, can get us out of this mess.”

This is what this passage is all about; it’s what justification is all about; it’s what the gospel is all about. Men are condemned on account of Adam—totally apart from any sins of their own; and so too men are justified on account of Christ—totally apart from any righteousness of their own. Just as you and I had nothing to do with our condemnation in Adam, so we have nothing to do with our justification in Christ. We were condemned solely because of Adam and what he did; we are justified solely because of Christ and what He has done. Isn’t that incredible? Isn’t it sweet? It’s true. Samuel Rutherford put it really simply when he said: “the first Adam mars all, the second Adam who makes all things new, mends all.”

But how can this be? How can God condemn us for a sin we never committed? And how can God justify believers in Jesus who continue to be guilty of sin? The answer is that both our condemnation in Adam and our justification in Christ are founded upon a biblical principle called imputation. So, before we get to this passage in Romans, let’s take some time now to review this precious biblical doctrine.

II. A Summary of the Principle of Imputation

What is imputation? Simply put, to impute is to reckon, or regard or to credit to one’s account. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for impute is hashav, and we find it in places like Genesis 15:6, where we read that Abraham “believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.” In the New Testament, the Greek word for impute is logizomai, and we read of it for instance in Romans 4:3-8 where Paul uses this word no less than five times as he speaks of “the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.” That’s verse 6, that God credits righteousness apart from works. Then, in verse 8, Paul quotes Psalm 32:2, “Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.” It’s that same Greek word logizomai—to impute—both in verses 6 and 8. So, in verse 6, God is crediting a sinner with something he doesn’t actually have (righteousness). And in verse 8, God is not crediting a sinner with something he does actually have (sin). And that’s exactly what imputation is.

We were condemned solely because of Adam and what he did; we are justified solely because of Christ and what He has done. As Adam was the head and representative of his race, whose destiny was suspended on his conduct, so Christ is the head and representative of his people. As the sin of the one was the cause of the guilt, the sin, and the death of all humans, so the obedience of one is the cause of the righteousness, acquittal, and life of all. In the one [Adam] all are condemned and have died; the the one [Christ] all are justified and saved.” (V2, p33). Bavinck: “Adam, therefore, is an exact type of Christ. The way things go in the case of the sin and death that accrue to us from Adam is identical with the way righteousness and life that Christ acquired accrue to us...the manner in which both are imparted to us is the same. Just as the trespass of the one was the cause of the guilt, the sin, and the death of all humans, so the obedience of one is the cause of the righteousness, acquittal, and life of all. In the one [Adam] all are condemned and have died; the the one [Christ] all are justified and saved.” (pp84-85). And again: “just as the death of all people was not first caused by their personal sins but already pronounced upon all humanity and passed on to all solely because of Adam’s disobedience, so the resurrection has not been won by the personal good works and faith and so on of the believers but exclusively by the obedience of Christ.” (Bavinck, V3, p83; emphasis mine). Hodge: “Adam is the type of Christ...As the sin of the one is the ground of the condemnation of his posterity, so the righteousness of the other is the ground of the justification of all who are in him.” (Systematics, V2). And again: “Adam is the cause of death coming on all independently of any transgressions of their own; as Christ is the author of justification without our own works...As Adam was the head and representative of his race, whose destiny was suspended on his conduct, so Christ is the head and representative of his people. As the sin of the one was the ground of our condemnation, so the righteousness of the other is the ground of our justification.” (Hodge, Romans). From Ligon Duncan course on Covenant Theology.

7 From Ligon Duncan course on Covenant Theology.
8 From The Covenant of Life Opened (also called, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace).
9 Bavinck notes that the Greek word for impute here “has the sense of ‘to credit to a person something one does not personally possess.’ Thus the sins of those who believe are not counted against them although they do have them (Rom.4:8; 2Cor.5:19; cf. 2Tim.4:16), and...To those who believe, a righteousness is imputed that they do not have (Rom.4:5).” He also points out that this same principle of imputation was at work at the cross, when sins were “counted against Christ, although he was without sin” (Is.53:4-6; Matt.20:28; Rom.3:25; 8:3; 2 Cor.5:21; Gal.3:13; 1Tim.2:6). See his Reformed Dogmatics, p655. Hodge notes of this passage: “That the Bible does speak both of imputing to a man what does not actually belong to him, and of not imputing what does...” (Romans). Stott also says of verses 6,8: “On the one hand, negatively, God will never count our
You remember the story of Joseph, and how his brothers sold him into Egypt, and they went back and forth a few times to buy grain from him, though they didn't yet recognize him. And the last time, Joseph's silver cup was found in the sack of Benjamin. And Joseph said: Let him be my slave but the rest of you go in peace. But then what happened? Judah begins to plead for Benjamin, and in Genesis 44:33, Judah says this: “please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.” Though he wasn't the one who sinned, Judah was saying, in effect: Let Benjamin's sin be reckoned to me rather than reckoned to him—and let my innocence be reckoned to him instead of me.¹⁰

That's imputation. Or think of earlier in Genesis. Jacob planned to marry once but ended up with four wives. Rachel and Leah, and their two maids. Now, why was it that Rachel and Leah so easily gave their servant girls to their very own husband as two more wives? Well, when Rachel started getting jealous because Leah was bearing children like crazy, and she was still barren, we read in Genesis 30:3, “She [Rachel] said, Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children.” After he does so and Bilhah bears a son, we read in verse 6, “Then Rachel said, 'God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son.’” How is it that Bilhah bore Jacob a son but Rachel is saying that the son was hers? Because that son, though actually belonging to Bilhah, would be reckoned, or counted as belonging to Rachel. That is the principle of imputation.¹¹

And the reason this is so vital for us to understand is that imputation is at the very heart of the doctrine of justification. We are justified on the basis of the fact that our sins were imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. To impute is not to actually impart or infuse or transfuse. This is absolutely vital. Think of a blood transfusion. What happens? Blood is actually, physically, taken out of one person and injected into another person. That blood is actually, physically, imparted in such a way that it no longer properly belongs to the first person, because it has been actually transferred to the second person. Now, blood transfusions are a wonderful thing—but this is not how it worked with our salvation. Our sins were not actually transfused (or imparted) to Jesus. If our sins had actually been transfused to Jesus, then He would have actually become sinful.¹² But Jesus never sinned, did He. Jesus never became a sinner. He remained sinless until the end. So, our sins were not actually imparted to Him. Rather, they were imputed to Him—that is, they were reckoned to Him and counted as His, and because of that He bore the weight of the wrath of God for sin. The sins Jesus died for were not actually His—they were ours—but they were imputed to Him. And in the same way, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. Imputed, not imparted. We're not justified because we actually become righteous. In justification, God doesn't actually make us righteous. Rather, in justification God declares us to be righteous. We are justified because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. Not imparted, infused, or transfused. It's imputed. That is, His righteousness is reckoned or counted as ours. Think again about Bilhah and Rachel. The son actually, physically belonged to Bilhah—but it would be reckoned, or counted, as Rachel's. So too, our sins, though actually belonging to us, are reckoned (imputed) to Christ; and in the same way, His righteousness, though actually belonging to Him, is reckoned (imputed) to us.

III. The Three Great Imputations of Scripture

Now, in the Scriptures there are three great imputations that make up the very foundation of our faith, and it's absolutely vital for us to understand them. We've mentioned all of them already. The first is the imputation of Adam's sin to all humanity. The second is the imputation of our sin to Jesus Christ. And the third is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to His people. So, we could say, the first imputation has to do with sin, the second one has to do with satisfaction, and the third one has to do with salvation: ¹³

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¹⁰ Stott also rightly notes that this was one of the major issues during the Reformation: the Roman Catholic Church taught that in justification God infuses righteousness; the Reformers that He rather imputes it.
¹¹ See also 1 Samuel 25: Nabal had offended David, but when his wife Abigail found out, she told David, “On me alone...be the blame...please forgive the transgression of your maidservant” (vv24,28). She's asking that Nabal's sin be reckoned as hers.
¹² What's more, if all our sins were actually imparted (transfused) to Jesus, then we would no longer have any sin of our own.
¹³ The categories of sin, satisfaction, and salvation gratefully gleaned from S. Lewis Johnson, The Imputation of Adam's Sin.
1. The IMPUTATION of SIN: The first great imputation is the imputation of Adam's sin to all humanity. This is something we mentioned in the last lesson and we're going to spend a lot of time on in this lesson. Because Adam acted as our covenant representative in the Covenant of Works, his sin has been imputed, or reckoned, to all of us. Adam alone sinned, but all humanity is held guilty, because his sin is imputed to us. We mentioned different examples from the Scriptures (Ham and Canaan, Achán's sin, Haman's sons, Daniel's accusers), but let's give one more example here. Genesis 36 is a chapter that describes Esau's departure from the land of Canaan. And Canaan wasn't just some insignificant place—when Esau walked away from Canaan, he was in effect walking away from the faith. And Genesis 36:6 makes it really clear that Esau's decision didn't just affect him. He took his whole household with him when he left. When he walked away from the faith, he took his family with him. And there's even more. The rest of the chapter describes in detail the descendants who would later come through Esau. All of them were born outside the promised land, to parents who didn't know the Lord. So Esau's decision affected entire generations to come. And so it was with Adam. Because of his sin, we were born outside of the promised land, as it were. Because of Adam's sin, every single one of us has been born into sin.

2. The IMPUTATION of SATISFACTION: The second great imputation is the imputation of the sin of God's people to Christ. Scripture teaches us that the sins of God's people were imputed to Jesus. Now again, our sins were imputed to Him—not imparted. He never sinned, and He didn't become a sinner. But Scripture says that Christ "bore our sins in His body on the cross" (1 Peter 2:24). We read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." What do these Scriptures mean? Well, think about the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. A person would sin, and to make atonement, he would bring an animal to the house of the Lord. And what would the man then do before he slayed the animal? He would lay his hands on the animal (Leviticus 1:4). Why? Because the guilt of the sinner was being symbolically transferred to the animal. The guilt of the sinner was being imputed, or reckoned to the animal. And so the animal, who had no sin, took upon itself the guilt of the sinner. And then it was slaughtered to satisfy God's justice. This is what it means that Christ bore our sins, that Christ became sin for us. The sins of God's people were imputed to Christ, the lamb of God, and then "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities. . .All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." (Isaiah 53:5-6).

3. The IMPUTATION of SALVATION: The third great imputation is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to His people. And it's this great truth that Paul is going to demonstrate here in Romans 5. Paul is going to tell us: just as sin was imputed to us in Adam, so too righteousness is imputed to us in Christ. Just as it was Adam's disobedience that condemned us, so too it's Christ's obedience that justifies us. We talked about Esau, and how he is a picture for us of the first Adam. Esau brought his family out of the land of promise. But if Esau is a picture for us of the first Adam and imputed sin, then Jacob his brother is a picture for us of the second Adam and imputed righteousness. Esau single-handedly brought his entire household out of the promised inheritance. But Jacob did the opposite. Though all of Jacob's children were born outside of Canaan, Jacob single-handedly brought them into the promised inheritance (Genesis 31-33). Esau's offspring had nothing to do with leaving the land of promise, but when Esau left he took them with him. And so it was with us in Adam. In the same way, Jacob's offspring had nothing to do with returning to Canaan, but when Jacob came back home to the land of promise he brought all his sons and daughters back home with him. And so it is with us in Christ: By the first Adam's disobedience we were condemned; but by the Second Adam's obedience, we are justified.

11 For more Scriptures: 1) The Imputation of SIN: Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22. 2) The Imputation of SATISFACTION: A) Our sin imputed to Christ: Is. 53:5-6; Matt. 20:28; Rom. 3:25; 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13ff; B) Our sin not imputed to us: Rom. 4:8; 2 Cor. 5:19; 2 Tim. 4:16. And for more on, 3) The Imputation of SALVATION: Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:5; 5:12-21.
IV. Imputed Sin and Righteousness in Romans 5:12-21

So, that's the doctrine of imputation, and the three great imputations of Scripture. Now, in our passage here in Romans 5:12-21, Paul is going to reference two of the three great imputations of Scripture: imputed sin in Adam, and imputed righteousness in Christ. And one of the reasons it's going to be especially vital for us to have a clear understanding of imputed sin is that as we study through this passage, we're actually going to be talking about three distinct kinds of sin: actual, inherent, and imputed sin:\textsuperscript{15}

The Three Different Kinds of Sin that We Need to Distinguish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTUAL SIN</th>
<th>The conscious, personal sins that we willfully commit against God and His Law</th>
<th>Committed to us</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INHERENT SIN</td>
<td>The inward, inherent, corrupt nature with which we are infected from birth</td>
<td>Transmitted to us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPUTED SIN</td>
<td>The sin, guilt and condemnation that was counted as ours when Adam sinned</td>
<td>Reckoned to us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And what's going to be really important for us to understand, is that the sin Paul is going to be talking about here in Romans 5:12-21 (especially verse 12) is imputed sin. Now, actual and inherent sin are both biblical realities. No Christian denies the existence of actual sin. And inherent sin is the source of all our actual sin. The reason all of us sin is that naturally, every single one of us is born with a heart that loves the darkness (John 3:19). Naturally we love the darkness, that's why we sin. It's why if you lived ten thousand years and traveled the world over and back again, you wouldn't find a single person without sin. No other religion can explain this.\textsuperscript{16} There's no other explanation for why it is that people continue day after day to do the very things they themselves know to be wrong. Why? Because every single one of us is born with a heart that loves sin. It's only when a man is born again that God takes away the heart of flesh and gives a new heart; making us hate the sin we used to love and love the God we used to hate.

So, actual and inherent sin are both biblical realities. But neither of them are what Paul will talk about in this passage. In Romans 5:12-21, Paul won't be talking about how we personally sin every day. Nor will he talk about how we are inherently corrupt. He's going to talk about how Adam's sin has made every one of us judicially guilty. In Romans 5, Paul isn't going to tell us about how the corruption of Adam's nature has been imparted to us. He's going to tell us that the guilt of Adam's sin has been imputed to us.

And the reason Paul's going to share this with us isn't to make us miserable. It's to set us free. Because again, he's going to go on to show us that this exact same principle of imputation is the very foundation of our salvation: it's Christ's imputed righteousness that is the sole basis of our justification. How can God say to you and me, “You are just,” when, in fact, we're not? How can an unjust people be justified? In exactly the same way that we were condemned. Just as we were condemned on account of Adam's imputed sin—so too, we're justified on account of Christ's imputed righteousness. See, our justification works the exact same way as our condemnation. We were condemned for a sin that was not personally our own, and we are justified for a righteousness that is not personally our own: “It's not just the death of Christ that redeems us, but it is the life of Christ that redeems us. By one man's disobedience, we're plunged into ruin, but by one man—the new Adam's obedience—we are justified. . .by one man's offense the world was plunged into ruin [IE, condemned]; by another man's obedience, we are justified.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Scholars have defined original sin differently. Some have limited it solely to inherent sin, but most have also included in it the element of imputed sin. Since it's vital, though, to clearly distinguish between inherent and imputed sin, especially in this lesson, we will mostly refrain from using the term original sin and use instead either inherent or imputed sin (see chart below).

\textsuperscript{16} I love how Jonathan Edwards put it: “If the Bible never taught about a universal plunge into ruin of the human race, if there was no such word of the fall in the Scripture, reason would require that we posit such an event. How else could we explain the universality of sin in the human race?” (The Doctrine of Original Sin Defended, quoted from R.C. Sproul sermon, Death in Adam, Life in Christ: Romans 5:8-17; www.ligonier.org/learn/sermons/death-adam-life-christ/).

\textsuperscript{17} R.C. Sproul, The Doctrine of Imputation: Romans 5:12-19 (http://www.ligonier.org/learn/sermons/doctrine-imputation/). This might be a good place to ask an important question: How exactly is it that Christ's imputed righteousness fits in with His atoning sacrifice, with respect to our salvation? How do these two aspects of our salvation fit together? John Colquhoun gives the best answer I know of: “The second Adam's perfect holiness of human nature, and obedience of life, to the precept of the law as a covenant, are as necessary to the justification of sinners, as his suffering of its penalty is. The doctrine of justification by faith, establishes the law, the whole law, the honor of the precept, as well as that of the penal sanction. But this it could not do, if it did not represent the righteousness of Jesus Christ, as consisting in his active obedience, as well as in his passive.
V. The Structure of Romans 5:12-21

So, this passage is here for our comfort. It's here to help us really understand the basis of our salvation—how it is that guilty sinners are justified in Christ—in order to show us just how secure we are in Jesus. It's here to show us just how desperate our problem is, yes; but all the more, just how glorious our Savior is.

So, let's turn together to Romans 5. Many would say that there's no other passage in the Scriptures that so fully explains the foundation of our justification in Christ. But we could also say that there may not be any other passage in the Scriptures that's so complex and hard to understand! So before we begin to look at this Scripture in detail, let's spend some time outlining what Paul is saying here in Romans 5:12-21.18

1. 5:12, An INTRODUCTION to imputed sin:

Paul begins a thought here that he doesn't end up finishing until later, in verses 18-19; namely, that we are justified in Christ in exactly the same way that we were condemned in Adam: by imputation. In other words: Just as we were condemned because of the (imputed) sin of Adam, so too, we are justified because of the (imputed) righteousness of Christ. This is what Paul is driving at. But before he can get to the second part of the comparison, he realizes he has to clarify a few things first:

A) Actual sins committed against the MOSAIC LAW (written on stone) cannot account for the widespread effect of death, since men suffered death long before the Mosaic Law was given; and,

B) Actual sins committed against the MORAL LAW (written on hearts) likewise cannot account for the widespread effect of death, since even infants suffer death; for though they are corrupted with the disease of original sin, still, they cannot be said to have committed any actual sins of their own.

Active obedience, strictly speaking, cannot be said to satisfy vindictive justice, for sin. And, on the other hand, Suffering for punishment, gives right and title unto nothing, only satisfies for something; nor does it deserve any reward.' (Owen on Justification, p384). Christ's satisfaction for sin, could not render his perfect obedience to the precept, unnecessary; nor could his perfect obedience, make his satisfaction for sin by suffering the penalty, unnecessary, because it was not of the same kind. The one, is that which answers the law's demand of perfect obedience, as the ground of title to eternal life; the other, is that which answers its demand of complete satisfaction to Divine justice, for sin. The meritorious obedience of Christ to the precept, could not satisfy the penal sanction; and the sufferings and death of Christ, could not satisfy the precept of the law. The commandment of the law as a covenant, requires doing for life; the curse of that law, demands dying as the punishment of sin. These, though they are never to be separated as grounds of justification, yet are carefully to be distinguished. The perfect obedience of Christ, is as necessary to entitle believers to eternal life, as his suffering of death is, to secure them from eternal death. His satisfaction for sin, applied by faith, renders them innocent or guiltless of death; and his obedience, makes them righteous or worthy of life. As the latter, then, is as necessary to complete their justification, according to the gospel, as the former; so, it is as requisite as the former, to establish the honor of the law.” (Treatise On Law and Gospel, pp263-266).

Vos gives some precious application at this point, describing what it might have looked like, had God only forgiven our sins, without also providing the imputed righteousness of Christ: “God could have forgiven people, namely their guilt. . .and then further could have entered into a new covenant relationship with them in order to let them earn eternal life for themselves. But then they would not have been justified as believers are now justified. Justification is not merely the act of God whereby He puts the sinner in a position to open a new page in this life's book, which for the time being would still be blank, and on which he himself would still have to inscribe new merits. All the pages are opened by God at one time; on all pages, the handwriting of sin against him is wiped out [cf. Col. 2:14], and in its place the promise of eternal life is written.” (V4, p153).

To further condense this outline into a paragraph: I. Paul begins by introducing the concept of Adam's imputed sin (v12); II. Knowing that this wouldn't be a popular doctrine, he goes on in to prove that Adam's sin was imputed to us all (vv13-14); III. Next, Paul sets about contrasting Adam and Christ, showing how, in a very real sense, the two are incomparable (vv15-17); IV. Paul then makes the parallel comparison between Adam and Christ as covenant heads; this is the heart of the passage (vv18-19); V. Lastly, Paul makes a final clarification and summarizes everything he had been saying (vv20-21).
So then, it can't be because of actual sins that men are condemned and punished—whether it be actual sins committed against the Law of Moses on the one hand, or actual sins committed against the Moral Law on the other. Why is it then, that all men suffer the judicial punishment of death? Because of the sin of Adam. As our covenant head, Adam's transgression has been counted as ours; it's his disobedience that has been reckoned to you and me; it's his sin that has been imputed to us.

3. 5:15-17, The CONTRAST of imputed sin in Adam and imputed righteousness in Christ:

After proving the doctrine of imputed sin in verses 13-14, Paul feels he needs to contrast Adam and Christ before he can compare them. He wants to show that we are justified in Christ in exactly the same way we were condemned in Adam. This is a comparison. But before Paul can compare the two, he wants to show us that in a very real sense, Adam and Christ are infinitely incomparable. So in verses 15-17, the imputation of Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness is CONTRASTED: Paul's point is that our justification in Christ is so much more glorious than our condemnation in Adam.

4. 5:18-19, The COMPARISON of imputed sin in Adam and imputed righteousness in Christ:

Now that Paul has given ample proof for the doctrine of imputed sin (vv13-14), and has drawn out the infinite contrasts that exist between Adam and Christ (vv15-17), he's now finally ready, here in verses 18-19, to complete the comparison he began back in verse 12. And so finally, here in verses 18-19, the imputation of Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness is COMPARED: Our justification in Christ happens the same way as did our condemnation in Adam. And this is the heart of the entire passage. Paul wants us to see the truth that just as in Adam we were condemned solely because of what Adam had done, so now in Christ we stand justified solely because of what Christ has done.

5. 5:20-21, A final CLARIFICATION about God's way of salvation:

A) The ROLE of God's LAW: In these last verses, Paul feels the need to remind us that the Law was never meant to save us—but actually to further condemn us. It was never meant to make us righteous, but to show us just how sinful we really are. The Law was never meant to be our Savior.

B) The WONDER of God's GRACE: Even though our sin had abounded through the Law, God's grace has super-abounded through Christ. In Adam, sin had owned and defeated us; but now in Christ, sin itself is owned and defeated by God's grace. We are no longer a people overwhelmingly conquered by sin, but rather a people who overwhelmingly conquer through Christ Jesus our Lord.19

Now I think we're ready to look at the text in a little more depth; so let's go ahead and jump in!

VI. An Exposition of Romans 5:12-21

ROMANS 5:12

12Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Now, when Paul says, “through one man sin entered into the world,” it's evident that he's talking about Adam, but what exactly does he mean when he says that through him sin entered into the world? At first, it seems that he's simply saying that it was through Adam's disobedience that sin began to exist in the world. And some good theologians take Paul's phrase to mean just that. But Scripture seems to tell us that it was actually Eve who sinned before Adam. We read in 1 Timothy 2:14, “it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.”20 So, it seems that sin began to exist in the world—not when Adam sinned—but when Eve sinned (before Adam). It's probable, then, that

19 NOTE: This might be a good time to stop for questions, if there is time.
20 See also Genesis 3:6; 2 Corinthians 11:3.
Paul isn't saying here that sin began to exist in the world with Adam—but rather that sin was thrust upon the world because of Adam. If this is the case, Paul isn't saying that Adam was the first person in the world to sin; he's saying that Adam plunged the world into sin. So, the first interpretation takes the clause as meaning that sin came into the world through Adam, the second takes the clause as meaning that sin came upon the world through Adam. Either interpretation fits the overall truth that Paul is getting at.

The next clause, “death through sin,” reminds us that death is not natural. Death doesn't exist because that's the way God had created man; rather, death came into the world as a judicial punishment for sin. God had told Adam in the garden, “for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:17). And so, when Adam disobeyed, the death that resulted was actually the penal consequence for his sin.

Paul goes on, “and so death spread to all men. . .” Notice the past tense: “death spread to all men. . .” Paul's talking about something that happened in the past. He's not telling us that death presently spreads to us all when we sin. No, he's telling us that death spread to us all when Adam sinned. Paul's telling us that when Adam sinned, we died. This is clear from Paul's later explanation in verses 15 and 17, where he says that “by the transgression of the one the many died” (v15), and that “by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one” (v17). Paul's purpose here isn't “to teach the inseparable connection between sin and death, by saying, ‘As Adam sinned, and therefore died, so also all die, because all sin.’ His purpose is to teach the connection between Adam's sin and the death of all men.”

Paul is saying that “as Adam brought sin on all men, he brought death on all [men].” When Adam sinned, he didn't just bring the judicial punishment of death upon himself—he brought it upon every single one of us.

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21 So Hodge and Haldane. Hodge says of this clause, “[Sin] . . . invaded the race. . . much more is meant than that sin began to be in the world.” Robert Haldane put it: “the apostle means to tell us not merely that sin commenced by one, but that it came upon all the world from one.” (from his Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, p208).

22 Though the second interpretation is preferable, either fits with what Paul is getting at. If the clause means nothing more than that sin began to exist in the world, then Paul would be saying (as we will see): “Therefore, just as through one man sin began to exist among the human race, and death came as punishment for sin, and so death came upon all men, because all men sinned [in and through Adam] . . .” If the clause means that sin was thrust upon/imputed to the world because of Adam, then Paul would be saying (as we will see): “Therefore, just as through one man sin was thrust upon/imputed to the human race, and death came as punishment for sin, and so death came upon all men, because all men sinned [in and through Adam] . . .” So, though the second fits better grammatically, either interpretation fits the overall truth that Paul is wanting to communicate here; namely, that when Adam sinned we died because we sinned in and with him in his sin. The difference is that the first interpretation sees 5:12d, “because all sinned,” as new information and the key that unlocks the reason why it is that death had spread to all men, while the second interpretation sees 5:12d as reaffirming what had already been said in this first clause. One last question: what sin is the apostle referring to? Actual sin, original sin, or imputed sin? Hodge argues that he's referring to all three, taken collectively: the guilt of sin, the corruption of sin, and the actual sins that proceed. In the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question #18: “The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, (IE, the sin that Adam brought upon the world.) consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.”

23 The Scriptures speak of death as “the wages of sin” (Romans 6:23). Hodge says, “This passage, therefore, teaches that death is a penal evil.” (Commentary on Romans). This truth is going to take on a lot of importance later.

24 The death that Paul is speaking of here evidently encompasses all forms of death: physical, spiritual and eternal (compare with 5:15,17,21). As Hodge says, “It is plain that [death] here includes the idea of natural death, as it does in the original threatening made to our first parents. In neither case, however, is this its whole meaning. . . the death here spoken of includes all penal evil, death spiritual and eternal, as well as the dissolution of the body. . .” (from his Commentary on Romans). It's not just the physical death that overtakes us at the end of our lives, it's the spiritual death into which all men are born, ending in the eternal death that the Scriptures speak of (called the second death). We explained this in the last lesson in our discussion of the meaning of death in Genesis 2:17. The aspect of physical death will take on significance in our discussion of the meaning and implications of verses 13-14. The aspect of spiritual death will also take on great significance as we go forward in our study. For if it is indeed true that spiritual death is included in the meaning of Genesis 2:17, then there is no escaping the conclusion that the inherent natural corruption into which we are born (also called spiritual death) is meted out to us along with physical death as a penal consequence for Adam's sin. We are born with inherent corruption as a judicial penalty and punishment for Adam's sin. This means that inherent corruption is not the grounds of our judicial punishment of condemnation and death (Mediate imputation), but rather the penal consequence of our judicial punishment of condemnation and death (Immediate imputation). So then, we're not held guilty and condemned because Adam's corrupt nature was imparted to us—we're held guilty and condemned because Adam's sin was imputed to us. And spiritual death—along with physical and eternal death—is the penal sentence meted out to us as part of the judicial penalty.

25 As John Murray puts it, “the apostle regarded condemnation and death as having passed on to all men by the one trespass of the one man Adam.” (from his commentary on Romans, p184).

26 Hodge from his commentary on Romans.

27 Ibid.

28 The question of how it can be that Adam's sin brought death upon us all will be considered in the last clause of verse 12.
The biggest debate among interpreters has to do with the last clause in verse 12. The following are the possible interpretations of the meaning of this last clause of Romans 5:12, “because all sinned”:

### MEANING OF THE LAST PHRASE OF ROMANS 5:12: “BECAUSE ALL SINNED”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF VIEW</th>
<th>TRANSLATION OF PHRASE</th>
<th>MEANING OF PHRASE</th>
<th>WHY ALL MEN DIE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The PELAGIAN View</td>
<td>“for all have personally sinned”</td>
<td>All die because all are guilty of committing actual sins (like Adam)</td>
<td>Actual Transgressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CORRUPTION View</td>
<td>“for all have become corrupt”</td>
<td>All die because all have been infected with Adam's corrupt nature</td>
<td>Imparted Corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CLASSICAL View</td>
<td>“for all sinned in Adam”</td>
<td>All die because the guilt of Adam's first sin has been imputed to all</td>
<td>Imputed Guilt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let's spend some time looking at these different views one by one.²⁹

1. The PELAGIAN View: There was a heretic named Pelagius who invented a new theory about the nature of man in relation to Adam's fall in the ⁴th century A.D. His theory was universally rejected and condemned by the Church as soon as it was fully understood.³⁰ Pelagius taught that Adam in no way represented humanity as their covenant head, and so humanity in no way fell when he fell. Accordingly, Pelagius taught that there is no such thing as inherent corruption (original sin). He taught that men are born into the world in the same state in which Adam was created, with pure souls, untainted in any way with sin. Consequently, Adam's sin didn't effect anyone but himself. According to Pelagius, the only way that Adam's sin effected the rest of humanity in any way was that it left us with a bad example to follow.³¹

So, Pelagius and many who have followed in his footsteps, have taken the last clause of Romans 5:12 as referring to the actual sins of all men. They understand Paul to be saying in verse 12: “just as sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so too death spreads to all men, because all sin.” They interpret Paul as saying, “As Adam sinned, and therefore died, so also all die, because all sin.”³² This interpretation has been almost unanimously rejected and dismissed by the Church for these reasons:

A) It's not true GRAMMARICALLY: The tense Paul uses here in verse 12 for both “spread” and “sinned,” is the simple past, or simple historical (aorist) tense.³³ Again, Paul does not say here: “so too death spreads/has spread to all men, because all sin/have sinned.” He says, “and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Namely, death spread to all because all sinned in and with Adam in his sin.

B) It's not true CONTEXTUALLY: Verse 12 is inseparably bound together to verses 13-14 (not just because verses 13-14 directly follow verse 12, but because of the “for” connecting them). But verses 13-14 in no way prove the Pelagian view, that all men die because they all sin just as Adam did. Actually, these verses prove the exact opposite (as we'll see), that some die even though they don't sin as Adam did.

C) It's not true STRUCTURALLY: Romans 5:12-21 (especially verses 12-19) is one coherent passage. And over the course of this same passage, Paul clearly tells us no less than five times that condemnation and death have come upon the human race because of the one sin of the one man Adam: “by the transgression of the one the many died” (v15); “the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation” (v16); “by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one” (v17); “through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men” (v18); “through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners” (v19). It's undeniable. So, to say that verse 12 teaches that condemnation and death have actually come upon the human race because of our personal sins—is to totally contradict everything Paul is clearly saying in this passage. One of the basic rules of Scriptural interpretation is to let the clearer Scriptures interpret those that are less clear. And what is clear about the passage is that death and condemnation came upon the entire human race because of Adam's sin. So the ambiguity of verse

²⁹ NOTE: If time is an issue, feel free to skip over the objections against the Pelagian and Corruption Views, as those objections will come up again in briefer form in the discussion of the Classical View.

³⁰ Hodge, Systematics, V2. Much of this paragraph gleaned from Hodge.

³¹ We could note here that Islam's view of sin is essentially the Pelagian View.

³² Hodge from his commentary on Romans.

³³ Actually, all three verbs in the verse are in the aorist tense: “spread” and “sinned” are in the same tense as “entered into.”
12 must be interpreted in light of the clarity of the rest of the passage. We simply can't get around it: "the Scriptures assert that the sentence of condemnation has passed upon all men for the sin of one man."

D) It's not true EXPERIENTIALLY: If men only die as a result of actual sins that they have committed, then infants who die in the womb or in infancy are a massive problem for Pelagians. Again, death is the judicial penalty for sin. And according to Pelagius, the only sins that men are guilty of are actual, personal sins. But what infant who dies in infancy can be charged with knowingly sinning against God?

Further, if it's true that everyone is born in the same state as Adam before the fall, totally untainted by inherent corruption (original sin), then how in the world can it be that there hasn't been a single individual in the history of mankind—excepting One, our Lord Jesus Christ—who has ever come close to living a sinless life? If the Pelagian doctrine was right, we would expect at least something like a 50-50 ratio between sinners and the sinless. But we can't even find a single person. You see, the truth is, original sin—inherent corruption—is very much like the law of gravity: you don't need a science book to prove it's true; you simply know it's true from experience. According to the Pelagian view, we sin simply because we have bad examples. But this simply doesn't do justice to what we know about the world.

E) It's not true THEOLOGICALLY: We mentioned earlier that Paul's main aim in this passage is to teach us that we are justified in Christ under the Covenant of Grace in precisely the same way that we were condemned in Adam under the Covenant of Works. This is most clear in verse 18: "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men." Paul's saying: Just as it was with your condemnation in Adam, so it is with your justification in Christ. There is a very real parallel. And we would all agree that no man was ever justified by his own good works or his own righteousness. But if we take seriously Paul's parallel comparing justification in Christ with condemnation in Adam, that's exactly the implication we have to draw with the Pelagian view. How so? Because if we are condemned—not on account of Adam's imputed sin—but rather on account of our own personal sin, then the corollary truth is that we are justified—not on account of Christ's imputed righteousness—but rather on account of our own personal righteousness. So, the Pelagian view necessarily results in a doctrine of justification by works.

2. The CORRUPTION View: In the mid-1600's, three professors at a theological school in Saumur, France, introduced a significant modification to John Calvin's view of imputation. According to Calvin, men were condemned both because Adam's corruption was imparted to us and because Adam's sin was imputed to us. Though Calvin held that we are guilty on both counts, he interpreted the last phrase in Romans 5:12, “for all sinned,” to mean that, “all became corrupt/sinful.” Well, these professors took.

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34 Hodge, Systematics, V2.
35 Vos puts it: “The Pelagian theory leaves the universality of sin entirely unexplained. . .The possibility that all [can sin], as an abstract possibility, does not explain why they all have actually sinned.” (V2, p29.  Note: quote edited for greater clarity). Another says: “Original sin explains everything and without it one cannot explain anything” (de Maistre in Bavinck, V3, p101).
36 As John Murray notes in his commentary on Romans: “How contradictory would be the appeal to the parallel obtaining on the side of condemnation and death if Paul finds the basis of the condemnation and death of all in the actual transgression of each individual. If this were Paul's teaching here the parallel that would be necessary on the other side would be justification by works, that each individual would be justified by his own actions and attain to life on that basis.” (p184).
37 Moise Amyraut, Louis Cappel and Josue' La Place (also spelled Placaeus).
38 Calvin was wrong in interpreting this phrase in this way. But a few words can be said in his defense. First, again, Calvin did not hold to the view of "Mediate Imputation" that these later French professors concocted. From what we can gather from his writings, he held that we are guilty and thereby condemned and suffer the penalty of death both on account of Adam's sin imparted to us and on account of Adam's depravity imparted to us. He did not deny that Adam's imputed sin is the ground of our guilt and condemnation, but just that it is the only ground of it: "By Adam's sin we are not condemned through imputation alone, as though we were punished only for the sin of another; but we suffer his punishment, because we ourselves are guilty; for our nature is vitiated in him, it is regarded by God as having committed sin." (Romans, 210). So again, the doctrine of the school of Saumur was not Calvin's doctrine. Second, the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin wasn't something that was disputed in his day. Calvin was fighting different battles. He was devoting his attention to refuting the Pelagians (who denied both imputed guilt and imparted corruption) and the Roman Catholics (who significantly emphasized imparted guilt to the near denial of imparted corruption). It was the doctrine of Adam's inherent corruption that was being diminished in Calvin's day, so it shouldn't surprise us that he doesn't devote a ton of attention to it. Third, to say that Calvin should have had more definitive views of imputation is anachronistic. Distinctions between Mediate and Immediate imputation didn't exist in his day. We look back at Calvin 500 years later, having reaped the benefits of several generations of theologians following in the steps of the Reformation. Calvin and the Reformers were living in a time where they had to re-discover the basic fundamentals of the gospel; they were doing their best to plant the seeds of the gospel. The
Calvin’s interpretation of Romans 5:12, “all became corrupt/sinful,” and created an entirely new doctrine, that Calvin never believed or taught, which is now called Mediate Imputation. According to this view, men are condemned and punished solely on account of the corrupt nature they inherited from Adam. In other words, we’re not guilty because Adam’s sin was imputed to us—only because his corruption was imparted to us:49 “Adam having defiled his own nature by sin, that depraved nature was transmitted to all his posterity, and therefore all die because they are thus inherently corrupt.”40 In short, Adam sinned. As a result of his sin, Adam’s nature became corrupt. That corrupt nature is passed down to us. And because we inherit that same corrupt nature, on that basis we stand guilty and condemned before God.41

Now, it’s true that we sin because we’re sinners (not visa versa). And it’s true that because of Adam’s sin, every one of us is born with a corrupt nature. But the question is: Is Paul telling us in this passage that our inherent corruption is the basis of our condemnation? We would say no for the following reasons:

A) It’s not true GRAMMATICALY: This view is contrary to the simple meaning of the words in Romans 5:12. Just as Paul doesn’t say that death spread to all “because all sin/have sinned,” (the Pelagian view), neither does he say—as he could have—that death spread to all men “because all became sinful,” which is how it’s interpreted under this inherent corruption view. Paul simply says, “because all sinned.”

B) It’s not true STRUCTURALLY: We saw above that in verses 15-19, Paul tells us again and again that the basis of our condemnation and death is the one sin of the one man, Adam. We are held guilty and suffer the judicial penalty of death because of Adam’s sin. But to say we’re guilty and suffer death because of Adam’s sin is completely different than saying that we’re guilty and suffer death because of inherent corruption passed down from Adam. Verses 15-19 tell us that we’re guilty and condemned because of the sin Adam committed—not because of the corruption that later resulted from that sin.42

C) It’s not true BIBLICALLY: When God told Adam in Genesis 2:17, “for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die”, He was letting Adam know that death would be the penalty for his sin. And God wasn’t just talking about physical death—He was talking about spiritual death: Adam would die spiritually. After all, Adam didn’t die physically the very day that he ate of the fruit—but he did die spiritually that day. So, spiritual death would be the punishment for Adam’s sin. Well, here’s what we have to understand: Inherent corruption IS spiritual death. The spiritual death that came upon Adam when he fell into sin was inherent corruption. And this passage teaches us that the same thing is true for us in Adam: Just as Adam was punished with spiritual death as a result of his sin—so too, all human kind was also punished with spiritual death, as a result of his sin. So then: Our inherent corruption is not the time would come for others to come along and prune the trees and hedges. Finally, it might help us a bit to remember that Calvin wrote his commentary on Romans in 1539, when he was only 30 years old. (Gleaned from: Martyn McGown, The Resurrection of a French Heresy: Joshua De La Place’s Denial of the Immediate Imputation of Adam’s Sin to His Posterity).

40 It was only after Placeus was confronted with the fact that this view (IE, we are condemned on the basis of our inherent corruption) was actually a denial of the doctrine of Adam’s imputed sin, that the doctrine of Mediate Imputation actually came into existence. It seems that it was in order to evade the force of this charge (of the denial of imputed sin) that Placeus proposed the distinction between mediate and immediate imputation. Dabney says, “The distinction seems to have been a ruse designed to shelter himself from censure.” (cf. Turretin, Hodge). Thus confronted, Placeus and the others claimed that they actually did adhere to a belief in Adam’s imputed guilt, only that this imputed guilt was mediated through the inherent corruption imparted to us (hence the term Mediate Imputation). Functionally, however, this view opposes the historic doctrine of imputed sin. The doctrine of imputed sin (now called Immediate) is that our inherent corruption is not the basis for our condemnation—but to the contrary—its penal consequent: spiritual death (inherent corruption) is the penalty “inflicted by the just judgment of God on account of Adam’s sin.” (Hodge, Systematic Theology). In other words, we’re condemned, not because of our inherent corruption; rather our inherent corruption is the proof that we’ve been condemned. Placeus turned this around. Instead of teaching that we are corrupt because of imputed guilt (the Classical View), he taught that we are guilty because of imparted corruption. “Instead of teaching that we are corrupt because of imputed guilt... Placeus turned this around and said: Original sin is imputed to us because we are born corrupt.” (Bavinck, p359). Placeus thus denied both 1) the imputation of the guilt of Adam’s first sin, as well as 2) the fact that inherent corruption is a punishment for his first sin.

41 It’s important to note (as Hodge does in his Systematic Theology that this doctrine was formally condemned by the National Synod of France in 1644-45, by the Swiss churches in the “Formula Consensus,” and by the theologians of Holland. Thus, this doctrine of mediate imputation was generally condemned both by the Reformed and Lutheran Churches, though it did find some advocates outside of France and has trickled down in various ways into modern theological thought.

42 We could add here: If the imputation of Adam’s sin to the human race is what Paul’s clearly teaching in vv15-19 (as it is), and what Paul says in v12 is the very foundation for the conclusion he draws in vv15-19 (as it is), then to say that Paul’s speaking about a completely different truth in v12 than he is in vv15-19 is to undercut the whole meaning of the passage.
reason we're punished (like Adam)—rather—inherent corruption is the proof that we've been punished (with Adam). When Adam was punished with spiritual death, we were punished with him—with spiritual death. In other words, Adam's corruption is imparted to us because Adam's guilt was imputed to us.

D) It's not true THEOLOGICALLY: We saw above that Paul's main aim in this passage is to teach us that we're justified in Christ under the Covenant of Grace in exactly the same way that we were condemned in Adam under the Covenant of Works. And we saw that if we take this comparison seriously, and if the Pelagian view teaches that it's our personal sins that condemn us, then the necessary corollary implication is that it's our own deeds of righteousness that justify us. Well, we've got the same problem here with the Corruption view. Because if Paul is indeed showing us that we're justified in Christ in the same way we were condemned in Adam, and if it's true (as the Corruption view teaches) that we're condemned in Adam because we become inherently corrupt—then the corollary truth is that we are justified in Christ because we become inherently holy. But this is to deny the gospel. The doctrine of justification (as set forth in this passage) is grounded on the truth that it is solely the righteousness of Christ imputed to us—to totally apart from any inherent goodness in us—that makes us right with God. So, “Although...it is true that our nature was corrupted in Adam, and has been transmitted to us in a depraved state, yet that hereditary corruption is not here represented as the ground of our condemnation, any more than the holiness which believers derive from Christ is the ground of their justification.”

3. The CLASSICAL View: We call this view the Classical View because it is an interpretation of Romans 5:12 that is first, rooted in the Old Testament, secondly, has been the primary doctrine of the Church in ages past, and thirdly, continues to be the view of a great majority of scholars and theologians. In short, the Classical View understands Romans 5:12 as speaking about imputed sin.

43 As Hodge says: “It is a still more serious objection that this doctrine [IE, mediate imputation] destroys the parallel between Adam and Christ on which the Apostle lays so much stress in his Epistle to the Romans. The great point which he there labors to teach and to illustrate, and which he represents as a cardinal element of the method of salvation, is that men are justified for a righteousness which is not personally their own. To illustrate and confirm this great fundamental doctrine, he refers to the fact that men have been condemned for a sin which is not personally their own. He over and over insists that it was for the sin of Adam, and not for our own sin or sinfulness, that the sentence of death (the forfeiture of the divine favor) passed upon all. It is on this ground he urges men the more confidently to rely upon the promise of justification on the ground [of] a righteousness which is not inherently ours. This parallel destroyed, the doctrine and argument of the Apostle are overturned, if it be denied that the sin of Adam, as antecedent to any sin or sinfulness of our own is the ground of our condemnation. If we are partakers of the penal consequences of Adam's sin only because of the corrupt nature derived by a law of nature from him, then we are justified only on the ground of our own inherent holiness derived by a law of grace from Christ. We have thus the doctrine of subjective justification, which overthrow the great doctrine of the Reformation, and the great ground of the peace and confidence of the people of God, namely, that a righteousness not within us but wrought out for us—the righteousness of another, even the eternal Son of God, and therefore an infinitely meritorious righteousness—is the ground of our justification before God. Any doctrine which tends to invalidate or two weaken the Scriptural evidence of this fundamental article of our faith is fraught with evil greater than belongs to it in itself considered. This is the reason why the Reformed theologians so strenuously opposed the doctrine of La Place. They saw and said that on his principles the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness antecedent to our sanctification could not be defended.” (Hodge, Systematics, V2).

44 Hodge, Romans. Another objection to the Corruption View is that it can't explain why we inherit Adam's corrupt nature. It can explain how it is (by natural generation; IE, WLC #26) that Adam's sin is conveyed to his posterity, but they can't explain why. As Vos says: "It [mediate imputation] leaves the transmission to us of Adam's corruption as an unexplained and inexplicable fact, since it does not want to view this corruption as punishment." (V2, p37; cf. also Bavinck, V3, p109).

45 The Classical View is also called Immediate Imputation.

46 For examples of imputed sin in the Old Testament, see Lesson 2, Section V, Number 2, sub-section B.

47 Imputed guilt from Adam is a teaching that began to appear, it seems, with Ambrosiaster and Augustine in the 4th century A.D. (Moo, p920). Augustine held that "Such was the union between Adam and his descendants, that the same consequences of his transgression came on them that fell upon him... involving both guilt and corruption...[and] that the loss of original righteousness and the corruption of nature consequent on the fall of Adam are penal infallious, being the punishment of his first sin." (Hodge, Systematics, p136). Thus, "from the beginning, the universal Church has agreed in holding that the guilt of Adam's first sin was directly charged to the account of the human race in mass, just as it was charged to himself. Likewise, Adam's first sin was punished in the race by desertion and consequent depravity, just as it was punished in him." (Hodge, The Imputation of Adam's First Sin To His Posterity, #13). Again, in his Systematic Theology, Hodge writes: “The imputation of Adam's sin has been the doctrine of the Church universal in all ages. It was the doctrine of the Jews, derived from the plain teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. It was and is the doctrine of the Greek, Latin, Lutheran, and Reformed churches. Its denial is a novelty...The points of diversity in reference to this subject do not relate to the fact that Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity, but either to the grounds of that imputation or to its consequences...The Lutherans and Reformed held the same doctrine with more consistency and earnestness. But in all this diversity it was universally admitted, first, that certain evils are inflicted upon all mankind on account of Adam's sin; and, secondly, that those evils are penal.” (p160).

48 See the last quote in the previous footnote (Hodge, Systematic Theology, p160).
According to the Classical View, what Paul means by “all sinned,” is that “all sinned in Adam as their head and representative.” As the covenant head of the human race, Adam represented all men in such a way, that because of his sin, all humanity has been plunged along with him into guilt and condemnation. Adam’s sin was judicially reckoned to all men. So, when he fell, we fell with him; when he was condemned, we were condemned with him. His sin is reckoned to us; his transgression is legally charged to our account. He sinned, but we are guilty with him; he transgressed, but we are condemned with him.

We have a striking example of this in the passages of Scripture that deal with Achan’s sin. We’ve referred back to them before, but there’s one detail in particular that we haven’t pointed out yet that can really help us understand how it is that “all sinned” (in verse 12) can mean that Adam’s sin was imputed to all. Joshua 7:14-21 makes it clear beyond any doubt that it was Achan alone who sinned, for one man only was taken by lot, and when Achan confesses his sin he speaks in the first personal singular. And yet, if we turn to Joshua 22:20, we find that, as a result of Achan’s sin, wrath fell on “all the congregation of Israel”. Why? If Achan alone sinned, then why did wrath fall on all Israel? We find our answer if we turn back again to Joshua 7:11-12, where we read: “Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things. Therefore the sons of Israel...have become accursed.” Was it not Achan alone who sinned? Why then does God say that all Israel had sinned? Because Achan’s sin was being reckoned as belonging to all Israel. His sin, though not actually belonging to all—was imputed to all; and it was for this reason that wrath fell upon all of them. It is precisely this way that we understand what Paul is saying in Romans 5:12. Adam alone sinned—and yet wrath fell upon all humanity. Why? Because the guilt of his sin is imputed to us—reckoned as ours.

Now, according to this view, Adam’s sin is both imputed and imparted. One truth: the guilt of Adam’s sin is imputed to us. Another truth: the corruption of his nature is imparted to us. But in the Classical View, these two truths fit together in the exact opposite way that Placaeus had put them in the Corruption View (above). The Classical View reasons this way: 1) God had told Adam that his disobedience would result in death; 2) This was true not just for Adam, but for all those he represented; 3) And this death included spiritual death, which is exactly what inherent corruption is. For Adam, inherent corruption—spiritual death—came upon him as a judicial penalty for his sin, along with physical death. And it’s exactly the same for all those he represented (all of us): just like Adam, so too, we are inflicted with spiritual death as the penalty for Adam’s sin, because he represented us. Just as Adam died spiritually as a judicial consequence for his sin—so did all those he represented (all of us). In a word, our inherent corruption isn’t the basis of our condemnation—it’s the proof. Whereas Placaeus taught that we’re guilty because of imparted corruption, the Classical View teaches us that we’re actually corrupt because of imputed guilt.

The following charts summarize the differences between the Classical View and the Corruption View:

**How is it that Adam’s sin is imputed to his posterity? (Directly or Indirectly)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediate Imputation (Corruption View)</th>
<th>A Summary of the Two Views</th>
<th>Takes Romans 5:12,15-19 to Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The inherent corruption that has been imparted to us in Adam is the judicial grounds/basis of our condemnation: In other words, we are guilty because of Adam’s imparted corruption</td>
<td>Adam’s trespass resulted in the corruption of human nature, which corruption is the judicial basis of the condemnation and death of all: We die because of Adam’s imparted corruption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Imputation (Classical View)</td>
<td>The inherent corruption that has been imparted to us in Adam is the penal result/consequence of our condemnation: In other words, we are actually corrupt because of Adam’s imputed guilt</td>
<td>Adam’s trespass resulted in the guilt of both Adam and the entire human race, which guilt is the judicial basis of the condemnation and death of all: We die because of Adam’s imputed guilt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediate</th>
<th>Immediate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam sinned → Adam’s nature corrupted → we inherit this corrupt nature → we are thus punished</td>
<td>Adam sinned → Adam’s sin reckoned to us → we are punished with Adam → we are thus corrupted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now, something we should note here is that there are actually two distinct lines of thinking regarding the basis of Adam’s imputed sin. Both lines of thinking agree that we are all guilty because Adam’s sin was

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49 Hodge, Romans.
imputed to us, but they disagree over why it is, exactly, that Adam's sin was imputed. What we've been describing is called the **FEDERALIST** (or representative) view; namely, the reason Adam's sin was imputed to us was that Adam was our covenant representative. When Paul says that we die because "we sinned" in Adam (5:12), he's not saying that we actually, physically, literally, sinned in the garden in and with Adam. No, he's saying that we are treated as sinners, we are regarded and reckoned as having sinned in and with Adam when he sinned, because he was our covenant representative. But there's another group of theologians who subscribe to what is called the **REALIST** view: they also affirm that Adam's sin is imputed to us, but according to them, the reason why Adam's sin is imputed is that we actually, literally, physically sinned in and with Adam. According to them, we're guilty of Adam's sin—not because he was acting on our behalf as our covenant head—but because we actually sinned in and with Adam in the strict and proper sense of the term. So, according to the realist view, "[Adam's] sin is ours not because it is imputed to us; but it is imputed to us, because it is truly and properly our own."\(^{30}\)

**WHY IS IT THAT ADAM’S SIN IS IMPUTED TO HIS POSTERITY? (THE BASIS OF IMPUTED SIN)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REALISM</th>
<th>A SUMMARY OF THE TWO VIEWS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam's sin was imputed to all men because we were really there sinning with him when he sinned</td>
<td>Levi paid tithes in that he was “present” in Abraham's loins when he tithed (Heb.7:9-10)</td>
<td>Caan's curse (Gen.9); Achan's sin (Josh.7); Haman's sons (Esth.9); Daniel's accusers (Dan.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEDERALISM</td>
<td>Adam's sin was imputed to all men because when Adam sinned he acted for all those he represented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So, which view is the right one? We believe that when Paul says, “all sinned in Adam” he's telling us that Adam was acting as our covenant representative in such a way that when he sinned, his act was reckoned as ours. Paul's NOT saying that all men actually sinned in Adam's sin in such a way that his act was literally and physically our act. That's impossible; we didn't even exist at that point.\(^{51}\) Further, Paul goes on to make it crystal clear, that it was on account of “the transgression of the one” that the many died (v15); it was through “the transgression of the one” that death reigned over all (v17).\(^{32}\) It wasn't the transgression of the many, or the transgression of all, sinning in Adam, that brought condemnation upon the human race; It was the transgression of the one man, Adam.\(^{53}\) Adam's sin isn't imputed to us because it's truly and properly ours; rather, his sin is ours because it's federally and covenantally imputed to us.\(^{34}\)

What Scripture teaches is that Adam stood as the covenant head of the human race in the same way that Christ stands as the covenant head of his people: “when it is said that the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity, it is not meant that they committed his sin, or were the agents of his act. . .but simply that in virtue of the union between him and his descendants, his sin is the judicial ground of the condemnation of his race, precisely as the righteousness of Christ is the judicial ground of the justification of his people.”\(^{55}\) Adam's sin—though not ours—was imputed to us in *the Covenant of Works*. And in exactly the same way, Christ's righteousness—though not ours—is imputed to us in *the Covenant of Grace*. The first imputation brought death; the second has brought life. Here's the evidence for the Classical View: \(^{36}\)

A) *It fits GRAMMATICALLY:* The Classical View best fits the simple meaning of Paul's words in Romans 5:12. Paul doesn't say that death spread to all men because “all *do* sin/have sinned” (IE, the Pelagian View), or because “all *became* sinful” (IE, the Corruption View),\(^{57}\) but simply because “all

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\(^{30}\) Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, p175.

\(^{51}\) Hodge says: "the act of Adam was not the act of all men...it is impossible that they acted his act. To say that a man acted thousands of years before his personality began, does not rise even to the dignity of a contradiction; it has no meaning at all."

\(^{32}\) Dr. Lewis Johnson Jr: the condemnation is traced to the act of one man, not the act of all men. *(Sermon on Romans 5).*

\(^{33}\) Haldane says: “The assertion...that Adam's sin is as truly ours as it was his, does not imply that it is his and ours in the same sense. It was his personally; but in the same way, we were in him. Adam's sin, then, is as truly ours as it was his sin, though not in the same way.” Hodge: “Adam's sin may be said to be imputed to us because it is ours, insomuch as it is the sin of the divinely constituted head of our race. But it is not ours in the same sense in which it was his.” *(Systematic, p169).*

\(^{34}\) One final objection against the Realist View: Just as Mediate Imputation cannot explain why it is that Adam's corruption is transmitted to his posterity, so here, the Realist View leaves unexplained why it is that Adam's sin is considered to be our own, but the sins of our other ancestors are not. As Vos again notes: “The theory of the realistic mode of being in Adam leaves entirely unexplained how Adam's sin can be imputed to us and the sins of all our other ancestors cannot.” *(See Vos, V2, p39).*


\(^{36}\) Much of the following is compiled again from Hodge.

\(^{37}\) As Bavinck notes, the Greek verb used in Romans 5:12 for 'sinned', "refers not to a sinful state but to an act." *(V3, p84).*
sinned.” This verb is in the simple historical (aorist) tense, indicating momentary action at a particular time. “And when was that? Doubtless at the fall. All men sinned in Adam’s sin. All fell in his fall.”

B) It fits CONTEXTUALLY: Verses 13-14 are inseparably bound to the last clause of verse 12, not just because they follow directly after, but because of the connecting “for” at the beginning of verse 13. This “for” tells us that in verses 13-14, Paul is seeking to prove what he just said in verse 12. But verses 13-14 don’t prove the Pelagian View (they actually prove the exact opposite), nor do they fit the Corruption View very well. The interpretation of verse 12 that fits the best with verses 13-14 is the Classical View.

C) It fits STRUCTURALLY: The whole passage of Romans 5:12-19 is a single unit. And what's absolutely clear in verses 13-19 is that all men are condemned and suffer death on account of the one sin of the one man, Adam. Paul says it clearly no less than five times: “by the transgression of the one the many died” (v15); “the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation” (v16); “by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one” (v17); “through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men” (v18); “through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners” (v19). So then, to say that all men are actually condemned and suffer death on account of their own sins (the Pelagian View) would totally contradict the rest of the passage. So too, to say that all men are condemned and suffer death on account of their inherent corruption (the Corruption View) is something very different than saying that all men are condemned and suffer death on account of the one sin of Adam. So, the Classical View of verse 12 is really the only interpretation that fits the rest of the passage.

Further, it's almost universally agreed that verse 12 is the first part of a comparison that is resumed and completed later in verse 18 (“just as...even so”). In other words, what Paul begins to say in verse 12, he later comes back to and repeats in verse 18. So, we could say that verse 18 “is Paul's own interpretation of what he meant when he said 'all sinned'” in verse 12. And in verse 18, Paul is clearly speaking about imputed sin in Adam, when he says: “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.”

D) It fits THEOLOGICALLY: Paul's whole aim in this passage is to demonstrate that we are justified in Christ the exact same way that we were condemned in Adam. This is clear in verse 18. Paul's saying: just as it was with your condemnation, so it is with your justification. There's a very real parallel. Now, if we take this comparison seriously, and if the Pelagian View of verse 12 teaches that we are condemned by our own personal sins (as it does), then the corollary truth is that we are justified by our own personal deeds of righteousness. That's not good; actually it's heresy. And we've got the same problem with the Corruption View, because if we are condemned in Adam because we become inherently corrupt (as this view teaches), then the corollary truth is that we are justified in Christ because we become inherently righteous. That's also a denial of the gospel. The essence of the doctrine of justification is that in Christ, sinners are declared to be right with God totally apart from any good works or inward righteousness of their own. And Paul's telling us we were condemned the same way we're justified: through imputation. It was Adam's imputed sin that condemned us; and it's Christ's imputed righteousness that justifies us.

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58 Hodge, Romans.
59 As John Murray points out: “In verses 13 and 14 Paul says the opposite of what Pelagians teach about verse 12. . .If all die because they are guilty of actual transgression [IE, the Pelagian View], then they die because they sin just as Adam did. But [in vv13-14] Paul says the reverse; some died even though they did not sin after the pattern of Adam.” (Romans, p183).
60 In short, this is because Paul is arguing in verses 13-14 that the fact that all men die testifies to the fact that all men have broken a law, since death is the enforcement of a penalty, and penalties only exist in the context of law. So, all men must have transgressed a law. What Paul then goes on to show in verses 13-14 is that this law that all men have transgressed cannot be the actual, personal sins that men commit, either against the Law of Moses on the one hand, or the law written on their hearts on the other. This latter fact rules out the Pelagian View of verse 12. But the former, that all men have transgressed a law, seems to also rule out the Corruption View, for being inherently corrupt is not the same as being guilty of breaking a law.
62 As Hodge says: “That doctrine on which the hope of God’s people, either implicitly or explicitly, has ever been founded is, that the righteousness of Christ as something out of themselves, something distinguished from any act or subjective state of theirs, is the ground of their justification. They know that there is nothing in them on which they dare for a moment rely, as the reason why God should accept and pardon them. It is therefore the essential part of the analogy between Christ and Adam, the very truth which the apostle designs to set forth, that the sin of Adam, as distinguished from any act of ours, and from inherent corruption as derived from him, is the ground of our condemnation. If this be denied, then the other great truth must be denied, and our own subjective righteousness be made the ground of our justification; which is to subvert the gospel. . .the scope of the passage. . .is to illustrate the doctrine of justification on the ground of the righteousness of Christ,
CONCLUSION: So, when Paul says in Romans 5:12 that “death spread to all men, because all sinned,” he’s not saying that all of us suffer death because of our own personal sins (the Pelagian View), nor is he saying that all of us suffer death because of our inherent corrupt nature (the Corruption View). He’s saying that all of us suffer the penal consequent of death because as our covenant representative, we were reckoned guilty and condemned with Adam in and through his sin: “when he sinned, we sinned; when he fell, we fell; and we die because we have been accounted as having sinned in and with him” in his sin.
Paul had just made a radical claim at the end of verse 12. And so, before he can do anything else, he has to stop and prove what he just said about imputed sin. His goal is to show that we're justified in Christ in exactly the same way we were condemned in Adam: just as we were condemned in Adam completely our life; so too it's Christ's righteousness alone that justifies us, but there are degrees of glory and rewards of grace hereafter, which are based on the way we live our life. After all, Romans 2:5-6 doesn't say we're judged “on account of” our deeds but “according to” our deeds. The unbelieving will be punished, not on account of—but according to their sinful deeds, just as the believing will be rewarded not on account of—but according to their righteous deeds. So then, our deeds are not presented as the basis of our punishment or reward—but rather as that which determines the extent. Our actual, personal sins don't add to our condemnation—we're already condemned—but they add to the degree of punishment we'll experience in the next life. So it is with rewards of grace. Our actual, personal deeds wrought in love for the glory of God in no way add to our justification! But they do add, I believe Scripture teaches, to the degree and weight of glory we'll experience hereafter. So, dear brothers and sisters, don't think that imputation means it doesn't matter anymore how we live. It certainly does. OBJECTION #3: Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

OBJECTION #4: Is imputed sin fair? It's an important objection. As one put it: “If you've never felt that, if you've never felt the force of that objection, I think it's probably because you've never thought about imputation.” We ought to feel this if we really understand imputation. We covered this last objection earlier in Lesson 2; please feel free to turn back there for review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF VIEW</th>
<th>SYNOPSIS OF VIEW</th>
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<tr>
<td>The PELAGIAN View</td>
<td>Not true grammatically: the text doesn't say “all sin” or “all have sinned” but “all sinned” Not true contextually: this interpretation contradicts what Paul goes on to say in vv13-14 Not true structurally: this understanding is inconsistent with the heart of the passage in vv15-19 Not true theologically: the corollary truth is that we are justified by our own good deeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CORRUPTION View</td>
<td>Not true grammatically: to say that “all sinned” does not mean that “all were made corrupt” Not true structurally: this understanding is inconsistent with the heart of the passage in vv15-19 Not true biblically: the Bible teaches we are punished with corruption because of Adam's sin Not true theologically: the corollary truth is we are justified by becoming inherently righteous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CLASSICAL View</td>
<td>TRUE grammatically: “all sinned” at a particular time—in and with Adam when he sinned TRUE contextually: what Paul goes on to say in vv13-14 fits perfectly with this interpretation TRUE structurally: this interpretation fits perfectly with the heart of the passage in vv15-19 TRUE theologically: the corollary truth is we are justified by Christ's imputed righteousness</td>
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**Romans 5:13-14**

13 For until the Law was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.
apart from our own actual sins, so too we're justified in Christ totally apart from our own actual righteousness (this is clear from verses 18-19). But before Paul can get there, he has to stop and prove the first premise of his argument. He has to show some evidence for the fact that all men indeed stand condemned on account of the transgression of Adam, totally apart from their personal, actual sins.\(^{64}\)

And this is exactly what Paul does in verses 13-14. He's going to give a “one-two punch,” to demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt, that all humanity stands condemned before God—not because of their individual sins—but because of Adam's sin. Paul is going to prove for us that we stand guilty before God and exposed to His punishment—not because of our own actual sins—but because of Adam's imputed sin.

So first, let's walk through verses 13-14, in light of verse 12, then we'll try to explain and summarize them:

**Paul's PREMISE** (v12): It was Adam's imputed sin that unleashed death upon the human race.

**Paul's PROOF** (vv13-14): For even before the Law of Moses was given, we know that sin existed, since it was being punished with death (v13a). Now, sin can't be punished where there's no law, since by definition, sin is transgression of law (v13b). And yet sin was being punished with the judicial penalty of death, which means that all men must be guilty of breaking a law (v14a). Now, that law, which all men must be guilty of breaking, for which reason all men are punished with death, cannot be the Law of Moses, since sin was being punished with death long before the Law of Moses was ever given (v14a). Neither can this law, that all men have transgressed, be the moral law—the law that is written on the heart of every man—since there are also some who die that have never transgressed that law either (v14b).

**Paul's CONCLUSION** (vv12,15-19): Thus, the law that all men have transgressed, for which all are punished with death, must be the transgression of Adam: we suffer the penalty of death because we are guilty of Adam's transgression; we suffer death because Adam's transgression has been imputed to us.

So, that's the general thrust of the text. Now let's look more in detail at Paul's two proofs for imputed sin:

1. **Paul's FIRST Argument:** The first thing Paul shows us in verses 13-14 is that all men stand condemned totally apart from actual sins committed against the Law of Moses. Before the Law of Moses was given, men could not be guilty of breaking that Law. Now, men could indeed be guilty of sinning against their conscience (the moral law written on their hearts)—Paul will get to that in the second part of his argument—but Paul's first point is that men who lived before the Law was given could not be said to be guilty of violating that Law. Paul's reasoning goes like this: if all men die (v12), and death is the enforcement of a penalty, and penalties are only given when there is violation of a law (v13), then all men must have transgressed a law (v13-14). Now, the law which all men transgressed, on account of which the penalty of death was rendered to all, cannot be the Law of Moses, since the punishment of death was meted out long before the Law of Moses existed. There must have been the transgression of another law for which all men are exposed to God's judicial punishment—namely, the transgression of Adam. So, Paul's first argument is that actual sins against the Law of Moses can't account for the judicial penalty of death.

2. **Paul's SECOND Argument:** But Paul keeps going, he has one more piece of evidence for us to prove that it was Adam's sin—and not our own actual individual sins—that resulted in death and condemnation for the world. In the second part of verse 14 he adds one more insight. Death reigned, Paul says, “even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam” (v14). What does it mean to not sin in the likeness of the offense Adam? It means to not sin like Adam did. Well, how exactly did Adam sin? What type of sin was that? Well, it was an overt, willing, explicit, violation of God's will. When Adam sinned, he knew what he was doing was wrong. Now, from Adam till Moses, even though the Mosaic Law had yet to be established, still, men did have the law of God written upon their hearts. So, while they couldn't sin against the Law of Moses, they could and did sin against God's moral law written upon their hearts. And when they did this, they were sinning like Adam did—because they were willingly, knowingly violating what they knew to be God's will—just as Adam did. But Paul is saying here is that death reigned from Adam till Moses (and still does) even over those who didn't sin in this way.

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\(^{64}\) As Hodge puts it: “If verse 12 teaches that men are subject to death on account of the sin of Adam, if this is the doctrine of the whole passage, and if, as is admitted, verses 13-14 are designed to prove the assertion of verse 12, then it is necessary that the apostle should show that death comes on those who have no personal or actual sins to answer for.” (Romans).
Well, you ask, who in the world could Paul be talking about? Are there any people that could possibly fit this description: people given over to death, yet who had never explicitly violated God's revealed will; a group of people who had never done what they knew to be wrong? Yes—infants. Infants who die in the womb, or in infancy. They died, and still do, even though they had never explicitly violated God's revealed will. Now, are they infected with the poison of original sin? Absolutely. But have they committed any actual sins, either against the Law of Moses or the moral law; knowingly, willingly violating God's will? No—and yet they die. Why? The only possible explanation is that death spreads to them also—not because of any actual, individual sins—but because of imputed sin. Death spreads to them not because of any particular sins of their own, but because of Adam's sin. Paul wants us to see that we do not share Adam's fate because we have followed his sinful pattern; or even because we have inherited his sinful nature (thought that's true); we share Adam's fate because we are held guilty in Adam's sin. We do not stand condemned because of our own particular individual sins—either against the Law of Moses or against the moral law written on our hearts; we stand condemned because Adam's sin was imputed to us.

Paul's Logic in Verses 12-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premise 1</th>
<th>All men die (vv12-13)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Premise 2</td>
<td>Death is the enforcement of a penalty (v13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Premise 3</td>
<td>Penalties are only enforced when there is a transgression of a law (v13)</td>
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<td>Premise 4</td>
<td>Thus, all must have transgressed a law (vv13-14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Premise 5</td>
<td>But this law can't be the Law of Moses, since men died before the Law was given (v14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Premise 6</td>
<td>Nor can it be the moral law, since some [infants] die who have never violated even that law (v14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Premise 7</td>
<td>So we don't suffer death because of actual sins either against the Mosaic Law or the moral law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>So then, all men are condemned on account of the sin of Adam, not their own actual sins (v12)</td>
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**SUMMARY:** Again, to briefly summarize: The judicial sentence of condemnation and punishment of death that has come upon all men argues the breaking of a law. But actual sins against the Law of Moses will not account for men's condemnation and death, as men were given over to death well before the Law of Moses existed. Neither will actual sins against the moral law written on the heart account for it, as infants are given over to death who, though corrupted with original sin, cannot be said to have committed actual sins against the moral law. So then, the violation of the law, of which every man is guilty, for which every man is punished with death, cannot be the personal, actual sins which men commit either against the law of God written on stone tablets, or the law of God written in their own hearts. Men are condemned and punished on account of the sin of Adam, totally apart from their own actual sins.

This is confirmed by the last clause in verse 14, where Paul describes Adam as “a type of Him who was to come.” How is it exactly that Adam is a type of Christ? Well, “Adam is the cause of death coming on all independently of any transgressions of their own; as Christ is the author of justification without our own works...As Adam was the head and representative of his race, whose destiny was suspended on his conduct, so Christ is the head and representative of his people. As the sin of the one was the ground of our condemnation, so the righteousness of the other is the ground of our justification.”

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65 See Haldane, Romans, p210; Murray, Romans, p190.
66 Matthew Poole puts it well: “dying so soon, they have neither capacity nor opportunity of committing any sin similar to [Adam’s]; that is, any actual transgression; and [they are] therefore said, in that respect, to be innocent (Jeremiah 19:4), not free from the taint, but from the act of sin.”
67 This chart gratefully adapted from Hodge's reasoning in his commentary on Romans. Hodge explains it this way: "The proof is this: the infliction of penal evils implies the violation of law; the violation of the law of Moses will not account for the universality of death, because men died before that law was given. Neither is the violation of the law of nature sufficient to explain the fact that all men are subject to death, because even those die who have never broken that law. As, therefore, death supposes transgression, and neither the law of Moses nor the law of nature embraces all the victims of death, it follows that men are subject to penal evils on account of the sin of Adam." (Romans). Again, in his Systematic Theology, Hodge puts it this way: "Punishment supposes sin; [and] sin supposes law; for sin is not imputed where there is no law. All men are punished; they are all subject to penal evils [IE, death]. They are, therefore, all chargeable with sin, and consequently are all guilty of violation of law. That law cannot be the law of Moses, for men died (i.e., were subject to the penalty of the law) before that law was given. [And] It cannot be the law as written on the heart; for those die who have never committed any personal sin [IE, infants]. . .The ground of that infliction must therefore be sought. . .in the sin of [Adam].” (p159).
68 Hodge, Romans.
And here's why all of this is so important for us to understand: As it was for us in Adam, so it is for us in Christ. Just as we were condemned for a sin that wasn't ours—so too, we're justified for a righteousness that isn't ours. Just as we had nothing to do with the guilt we received in Adam, so too we have nothing to do with the righteousness we receive in Christ. Just as our condemnation was based solely on what Adam did, so too our justification is based solely upon what Christ has done. Just as death came to us solely because of the disobedience of Adam, so now life comes to us solely because of the obedience of Christ.

ADDENDUM: We might add that there are actually two slightly different views of what Paul is saying in verses 13-14. We've been describing what we can call the Majority View. This is the view we judge to be the biblical view. But there's also another view we can call the Minority View. See the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The MAJORITY View</th>
<th>The MINORITY View</th>
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| SUMMARY              | All men die, and death is God's penal judgment for sin, and penalties are only enforced when there is a transgression of a law, so all men must have transgressed a law.  
                      | But this law that all men transgress can't be the Law of Moses, since men died before that Law was ever given; nor can it be the moral law, since some die who can't be said to have sinned against the moral law (infants).  
                      | Thus, all men must be guilty of Adam's offense.        | All men die, and death is God's penal judgment for sin, and penalties are only enforced when there is a transgression of a law, so all men must have transgressed a law.  
                      | But strictly speaking, sin (or transgression) wasn't actually possible before the Law of Moses was given, since it's impossible to sin when there are no laws to sin against, and God had yet to give His Law. And yet, men still died.  
                      | Thus, all men must be guilty of Adam's offense.        |
| OF THE 2 VIEWS       |                                                        |                                                        |
| HOW THE VIEWS ARE    | Both views take v12 (“all sinned”) to be referring to imputed sin.  
                      | SIMILAR                                               |                                                        |
|                      | Both views take v13-14 to be the proof for what had just been said about imputed sin in v12.  
                      |                                                        |                                                        |
|                      | Both views begin with the same premise (all men must have transgressed a law) and end with the same conclusion (the law all men have transgressed must be the imputed offense of Adam).  
                      |                                                        |                                                        |
| HOW THE VIEWS ARE    | Before the Law, sin was imputed, meaning that sin was punished with the judicial penalty of death  
                      | DIFFERENT                                             | Before the Law, sin was not imputed, meaning that sin didn't exist  
                      | Those who died before the Mosaic Law had actual sins—but death came on them for another reason  
                      |                                                        | Those who died before the Mosaic Law didn't have actual sins—so men did not die for actual sins  
                      | The 2nd clause of v13 is proving that there must have been law before the Law of Moses  
                      |                                                        | The 2nd clause of v13 is proving that actual sins could not truly exist before the Law of Moses  
                      | Verses 13-14a: Shows that men die for reasons other than actual sins against the Law of Moses; Verse 14b: Shows that men die for reasons other than actual sins against the moral law.  
                      |                                                        | In both vv13-14a as well as v14b, Paul is showing the same thing that men who lived before the Law of Moses was given died though they had no actual sins (against that law) to speak of.  

ROMANS 5:15-17

15 But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.  
16 The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.  
17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

1. An OVERVIEW of Romans 5:15-17: Let's remember the context of Romans 5:15-17. . .

“In [Romans 5:12], . . . Paul is concerned to pull back and give you a deeper, a broader background and understanding for what he has taught you so far. He's. . . pulling back and saying, 'Let me explain to you . . .

As far as I know, these two major views don't actually have names, but I thought it helpful to label them.
some of the underlying reasons for the purposes of God and why salvation has to be this way. Why it is that you cant save yourself. Why it is that you contribute nothing of your own righteousness to your standing of righteousness before God. Why it is that you have to look away from your works and to look to Jesus Christ. And so, beginning in Romans, Chapter 5, verse 12, he wants to explain to you the parallels which exist between [Christ, on the one hand, and] our first head—our federal representative—Adam, who fell in his rebellion against God from the state of righteousness and grace which God had blessed him with. And he wants to compare Adam to Jesus Christ so that we might understand, first of all, something of the web of sin that we're involved in, and also some reason again for why we need to flee to Christ alone for salvation. But before he will discuss those parallels between Adam and Christ, he wants to explain a couple of other things, especially the discontinuities between Adam and Christ. He wants it to be very clear that Christ, in what He does to save us, is far more glorious and the fruit of it is far more glorious in comparison to Adam [and] the work that Adam did to bring us into this situation. . . In other words, you can't talk about Adam and Christ and compare them without drawing out the bold contrast that exists between them. And that's exactly what [Paul does here] in verses 15 through 17. 970

2. The CONTRASTS contained in Romans 5:15-17: What are the contrasts in Romans 5:15-17?

Verse 15: It seems that there are two main contrasts in verse 15. The first is between the NATURE of the actions of the two covenant heads: Adam's transgression is contrasted with Christ's gift. 71 The second is between the DEGREE of the glory of the actions of the two covenant heads: that is, in Christ, "the grace of God not only negates the operation of judgment but abounds unto the opposite, unto justification and life." 72 The abounding of verse 15 refers to the gift extending "not only to the recovery of what Adam lost [IE, conditional favor], but to blessings which Adam did not possess [IE, everlasting favor]." 73 In other words: Jesus didn't come to just make salvation possible again—He came to make it certain. He didn't just recover what Adam had lost—He caused us to inherit what Adam never possessed.

Verse 16: In this verse there also seem to be two main contrasts. The first has to do with the immediate EFFECT of the actions of the two covenant heads: Adam's trespass brought condemnation; Christ's gift brought justification. The second contrast has to do with the POWER of the actions of the two covenant heads: "Christ has done far more than remove the curse pronounced on us for the one sin of Adam; he

70 Ligon Duncan from his course on Covenant Theology.
71 Hodge here poses and answers an important question that relates to verses 15-17. On verse 15: “It is here. . .expressly asserted that the sin of Adam was the cause of all his posterity being subjected to death, that is, to penal evil. But it may still be asked whether it was the occasional or the immediate cause. That is, whether the apostle means to say that [1] the sin of Adam was the occasion of all men being placed in such circumstances that they all sin, and thus incur death. . .that by being the cause of the corruption of their nature, it is thus indirectly the cause of their condemnation; or [2] whether he is to be understood as saying that his sin is the direct judicial ground or reason for the infliction of penal evil. . .it is a mere exegetical question. . .Does the dative here express the occasional cause, or the ground or reason of the result attributed to the offense of one man?. . .If Paul says that the offense of one is the ground and reason of the many being subject to death, he says all that the advocates of the doctrine of imputation say. . .[and] this is the strict exegetical meaning of the passage. . .This interpretation is not only possible, and in strict accordance with the meaning of the words, but it is demanded, in this connection, by the plainest rules of exposition. . .” On verse 17: “Here again the dative has a causal force, and the assertion of the apostle is, that the offense of Adam was the cause of death coming on all men. His sin was not the cause of death by any physical efficiency; nor as the mere occasion of leading men to incur by their own act the penalty of death; nor by corruption the nature of man, which corruption is the ground of the inflicted curse; but. . .because his sin was the ground of the judicial condemnation, which passed on all mankind.” Conclusion: “If it is true, therefore, as is so often asserted, that the apostle here, and throughout this passage, states the fact merely that the offense of Adam has led to our condemnation, without explaining the mode in which it has produced this result, it must be because language cannot express the idea.” (Hodge, Romans). As Haldane also says of verse 19: “Adam's disobedience is said not merely to be the occasion of leading his posterity into sin, but to have made them sinners. . .Mr. Stuart makes Adam's sin merely what he calls the instrumental or occasional cause. But with no propriety can Adam's sin be called an instrument by which his posterity sinned. . .an occasional cause is no cause. Every person knows the difference between a cause an an occasion. Besides, to suppose that Christ's own obedience is the real cause of our justification, and that Adam's sin be called the instrument by which his posterity sinned . . .an occasional cause is no cause. Every person knows the difference between a cause an an occasion. Besides, to suppose that Christ's own obedience is the real cause of our justification, and that Adam's sin be called the instrument by which his posterity sinned . . .an occasional cause is no cause.

72 Quote is from John Murray from his commentary on Romans, p193. Stott focuses on the contrasting nature of the actions; Murray on the degree of their glory; Moo on both. Hodge, Murray, and Moo all further point out that one major thrust of the “much more” of verses 15 and 17 has to do with the certainty of grace bestowed in Christ; we will discuss this later under Heading III, “The Truths Contained in Romans 5:15-17.”

73 From Haldane in his commentary on Romans, p214.
procures our justification from our own innumerable offenses.” In other words: Adam ushered in condemnation and death by one sin; but Christ has obtained justification and life despite countless sins.

Verse 17: The main contrast in verse 17 seems to be between the ultimate RESULT of the actions of the two covenant heads: the work of Adam resulted in the reigning of death; the work of Christ resulted in a reigning in life. The language here must be carefully noted; the contrast is not merely of the reigning of death and the reigning of life. In Adam, death reigned; but in Christ, it is not life that reigns, but we reign in life. “[Christ] delivers us from the rule of death so radically as to enable us to change places with it and rule over it. . .We become kings, sharing the kingship of Christ, with even death under our feet. . .”

| THE WORK OF ADAM AND THE WORK OF CHRIST CONTRASTED IN ROMANS 5:15-17 (CHART I) |
|---|---|
| **THE WORK OF ADAM** | **THE WORK OF CHRIST** |
| Its NATURE | A trespass that resulted in merited judgment (v15) | An act that resulted in unmerited righteousness (v15) |
| Its DEGREE | Far more inferior than that of Christ (v15a) | Far more superior than that of Adam (15a) |
| Its EFFECT | Condemnation for many (v16) | Justification for many (v16) |
| Its POWER | Brought condemnation & death by one sin (v16) | Brought justification & life despite countless sins |
| Its RESULT | The reigning of death (v17) | A reigning in life (v17) |

A second chart shows most of these contrasts from a slightly different angle:

| THE WORK OF ADAM AND THE WORK OF CHRIST CONTRASTED IN ROMANS 5:15-17 (CHART II) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **ITs NATURE** | **ITs OUTCOME** | **ITs EFFECT** | **ITs RESULT** |
| ADAM | A Transgression | Judgment of God | Condemnation | Death |
| CHRIST | An Act of Grace | Gift of Righteousness | Justification | Life |

3. The TRUTHS contained in Romans 5:15-17: What gospel truths do we learn in Romans 5:15-17?

As Paul draws out for us the contrasts between Adam and Christ, he also teaches us in these verses some precious truths about God's grace. As we meditate on verses 15-17, here's what we can see in particular:

A) These verses describe the NATURE of God's grace. When God condemned the world on account of Adam’s sin, He was operating according to justice. The wages of sin is death, both for Adam and all his posterity. So, condemnation is rooted in God's justice. But justification is rooted in God's grace—something that Paul mentions three times in verses 15-17. In Christ, God has dealt with us in a way that is utterly astonishing. It was out of sheer grace that God ever sent His Son in the first place. He wasn't obligated to do what He did; God didn't have to make a way of salvation for us. And what manner of grace. Again: Not coming merely to offer humanity a second chance at salvation, but coming to win it for us. Not coming just to make salvation possible again for sinners—but coming to make it certain.

74 Quote from Hodge on his commentary on Romans. Stott focuses on the effect of the two actions; Hodge and Murray on the power of their actions; Moo draws out both aspects.
75 Moo: “For the judicial verdict that resulted in condemnation was from one [transgression], but the gift that leads to justification came after many transgressions.” (p398). Murray: “Judgment... take[s] into account only one sin of one man and the whole race is condemned. But the free gift and justification take into account the many sins. . .of a great multitude (p196).
76 Quote from Stott from his commentary on Romans. Haldane put it this way in his commentary on Romans: “Believers are to be kings as well as priests. All this they are to be through the one Jesus Christ; for as they were one with Adam in his fall, so they are one with Christ in His victory and triumph.” (p215). Adding to this idea, Hodge also draws out from verse 17 insights concerning (again) the certainty of grace (as with verse 15), as well as the objects of grace, which we will also deal with below under Head III, “The Truths Contained in Romans 5:15-17.” (from his commentary on Romans).
77 The “act of grace” refers to the redemption accomplished through Christ's perfect life and atoning death.
78 The “gift of righteousness” refers to the redemption applied by the Spirit.
79 Murray notes in discussing verse 15 that Paul here moves “from the operation of judicial judgment to the bestowments of God's grace. . .The one sin of Adam is the judicial ground or reason for the death of the many. . .but the grace of God not only negates the operation of judgment but abounds unto the opposite, unto justification and life.” (Romans, pp192-93).
B) These verses highlight the CERTAINTY of God's grace. The “much more” of verses 15 and 17 isn't just meant to contrast the actions of Adam and Christ, but to strengthen the foundation of our assurance of salvation in Christ. This phrase “does not express a higher degree of efficacy, but of evidence or certainty. . .If the one event has happened, much more may we expect the other to occur.”  

If imputed sin is a certain reality, much more is imputed righteousness. If it's a certainty that all in Adam are condemned, it's much more of a certainty that all in Christ are justified. If it's certain that death reigns over all in and through Adam, then it's all the more certain that life reigns over all in and through Christ.

C) These verses demonstrate the MEDIATION of God's grace. Verse 17 also makes it really clear that our justification isn't just established on the basis of Christ's righteousness—it's also upheld through the mediation of Christ's righteousness: “For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” Our reigning in life isn't just grounded upon Jesus' righteousness; it's also perpetually upheld through the mediation of His righteousness. In other words, Jesus didn't just accomplish salvation for us—He continues to perpetually uphold that salvation. So, our victory in the Christian life isn't contingent on us at all; but on the perpetual mediation of the righteousness of Christ.

D) These verses define the RECIPIENTS of God's grace. Some people use verses 15-19 to defend universalism, teaching that just as Adam's sin brought condemnation to all (without distinction), so too Christ's righteousness brings justification to all (without distinction). But this view not only contradicts the teaching of Scripture in general; it also opposes the particularity of salvation taught in this very passage. In verse 17 Paul makes clear that it is not all men in general who are justified, but a particular group of people. It is only “those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness” that will reign in life through Jesus Christ. So, God's grace is a gift that must be received through faith in Christ.

ROMANS 5:18-19

18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

1. The CONTEXT of Romans 5:18-19:

Let's briefly review the context of verses 18-19 in relation to the whole passage of 5:12-21. The parallel between Adam and Christ that Paul had begun to make in verse 12 is finally brought to its full and intended completion here in verses 18-19. The truth that Paul draws out here in verses 18-19 is the same truth he had begun to declare in verse 12. The “just as” of verse 12 finally finds its corollary comparison in the “so then/even so” of verse 18. Paul had begun to talk about Adam's imputed sin in verse 12 and his design was to make a parallel comparison to Christ's imputed righteousness—to show that we are justified in Christ in exactly the same way that we were condemned in Adam. But before Paul can come to the second part of the comparison, he realizes that he has to clarify a few things. Before he can get to talking about imputed righteousness, he realizes he has to say a few more things about imputed sin.

First, he realizes that, just like today, there would be people in his day that would be skeptical about the doctrine of imputed sin. There would be people who didn't like it; people who wouldn't agree with it. So before he can say anything else, the first thing he does is take some time to prove the doctrine of imputed sin; and that's exactly what he does in verses 13-14. And he proves it by showing that: 1) all men suffer the judicial penalty of death; 2) which means that all men are guilty of violating a law; 3) but this law cannot be the Law of Moses, since multitudes died well before the Mosaic Law was ever given; 4) nor can...
this law be the moral law written on the hearts of all men, since infants die—who though corrupted with original sin—cannot be said to have committed any actual sins. So, it can't be because of actual sins that men are condemned and punished—either actual sins committed against the Law of Moses, or actual sins committed against the moral law. Rather, all of us stand guilty and condemned before God on account of the sin of Adam. As the covenant head and representative of all his posterity, his transgression has been counted as ours, his disobedience has been reckoned to you and I, his sin has been imputed to us.

Next, after proving the doctrine of imputed sin in verses 13-14, Paul feels that he must first contrast Adam and Christ before he can compare them. This he does in verses 15-17. Again, he wants to show us that we're justified in Christ in exactly the same way we were condemned in Adam. But before Paul can get to comparing Adam and Christ, he wants to show us that in a very real sense, they are infinitely incomparable: Adam brought God's judgment to men; Christ has brought God's righteousness to them. Adam brought condemnation; Christ has brought justification. Adam brought us death; Christ has brought us life. Adam plunged the whole world into condemnation and death through his one sin; but Christ has brought justification and life to the many even despite our own innumerable personal sins.

Now that Paul has given us ample proof for the doctrine of imputed sin (vv13-14), and has drawn out the infinite contrasts that exist between Adam and Christ (vv15-17), he's finally ready, here in verses 18-19, to complete the comparison he had begun back in verse 12: "[just] as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men." What is Paul telling us? We've been hinting at it for a while, now it's time to explain it.

2. The MEANING of Romans 5:18-19:

Throughout this passage, Paul has been relentless in his declaration of imputed sin. He actually refers to this doctrine of imputed sin no less than six times over the course of the passage:

Verse 12: “through one man sin entered into the world. . .and so death spread to all men,” . . .
Verse 13: “by the transgression of the one the many died,” . . .
Verse 16: “the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation,” . . .
Verse 17: “by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one,” . . .
Verse 18: “through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men,” . . .
Verse 19: “through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners” . . .

And now we can see that the whole purpose for Paul showing us so emphatically the reality of imputed sin in Adam is to help us see the parallel glories of imputed righteousness in Christ. You see, Paul had all kinds of opponents who were going around preaching a gospel of Jesus—plus salvation: Jesus plus circumcision, Jesus plus keeping the Law, Jesus plus something else you have to do; and what Paul is doing here is showing the world that the Scriptures teach a gospel of Jesus plus nothing. Salvation is by grace alone, and it's based on Jesus alone and has nothing to do with you at all. One preacher put it this way: “Look at yourself in Adam; though you had done nothing you were declared a sinner. Look at yourself in Christ; and see that though you have done nothing, you are declared to be righteous. That is the parallel.”

This is the very heart of the gospel. Just as you were condemned in Adam totally apart from what you did or didn't do—so too you are justified in Christ totally apart from what you do or don't do. Just as in Adam we were condemned solely because of what Adam had done, so now in Christ we stand justified solely because of what Christ has done. This is Paul is wanting to show us in verses 18.

And just in case we somehow missed Paul's point in verse 18, he reiterates it once again for us in verse 19. Though the language is different in verse 19, the structure and doctrine remain essentially the same.

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<tr>
<th>THE OBJECTS</th>
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<td>Just as all in Adam</td>
<td>have been condemned</td>
<td>on account of the transgression of Adam</td>
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<tr>
<td>So too, all in Christ</td>
<td>have been justified</td>
<td>on account of the righteousness of Christ</td>
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83 From Lloyd-Jones in V4.
Paul's Comparison in Verse 19

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<th>The Objects</th>
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<td>Just as the many [in Adam]</td>
<td>were made(^\text{64}) sinners</td>
<td>on account of the disobedience of Adam</td>
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<tr>
<td>So too, the many [in Christ]</td>
<td>will be made(^\text{65}) righteous</td>
<td>on account of the obedience of Christ</td>
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Romans 5:20-21

\(^{20}\)The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, \(^{21}\)so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. The Role of God's Law (5:20a): There's four things we need to mention here about the Law:

A) The Meaning of the Law: It may seem obvious to some, but it's important to note that the law that Paul is speaking about here is the Mosaic Law. There are some who maintain that Paul is referring not only to the Mosaic Law but to the moral law. But the moral law has been written on the heart of man since the dawn of creation. Paul is speaking exclusively about the Law of Moses—which did not enter into the world until a later time in redemptive history; hence Paul's words: “the law came in...” (v20).

B) The Reference to the Law: We might ask, why would Paul finish his discussion of the parallels between Adam and Christ with the Law? What in the world does the Law have to do with imputed sin in Adam and imputed righteousness in Christ? Well, that's actually a good question. A really important question. It was a question Paul wanted to ask his hearers. Because the context in which Paul lived and ministered was a Jewish context. He was always responding to the questions that came from the Jews. Throughout the book of Romans, Paul is constantly answering the objections that would inevitably come from the doctrines he was expounding. And it seems that this is exactly what he's doing here. As he finishes his discussion, he can imagine how contemporary Jews might object to what he just said. He knows that some of them would object to what he just said about our need for Christ by making the claim that God sent the Law in order to restore righteousness (see Galatians 3). And so Paul feels the need here to address a truth that is vitally important: just how is it that the Law relates to our salvation? And what Paul says is that the purpose of the Law was never to increase our righteousness—it was actually to increase our sin: “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase” (5:20). In other words, the Law was never meant to make us righteous—it was actually given to do the opposite: to show us just how sinful we really are. Paul wants his hearers to understand that the Law was never meant to be our Savior.

So, that's why Paul is bringing up the Law of Moses here at the end of this passage. Now, there's two things in particular that we need to mention here as we talk about Paul's reference to the Law:\(^\text{67}\)

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\(^{64}\) Since the verb behind the phrase “made sinners” and “made righteous” (kathistami) is literally “to appoint; constitute,” these phrases are better rendered “constituted to be sinners” or “constituted to be righteous,” as they are—just as in verse 18—referring to the forensic reality of imputed righteousness; that people are inaugurated into a state of sin/righteousness (see Jms.4:4; 2Pet.1:8 for same Greek verb). Hodge says: “It is not our personal righteousness which makes us righteous, but the imputation of the obedience of Christ. And the sense in which we are here declared to be sinners, is not that we are such personally (which indeed is true), but by the imputation of Adam’s disobedience.” Murray: “this involvement must be interpreted in forensic terms. Our involvement [in Adam's sin] cannot be that of personal voluntary transgression on our part. It can only be that of imputation, ... [and] The same principle of solidarity that appears in our relation to Adam, and by reason of which we are involved in his sin, obtains in our relation to Christ. ... just as the relation to Adam means the imputation upon us of his disobedience, so the relation to Christ means the imputation to us of his obedience.” (pp205-206). Moo: “Some argue that [the verb here] means nothing more than ‘make.’ But this translation misses the forensic flavor of the word. It often means ‘appoint,’ and probably refers here to the fact that people are ‘inaugurated into’ the state of sin/righteousness. ... This ‘making righteous’, ... must be interpreted in the light of Paul's typical forensic categories. To be 'righteous' does not mean to be morally upright, but to be judged acquitted, cleared of all charges, in the heavenly judgment.” (p345).

\(^{65}\) See previous footnote on the Greek verb kathistami.

\(^{66}\) See for instance Romans 3:1,3,5,8,31; 4:1; 6:1,15; 7:7,13; etc.

\(^{67}\) These two truths gratefully gleaned from Ligon Duncan’s course on Covenant Theology.
1) **FIRST**, Paul’s reference here to the Law is PARTIAL: This is not everything that Paul says about the Law. His mention here about the Law is not meant to be a comprehensive treatment on the nature and purposes of the Law. He says a lot more about the Law in a lot of other places in Scripture. So, don’t think that Paul is implying here, for instance, that the Law’s only purpose is to bring unbelievers to faith in Christ, but that it has no role in the life of a New Testament believer. Paul’s not saying that. He’s simply describing here for us one specific purpose of the Mosaic Law—namely, to drive sinners to Christ.

2) **SECOND**, Paul’s reference here to the Law is PROVOCATIVE: Paul’s statement here about the Law would have been incredibly offensive to the ears of many of his contemporary Jewish hearers. Why? Because ethnic Jews prided themselves on the fact that of all the nations on the earth, God had chosen them to be His people and had given them His Law. And Paul’s saying, look, the reason God gave you the Law wasn’t to vindicate your righteousness—it was to expose your sin; it wasn’t to show the world how wonderfully righteous you are—it was actually to show you how wretchedly messed up you are. What Paul says here is shocking. And he means it for it to be shocking. He wants to shock his hearers into life.

C) **The PURPOSE of the Law**: Again, the Law was never meant to be our Savior. It was meant to lead us to the Savior but it was never meant to be our Savior. It was never meant to restore Adam’s fallen, sinful race to God. The ten commandments were never meant to save us. But if the Law was never meant to save us, what was it meant to do? Paul tells us in Romans 5:20, “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase.” Now, biblical scholars and theologians will tell you that the “so that” of this clause is a “so that” of purpose or design. Paul’s saying here that the Law was given with a purpose—but that its purpose was actually to increase transgression—NOT to remove or lessen it. The purpose of the Law was not to remedy the disaster Adam created—it was actually to make it worse. The Law wasn’t meant to remove the judgment that came upon us through Adam’s sin—it was meant to increase it. The Law wasn’t given to save us, but to further condemn us. God gave us the Law to convict us of our sin and to show us just how sinful we really are, in order to drive us to Christ to find salvation in Him alone.

D) **The METHOD of the Law**: So again—we need to be absolutely clear on this—the Law is not our Savior and it was never meant to be. Rather, the Law was given in order to multiply and aggravate our sin, so that we would flee to Jesus, the Savior for sinners. But how exactly does the Law do this?[93]

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88 See Romans 7; Galatians 3:17-25; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11; and 1 Timothy 1:8-11. We’ll talk more about this later.
89 Ligon Duncan puts it in his course on Covenant Theology: “The law, coming along in the time of Moses, does not solve that problem that Adam plunged you into. The coming of the law with Moses was not God’s great solution to the Adamatic problem of sin, God’s great solution to the Adamatic problem of sin was Christ and grace.”
90 One question that arises here is: When Paul says, “so that the transgression would increase”, is he speaking of the one transgression of Adam, or transgressions in general? Ultimately, both these views seem to lead to the same conclusion. If we take the first position, that Paul is speaking of the transgression of Adam, and we ask: How can it be that the Law increased Adam’s transgression? The only reasonable answer is that the Law increased the continuing effects of Adam’s transgression; IE, it increased the many and various actual sins that would spring forth from Adam’s one transgression. Which means that the Law was given in order to make actual sins increase; which, is just another way of saying that the Law was given in order that transgressions in general would increase, which is, in fact, the second view. So, both views seem to express the same truth.
91 IE, Hodge on Romans 5:20; Murray, p208; Moo, p347.
92 Hodge puts it this way: “It was not intended to give life, but to prepare men to receive Christ as the only source of righteousness and salvation,” (from his commentary on Romans).
93 Along with emphasizing that the Law SHOWS us our sin as well as STIRs UP our sin (below), some also add to these two aspects an additional third notion; namely: The Law MULTIPLIES our Sin: When God, through His Law, begins to unfold for us what His perfect standard for mankind really is, we’re not just confronted with how sinful we really are—we’re also held accountable for what we’ve now come to know: As Murray says: “The more explicit the revelation of law the more heinous and aggravated are the violations of it.” Romans, p208. So, it’s not just that the Law increases our knowledge of sin—but that our sin is increased by the knowledge of the Law. As Hodge says (Romans): “the result of the introduction of the law the increase of sin. This result is to be attributed partly to the fact, that by enlarging the knowledge of the rule of duty, responsibility was proportionally increased [cf. 4:15], and partly to the consideration that the enmity of the heart is awakened by its operation, and transgressions actually multiplied [cf. 7:8].” It does seem important to stress that the increasing of the transgression must, at the least, mean more than (but not less than) the fact that the Law shows us our sin. Why? Moo says (647-48) that the corollary increasing grace later in verse 20 would seem to necessitate sin actually increasing; IE, if Paul is only saying that we apprehend our sin more and more, it seems then that the increasing grace would mean only that we apprehend grace more and more. And at the least, if the first clause means nothing
1) **FIRST**, the Law SHOWS us our sin: The Law shows us how sinful we really are. James likens the Law to a **mirror**—you look at it and see yourself—and its not a pretty picture! “The law [does] not put sin into the heart, but it [is] an instrument to display the depravity already existing in the heart.” The Law exposes our sin for what it really is—and in doing so it confronts us with just how sinful we really are.

I absolutely love how Martin Luther describes it: “As long as a person is not a murderer, adulterer, [or] thief, he would swear that he is righteous. How is God going to humble such a person except by the Law? The Law is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell, and the lightning of God’s wrath to bring down the proud. . .When the Law was instituted on Mount Sinai it was accompanied by lightning, by storms, by the sound of trumpets, to tear to pieces that monster called self-righteousness. . .The Gospel of the free forgiveness of sins through Christ will never appeal to the self-righteous. This monster of self-righteousness, this stiff-necked beast, needs a big axe. And that is what the Law is, a big axe.”

2) **SECOND**, the Law STIRS up our sin: This is the second way that the Law causes sin to increase (5:20), and thus drives men to Christ. Paul talks about this more in Romans 7:7-8: ‘Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, You shall not covet.’ ‘But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. Now, in the first verse (v7), Paul is referring to how the Law shows us our sin: “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law.” This is the Law acting like a mirror, exposing sin for what it really is. But in the second verse (v8), Paul is referring to how the Law actually stirs up our sin: “But sin. . .produced in me coveting of every kind.” Sin is being stirred up, it’s being provoked by the Law. The last clause, “for apart from the law sin is dead” doesn’t mean that sin is actually non-existent before the Law; but that sin is inactive and dormant before being confronted with the Law. In other words, sin is there—you just can’t detect it. But when a sinner is confronted with the law, sin is provoked and comes alive.

So, according to Scripture, the Law doesn’t just show us our sin—it stirs it up. **Think of your children.** The Law stirs up our sin in a similar way that our children do. Now, children are a good thing, they are a blessing; just like the Law. But what happens when you start having them? More and more of your sin begins to come to the surface! Before you had children, you never struggled with things like anger or impatience. But now you’re repenting of those things daily. What happened? Your sin and selfishness were there before, but they were dormant. Your sin of selfishness wasn’t being challenged, it wasn’t being provoked. It took children to draw it out, to provoke it, to stir it up. Caring for small children causes us to love in ways that are much more sacrificial than our flesh wants to. And so children—in themselves a good thing, a blessing—become a means of provoking our dormant, sleeping sins to new life. In a very real sense, God gives us children for the same reason He gave us the Law: to stir up our sin in order to show us our (continual) need for Christ. We could paraphrase it this way: Our children came in so that transgression would increase—but praise God—where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

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94 From Haldane in his commentary on Romans, p228. Note: the quote is in the past tense; I put it into the present tense. Another illustration might be light (cf. Proverbs 6:23): light doesn’t make your house dirty! Rather, it shows you that it’s dirty.

95 An interesting side-note here: Ligon Duncan points out in his course on Covenant Theology that the Greek word used in Galatians 3:24 to describe the Law as a “tutor to lead us to Christ,” (Gr. paideaggei) was a term used for the household slave who took the children to school: “he’s the one who led you to the one who was going to give you what you need. . .Paul is saying that the revelation of the law that God granted to us especially in the days of Moses was designed to show us our sin, not to be the instrument of salvation. It’s not our Savior; but if properly understood, it leads us to our Savior.”

96 From his commentary on Galatians.

97 What Luther says here about the Law fits perfectly (and humorously) with our analogy of children: “Before that he was a very holy man; he worshipped and praised God; he bowed his knees before God and gave thanks, like the Pharisee.” But now it is very different!! (quote from commentary on Galatians). The analogy isn't perfect, but I believe it's fair. It might be objected that the Law stirs up sin because it obligates us to obey new requirements, but we can also say the same of children, for now we are obligated to perform duties that were never before required of us. We must note here also that as it relates to both God's Law and our children, this is not by any means the only purpose. We mentioned earlier that this is just one purpose God has for the Law—it's by no means the only purpose. And the same is true for our children: I am by no means...
2. THE WONDER OF GOD'S GRACE (5:20b-21):

Paul had just told us in the first clause of Romans 5:20 (v20a) that the reason God gave the Law was to increase transgression by both showing us our sin and stirring up our sin. But, praise God, this isn't the end of the story. In the rest of the passage (vv20b-21), which completes the entire section of verses 12-21, Paul is going to show us that even though transgression increased through the coming of the Law, grace increased all the more. Paul wants us to see that even though sin has abounded through the coming of the Law, grace has super-abounded through the coming of Christ. This last portion of Scripture contained in vv20b-21 can be broken down into five distinct points; we'll take them one by one:

A) The REALITY of God's super-abounding grace: “Grace abounded all the more. . .” (v20b)

B) The PURPOSE of God's super-abounding grace: “. . .so that grace would reign. . .” (v21)


D) The RESULT of God's super-abounding grace: “. . .unto eternal life. . .” (v21)

E) The BASIS of God's super-abounding grace: “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v21)

A) The REALITY of abounding grace: “GRACE ABOUNDED. . .”

We read in Romans 5:20, “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. . .” God's reaction to abounding sin was super-abounding grace. Now, this was true historically, with Israel. The Law came in; and showed them just how perfect God's standard for righteousness really is, and they were confronted with just how far they fell short. If they were a proud people before, who looked down on others, God's Law humbled them to the core. But even where their sin was multiplied and aggravated the most; and even where God's Law confronted them with the worst of their hypocrisy, idolatry, and self-centeredness—even there grace abounded all the more. Even in the depths of the very worst of their sin, God's grace was more than sufficient for them.

And this wasn't just true historically for Israel, it's still just as true for us today. And not just at conversion—but every day in the Christian life. The Law continues (doesn't it?) to confront us, even now as Christians, with the fact that we're much worse off than we'd like to admit. What do you do, when God takes you through seasons in your life when you just feel utterly wretched? When you just feel like a big pile of sin? What do you do on those days where you feel like instead of pushing ahead in holiness, all you seem to be doing is falling back into sin? You go to this verse, that's what you do. It doesn't say: “but where sin decreased, grace abounded all the more.” That's what we tend to think: grace abounds to the degree that we're doing well in the Christian life. But no; it says: “where sin increased.” In other words, grace doesn't just abound on the days when we feel like we're doing great in the Christian life; where sin is decreasing. Now, God doesn't want us to sin. But what this text is teaching us is that grace abounds even where sin is increasing even in those places or seasons of our life when we're most overcome by our sin. “Where sin increased”—the very place where sin is at its worst—it is precisely there that grace abounds.

B) The PURPOSE of abounding grace: Grace abounded “SO THAT GRACE WOULD REIGN. . .”

We read in Romans 5:20-21, “. . .but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life. . .” Back in verses 14 and 17, Paul had told us that “death reigned” through Adam. Death had completely dominated us. This saying that this is the only reason that God gives us children! But, in my experience at least, it is truly one of His purposes.

98 Literally, “super-abounded.”

99 Moo puts it this way: “the law's negative purpose in radicalizing the power of sin has been more than fully met by the provisions of God's grace.” (from his commentary on Romans).

100 A fitting illustration of all this might be how Elijah poured out buckets of water on the altar in order to demonstrate and put on display all the more the awesome power of God (1 Kings 18). God's grace is not so limited that it can only exist where there is only a little sin—the power of His grace is so great that it reigns even in the midst of the worst of our sin: Murray says: “The apostle construes the multiplying of trespass which the giving of the law promoted as magnifying and demonstrating the superabounding riches of divine grace. The more transgression is multiplied and aggravated the greater is the grace that conquers it. . .The reign of sin is trumped by the triumph of grace. Grace meets sin head on, and it defeats it.”
is one of the things the genealogy of Genesis 5 is meant to show us. Even as Moses traces the godly line of Seth, he has to keep writing, “and he died... and he died.” In verses 14 and 17 it was death that reigned; Paul’s focus there was the result of imputed sin: Death dominates us. But here in Romans 5:21, Paul changes the focus. Here Paul says that sin reigned in death. Paul’s focus here is the power of imputed sin: Sin dominates us. In Adam, sin always defeats you, sin always triumphs over you, sin always owns you, sin always reigns over you. In Adam, sin completely and utterly dominates you.

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But now, in Christ, grace has abounded all the more, “so that... grace would reign.” Now, this is important. Notice, it doesn’t say, “so that WE would reign,” but rather: “so that GRACE would reign.” It’s not WE who reign—it’s GRACE that reigns. It’s not saying that sin used to defeat us, but now WE defeat our sin. It’s not saying that WE now triumph over our sin—it’s saying that GRACE now triumphs over our sin. Which is a really good thing, because, if we’re honest, there’s lots of times we still feel pretty defeated by our sin (right?). But that doesn’t matter, because our conquering isn’t dependent on us. Even when we feel defeated by our sin, we still overwhelmingly triumph, because it’s GRACE that reigns.

Sin had dominated us in Adam. But Paul tells us that grace abounded all the more, “so that... grace would reign.” Paul’s saying: grace abounded so that grace would reign. And how would it reign? “Grace abounded...so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign.” We’ve spent a lot of time in this lesson looking at the “just as...even so” parallel in verses 12 and 18-19. Well, here in this last verse, there’s another “just as, even so”: Grace abounded, “so that, [just] as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign...to eternal life.” In other words, in Christ, grace now reigns in the same way that sin used to reign in Adam. Well, how was it that Adam’s sin reigned in death? It reigned every time. Adam’s sin always produced death. It always dominated; it always reigned. Well, that’s the way that grace reigns now: In Adam, you were always defeated by sin; but now in Christ, sin is always defeated by God’s grace. Sin had always reigned in Adam. But now it’s grace that always reigns. Sin had dominated you in Adam every time; but now it’s grace that always dominates in Christ. Simply put, grace abounded so that we wouldn’t have to be a people defeated by sin anymore. Grace abounded in order that we would no longer be a people overwhelmingly conquered by sin, but now a people who overwhelmingly conquer by and because of grace. Grace abounded, “so that grace would reign...through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

C) The SOURCE of abounding grace: Grace abounded “so that grace would reign THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS...”

Paul goes on: “grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness.” The righteousness Paul is talking about here is the same righteousness he had called “the gift of righteousness” in verse 17 of our passage, and the same righteousness he’s been speaking about throughout the book of Romans (see 1:17; 3:21-22; 10:3). It’s not the righteousness that God requires of us, but the righteousness that He has provided for us. It is God’s very own righteousness, the “righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Philippians 3:9).

This clause reminds us what the power of grace hinges upon. It’s wonderful news that grace reigns. But again, if this reignying grace depends in any way upon us, it’s no good news at all. If grace reigns only as we follow Jesus with perfect obedience—if grace reigns only when we’re doing great spiritually—then there’s no hope for us at all. But what Paul’s telling us here is that grace is rooted—not in our own righteousness—but in the righteousness of Christ. Just as Adam’s sin mediated the curse to us, so now it’s Christ’s righteousness that mediates the blessing. Grace isn’t based upon our subjective righteousness, but the eternal, unchanging righteousness of Jesus Christ—the same yesterday, today, and forever. Grace is...

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101 Paul is not talking about feeling defeated by sin—he’s talking about actually being defeated by sin. Paul’s not dealing with our subjective feelings—he’s dealing with objective realities. This is vital. While still in our sins, we may not necessarily have felt defeated, but we were. So too, we may not always feel that we’re more than conquerors in Christ, but the reality is, we are.

102 And Paul wasn’t the first one to talk about it. Isaiah spoke of it hundreds of years before, often equating it to the Lord’s salvation (Isaiah 45:8; 46:12-13; 51:5-8; 56:1; 59:16-17; 63:1). The Psalms are also full of the language of God’s righteousness.
founded upon a righteousness that never wanes (Isaiah 51:6) and endures forever (Isaiah 51:8); a righteousness that is not only perfectly complete but completely unchangeable: Grace hinges upon the righteousness of our Savior: As Jeremiah 33:16 says, “In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the Lord is our righteousness.”

D) The RESULT of abounding grace: Grace abounded “so that grace would reign through righteousness unto eternal life... .”

Eternal life is the outcome of the reign of grace. And it’s not just one possible outcome among many. It’s the only possible outcome for all who are in Christ. Grace won’t just reign for a short season, or up to a certain point—grace will reign “unto eternal life.” For sinners who trust in Christ, eternal life isn’t just a good possibility; it is an absolute certainty. In Christ, you and I have a standing infinitely more secure than Adam had before the fall. Jesus didn’t just bring us back to the glory we had in the garden of Eden. He did so much more. He didn’t just give us a second chance at salvation through the cross; He won it for us. He didn’t come just to make salvation possible again; He came to make it certain.

It might be asked here that if through Adam the many were sentenced to physical death as well as eternal death, then why is it not the case that believers in Christ—though delivered from eternal death—are still liable to physical death? If what Adam did brought physical death as well as eternal death into the world, should it not be the case that what Christ did would grant physical life as well as eternal life? Why is it then that believers still die physically? Paul is going to answer this question later, in Romans 8:10-11. In short, God will “give life to [our] mortal bodies,” — but not until the resurrection. When Paul describes Christ's resurrection as the “first fruits” of those who have died in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:20ff), he’s saying that Christ’s bodily resurrection is the guarantee of our bodily resurrection. As believers, we’ll still have to pass through the reality of physical death, but praise God, the sting of death has been taken away.

A story is told of a pastor who was driving his car on the way to perform a funeral service; thinking through what he was going to say. As he’s driving, out of nowhere—bam—he feels a shot of pain shoot up his leg, and he realizes that there’s an unhappy bee flying around in his car. He looks down at his leg and sure enough, there’s a big welt, with the stinger still stuck in the skin; and the bee is still in the car, buzzing all around like it’s going to sting him again. He starts to get flustered, but all of a sudden he realizes—the bees stinger is gone. It can make all this noise and keep buzzing around, but it can’t hurt me—the sting is gone. And this is exactly what’s true for believers. Christ took the sting of death in our place. We’ll have to face death one day, but praise be to God, in Christ the sting of death is gone: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sting, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

E) The BASIS of abounding grace: Grace abounded “so that grace would reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This is it. This is the end of the passage, and the end of this section of Scripture, Romans 5:12-21. Paul closes it all with these words. Grace abounded, he says, “so that grace would reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It’s all because of Jesus. He did it all.

You all know the story of David and Goliath. I don’t know how you’ve heard it preached before. Maybe you’ve heard preachers tell you that you need to be brave like David and defeat the Goliath’s in your life. Maybe you yourself have preached messages like that from this story. But let me suggest to you what I think this narrative is really about: the story of David and Goliath is the story of Jesus and the gospel.

God’s people were helpless and hopeless before their enemy. Goliath owned them. But just when it seemed there was no hope, something happened. A father sent his son to his own kinsmen, to seek their welfare. Some of his own kinsmen were jealous of him, scolded him, and hated him for his words. But he delivered them from the hand of the strong enemy. David single-handedly ran to the battle line; this

103 Hodge puts it this way: “As the triumph of sin over our race was through the offense of Adam, so the triumph of grace is through the righteousness of Christ.” (from his commentary on Romans).

104 Illustration taken from Phil Smuland, Romans 5:12-19 (a sermon), Covenant PCA, Harrisonburg, VA.
was a battle he would fight alone. David alone conquered the enemy, but when he did, it meant victory for all God's people. His victory was their victory. Does this sound familiar? This is the story of the gospel: “Jesus is the ultimate champion, our true champion, who did not merely risk his life for us, but who gave it. And now his victory is our victory, and all he has accomplished is imputed to us.”

VII. A Final Word of Application from Romans 5:12-21

Don't we so often live like we're under the Covenant of Works instead of the Covenant of Grace? Don't we so often live as though our relationship with God was based on what we do or don't do? On how good we're living the Christian life? Don't we so often live as though our acceptance with God was based on our day-to-day obedience? Don't we so often live as though there was no Covenant of Grace?

But what does God's Word say? What this whole passage has been telling us, is that the entire human race was condemned in Adam. And the condemnation that came upon all humanity wasn't contingent upon the actions of anyone but Adam. The condemnation that came upon all men was based solely, exclusively, entirely—upon the action of one man, Adam. That's what Paul is saying. You could be in Adam and have a million actual sins that you committed personally, or you could be in Adam and have zero sins that you committed personally (that's Paul's whole point in 5:12-14) and you would be equally condemned. The condemnation isn't based on you at all. And you know what? The same is true for you, Christian, in Jesus. Your justification isn't based on you at all. In Adam all are condemned solely because of what Adam did. But now, in Christ, all are justified solely because of what Christ has done. We were condemned for a sin that wasn't our own—and we're justified for a righteousness that isn't our own. This is the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ. It's the sweetest thing in the world.

There's a true story of a very rich man who married later in life and had just one son. Shortly after his marriage, his wife fell sick and died. His son also died within just a few years of his wife's death. Finally, the rich man himself died, literally from a broken heart, according to historians. There was an auction to sell off his entire estate; and a lot of people came to bid on his property and belongings. The auctioneer began by reading a clause in the will of the deceased, that the first thing to be sold would be a particular painting of this man's son. There wasn't anything necessarily special about the painting; so no one was really interested. But one of themaids of the rich man, who had known his son, and known her master's love for his son and all the grief he had gone through, bid what she could on the painting. No one outbid her; so she won the painting. The auctioneer then came up to the platform again. He banged his gavel and announced to everyone's surprise that the auction was now closed. He then began to read the rest of the will. As it turned out, the rich man had written in his will that the person who bought the painting of his son would also be given the entirety of his estate. Whoever gets the son, gets the fortune.

And, my dear friends, if you belong to Jesus Christ, this is exactly what is true for you. Whoever gets the Son, gets the fortune: “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

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103 Quote from Tim Keller, *Center Church*, pp78-79. There’s another striking illustration of all that we have been talking about in Joshua 3 and 4. These chapters describe for us how Joshua and all Israel crossed over the Jordan River in order to enter into the land of promise, the land of Canaan. All God’s people were standing on the eastern banks of the Jordan, and the Jordan stood in the way between God’s people and the promised land. Jordan means “flowing downward,” and the Jordan River flowed downward to the south, all the way to the Dead Sea—which is called the Dead Sea not only because of what Adam did. But now, in Christ, all are justified solely because of what Christ has done. We were condemned for a sin that wasn't our own—and we're justified for a righteousness that isn't our own. This is the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ. It's the sweetest thing in the world.

106 Richard Lovelace puts it this way: “We all automatically gravitate toward the assumption that we are justified by our level of sanctification, and when this posture is adopted it inevitably focuses our attention not on Christ but on the adequacy of our own obedience. We start each day with our personal security resting not on the accepting love of God and the sacrifice of Christ but on our present feelings or recent achievements in the Christian life…” (*The Dynamics of Spiritual Life*).

107 This illustration was gratefully gleaned from Phil Smuland in his sermon on Romans 5:12-19 at Covenant Presbyterian (PCA), in Harrisonburg, VA: (https://www.cov-pres.org/resources/teachings/1999). I’ve profited immensely from his teaching.
The Covenant with
Noah
The Noahic Covenant

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The Noahic Covenant

I. The Background of the Noahic Covenant

1. The BIG PICTURE of Genesis 1-9:

It's good to remember that there were two absolutely cataclysmic changes that took place on the earth in the early chapters of Genesis: the fall of Adam; and the flood during the time of Noah.

A) The FALL: Before the fall, mankind was sinless and creation was untouched by the effects of sin. But when Adam fell, it wasn't just mankind that was cursed, but the earth itself (Genesis 3:17; 5:29).

B) The FLOOD: This was the second cataclysmic change. After the fall of man, the earth became cursed. But the flood that came upon the world also resulted in catastrophic effects on the earth.

2. The TRANSITION PERIOD of Genesis 3-5:

A) The Emergence of Two Lines:

One of the things we learned from Genesis 3:15 was that the Lord was going to put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, that is, between the children of God and the children of the Devil; between those who would trust in the coming Messiah and those who wouldn't. In Genesis 4-5 we begin to see the fulfillment of these words. We begin to discern who are the seed of the serpent and who are the seed of God, and we begin to see the hostility between them that the Lord had spoken of. In Genesis 4, Cain shows himself to be of the seed of the serpent, and in the murder of his innocent brother Abel, we are pointed back to the enmity the Lord had spoken of in Genesis 3:15. After the death of Abel, Eve gives birth to Seth (4:25).

1 As Abraham Kuyper puts it: “We leave the researchers of nature’s phenomena to their own speculations and calculations, although we admire their perseverance and the ingenuity wherewith they pursue their investigations, extending as far as the earth’s core. The only thing of interest for our subject is that the factual condition of our earth corresponds to what Holy Scripture tells us, namely, that our earth is no longer what it was originally, but that colossal cataclysms took place on the earth’s surface. Scripture records two such upheavals. In the first place, the original condition of the earth was changed immediately after the fall. Second, that condition underwent a colossal change through the flood. . .We simply cannot make a comparison with the earth before and after the curse. The world as God had originally created it at one time had perished under the curse, and an entirely different, sorrowful, and somber form of this same earth had now appeared. . .In that world thus ruptured and disheveled lived the race that had reproduced from Adam until Noah. . .But then followed a second powerful upheaval, one that in a violent manner again tore and fractured the earth that existed. This catastrophe wholly changed the earth’s appearance, and it was upon that earth’s surface, crushed and rearranged for a second time, that the current development of our race began after the flood.” (Common Grace, Volume 1; Chapter 2, Sections 4-5). Kuyper goes on to declare: “Whereas this earth became what it now is through those two upheavals, Holy Scripture testifies to us both times concerning something about which the natural scientists know nothing, namely this, that both the first and the second upheaval were effected by the wrath of God against the sin of our human race. Once more for a third time, so this same Holy Scripture testifies, such a tremendous upheaval is awaiting us, one that will surpass both of those previous ones in terror, when ‘the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved’ (2Pet. 3:10).” (Chapter 2:5).

2 Kuyper again says of the flood: “The traditions of the ancient peoples tell us little more than the recollection of an awesome event. And what the investigation of this earth, of its surface, of its mountains and its core have taught us thus far indicates that colossal changes have taken place, but it still lacks the graphic detail and exactitude of history. Meanwhile, this much is certain, that even if Holy Scripture had been silent about the flood, and even if the traditions of the peoples had contained no recollection of an event like this, simply observing the earth in its mountainous regions, and exploring the earth’s surface in almost every country, would provide us the certainty that a massive cataclysm had taken place on this earth, one that altered the entire form of the earth and completely altered even its climatic patterns.” (Common Grace, Volume 1, Chapter 2:3).

3 We could mention a little more about Cain and Abel here. One question: why did the Lord accept Abel’s sacrifice but not Cain’s? The reason doesn’t seem to relate to the offering itself, whether it was on account of the type of offering (animals over produce) or on account of the quality of the offering (firstlings of the flock over normal produce). After all, if Abel was accepted before God on account of the purity of his offering, the corollary truth is that we are accepted by God as Christians on account of the purity of our devotion—something we would never want to affirm. It seems that the reason for God’s acceptance of Abel’s offering and His rejection of Cain’s offering didn’t primarily have to do with the offering—but with the
After the account of Cain and Abel, we begin to see the emergence of two distinct family lines through the genealogies recorded in Genesis 4-5: the line of Cain (4:16-24), and the line of Seth (5:1-32). We also begin to understand that these two family lines represent two very different responses to the Lord. The physical seed represents spiritual seed. Those of the line of Cain show themselves to be the offspring of the serpent, children of the devil; those of the line of Seth show themselves to be the offspring of the woman, true children of God. So, again, we see:

I) The UNGODLY Line: Cain and his offspring (Genesis 4:16-24)

The outcome of CAIN’s line: Seven generations from Adam is LAMECH, the epitome of rebellion; a man totally hardened in heart towards marriage, life, and God (4:23-24).

II) The GODLY Line: Seth and his offspring (Genesis 5:1-32)

The outcome of SETH’s line: Seven generations from Adam came ENOCH (“dedicated”), a godly man who was taken home to the Lord (5:21-24).

III) The Biblical STORY Line:

By the way, these two family lines representing two responses to the Lord don’t stop with Lamech or Enoch. We see this reality continue to be played out throughout Genesis, and really, throughout the whole of the Scriptures. Noah, you remember, had three sons; one of them—Ham—showed himself to be of the seed of the serpent, while Shem inherits the blessing as a child of God. Abraham would later come from the line of Shem, and his sons Isaac and Ishmael would typify the same realities; Ishmael is called a child of the flesh, he persecutes Isaac, and he is cast out (Galatians 4:29); but Isaac is called the child of promise, and proves to be of the seed of God. Isaac likewise had two sons, Jacob and Esau; Esau is not a child of God; he doesn't know God, he doesn't love God; but Jacob shows himself to be of the seed of the woman; a true child of God. Many years later, Jesus would also use this same language when He told the Jews, “You are of your father the devil,” (John 8:44).

B) The Effects of Sin and the Grace of God (Genesis 5:1-32):

In the midst of these two distinct lines running through Genesis 3-5, we are also constantly confronted with two pervasive realities: SIN and GRACE. In particular, we see:

I) The EFFECTS of SIN: In studying the godly line of Seth in Genesis 5 we are confronted with the devastating effects of sin. Throughout Genesis 5, we read over and over and over again, “...and he died.” And remember—Genesis 5 was the godly line—these were believers. What we see here is that even the godly continue to be affected by the curse that came through Adam's sin. They're not exempt from the temporal effects of sin in this life (and neither are we).

II) The GRACE of GOD: We see God's grace, first, in preserving the line of Seth. Later, we'll talk more in depth about how God's covenant promises extend not only to believers, but also to their children. Well, that's exactly what we see in Genesis 5: God is preserving the line of this covenant family for generations. Enoch was a man who walked with God (5:21-24). And Noah's father, Lamech, named his son what he did through faith in the promise that God had given to Adam and Eve (5:29). So, we see that God deals with entire families in the covenant—not just with individuals. God has made promises, not just to us, but to our entire covenant line after us.

offerer: “the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.” (Genesis 4:4-5). Abel's offerings were accepted because Abel himself had entered into the favor of God through faith in Christ. Cain, on the other hand, was evidently living in enmity with God, refusing the offer of free grace and the necessity of the new birth. It's noteworthy though, that Cain was religious—religious enough to believe in God and present offerings to Him. But his religion couldn't save him. The world says: “Worship God whatever way you choose.” But God says something very different indeed. When Cain “went out from the presence of the Lord” (Genesis 4:16) and headed east, he left behind his covenant family, which also functioned as the first church on earth. The emphasis isn't that Cain now simply lived in a different location; the point is that Cain has now left the believing community to forge his own path in the world apart from God (cf. 1 John 2:19).
We also see God displaying His grace in another way. In Genesis 4:26 we read, “Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord.” This took place during the days of Enosh the son of Seth (4:26). Evidently, God began to pour out His Spirit in remarkable ways during the days of Enosh. Jonathan Edwards takes this to be a description of the first recorded revival in the history of the world—an outpouring of the Spirit that drew multitudes to faith in the coming Messiah.5

3. The IMMEDIATE CONTEXT of Genesis 5-6:

A) The Lineage of Noah and the Preface to the Flood (Genesis 5):

It's good to remember that even though Genesis 5 is a short chapter, it covers the span of over 1,500 years. Let that sink in a bit. It's easy to think of Noah coming right after Adam, but even if we assume there are no gaps in the Genesis 5 genealogy, the flood came 1,636 years after God had created Adam. So, Genesis 5 is a short chapter in our Bible but covers a great deal of time.

I) METHUSELAH (5:25): Yes, he was the oldest man recorded in Scripture, living 969 years; but there is more here. His name means, “When he is dead it shall be sent.” And when does he die? Add 187 (5:25) + 182 (5:28) + 600 (age of Noah at the flood; 7:6) = 969. Pretty amazing!7

II) LAMECH (5:28): “Overthrower,” probably an allusion to Genesis 3:15 and the promise of the Coming One who would overthrow the work of the serpent. It’s also pretty amazing to note that Lamech was 56 years old when Adam died. Adam died 126 years before Noah was born.

III) NOAH (5:29): “Rest.” Noah’s name reflects the Sabbath rest that God would give His people in salvation. Noah himself would be a picture of that rest in several ways, as we'll see.8

B) The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men (Genesis 6:1-4):

Bible interpreters have been baffled by Genesis 6:1-2. What in the world are these verses talking about? Who are the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” described in this passage?9

I) UNLIKELY Interpretations:

a) Fallen angels who had sexual relations with women. Some take this position because the language of “sons of God” is used in the Old Testament to refer solely to angels (Job 1:6).10

b) Tyrannical kings who kept large harems. Others take this position, largely because civil magistrates are sometimes called elohim (“gods”) in the Old Testament (Psalm 82:6).11

5 Edwards traces this theme through much of the Old Testament, particularly through the historical books. He wrote of Genesis 4:26: “[It] was the first remarkable pouring out of the Spirit of God that ever was. There had been a saving work of God on the hearts of some before; but now God was pleased to bring in a harvest of souls to Christ” (History of Redemption).

6 It’s not completely certain whether there are generational gaps in the genealogy or not. John Collins notes that the genealogy of Moses in Exodus 12:40-41 was most certainly shortened, and our Savior’s genealogy was definitely shortened in Matthew 1:8. It’s possible there are no gaps in the genealogy but it’s just hard to know for certain either way.

7 Thomas Goodwin points this out in his study of the Noahic Covenant: “Look as God inspired his great prophet Enoch, to give his son Methuselah a name that foretold the flood, and the year of the coming of it, being by interpretation, be dieth, the emission, or dart cometh, meaning the flood. Enoch, being a prophet, foretells this his son should die, and then the flood should be emitted; and therefore our days, as Methuselah’s were, are appointed and set….” (Works, V9, p46).

8 Again, as Goodwin puts it: “…in like manner God inspired Noah’s father with a name, which foretold the restoring of the earth from that curse, even from Adam, all along due to it, from the flood; and for the giving both the earth, and a new world of inhabitants, rest in it again, by that Noah, who was then born unto him; thus Genesis 5:29.” (Works, V9, p46).

9 Information for this section gleaned from Ligon Duncan Covenant Theology course.

10 Those who hold this view also appeal to passages such as 2 Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7. But there are several arguments against it: First, there is no other reference to angels in this context (of Genesis 1-6). Secondly, the language “take wives” (v2) is the standard OT expression for marriage. Third, Jesus said that the angels do not marry (Matt.22:30; Mk.12:25; Lk.20:34-35). Fourth, the Jude passage is talking about fornication and not marriage, but this passage is clearly talking about marriage.

11 These magistrates are called “gods” in the sense that they were to reflect God’s image in their ruling. Against this interpretation, we would ask: first, how would this relate to the context—why would Moses all of a sudden insert this into Genesis 6? Secondly, why would you express kingship so cryptically in this passage? IE, Why not just say “kings”?
II) LIKELY Interpretation:

c) The believing line of Seth intermingling in marriage with the unbelieving line of Cain:
There are three main arguments for this view: First, the concept of a godly line and of an ungodly line has been established in the immediate context of Genesis 4-5. The line of Seth and the line of Cain are deliberately traced. Secondly, the concept of sonship based on divine election is an important Old Testament theme. Scripture calls believers the children of God (1 John 3:1); God is our Father. So when the language “sons of God” is used, it refers to those who are a part of the line of promise—the seed of the woman. Third, there are warnings about marriages between believers and unbelievers throughout the Pentateuch and the Old Testament Scriptures in general. So it makes sense why Moses would include this in the Genesis account: it’s not just a piece of random information—he’s giving us a warning.

II. An Overview of the Noahic Covenant

*The covenant with Noah is the first manifestation of the Covenant of Grace after the gospel promise God had given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15. To review, here’s where we are in redemptive history:

I. The Covenant of Works with Adam

II. The Genesis 3:15 promise of a Redeemer:

A) The Noahic Covenant
B) The Abrahamic Covenant
C) The Mosaic Covenant
D) The Davidic Covenant
E) The New Covenant

*The first usage of “covenant” in the Bible is found here in God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 6:18). Yet that very usage implies the continuation of a previous covenant. The Hebrew phrase “to cut a covenant” is often used to describe the initiating of a covenant for the first time, but the phrase here in Genesis 6:18 implies the confirming or continuing of a previous covenant. Thus, it seems that God is confirming to Noah the same promise of redemption He had given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15.

*The first usage of the word “grace” is also found here in the context of God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 6:8). Later, we’ll talk more in detail about what implications this has for understanding who Noah was and why God chose to save him. But for now, we can simply note the fact that God chose to use the word “grace” for the very first time in Scripture in connection with His covenant with Noah. And what this teaches us is that God's grace is intimately bound together with His covenant. In particular, God's covenant with fallen man is rooted in grace—and His grace is administered through His covenant.

*There are actually two manifestations of God's covenant that take place over the course of Genesis 6-9. The Lord first establishes His covenant with Noah (and only Noah) before the flood in Genesis 6:18, then after the flood in Genesis 9 He confirms His covenant—not just to Noah—but also to his sons, and indeed, to everything that comes out of the ark. We'll talk about the significance of the animals later.

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12 Esau's marriage in Genesis 26; the actions of Jacob's sons in Genesis 34; the warning of Solomon, etc etc.
13 In that this was, it seems, the major event that led to the wide-scale corruption that had filled the earth by the time of Noah.
14 Insight gleaned from Ligon Duncan, Covenant Theology.
15 As Thomas Goodwin observes: “It is greatly observable, that in the sacred story Noah was the first of the sons of men unto whom God ever spoke of a covenant. There was promise indeed of Christ, the woman's seed, uttered before, which all the patriarchs before the flood lived upon; but under the title of a covenant never no mention, no, nor of the word grace till now. Noah had the first honor of both these expressions, grace and covenant.” (Goodwin, Works, V9, p45). And as Cammenga puts it: “it is in connection with the revelation of God's covenant with Noah that for the first time the word 'grace' appears on the pages of Holy Scripture. Genesis 6:8, 'But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.' Striking it is that the first use of the term 'covenant' occurs in conjunction with the first use of the term 'grace.' . . . it is in connection with God's establishment of the covenant with Noah that Scripture for the first time makes explicit mention of God's grace.” (Cammenga, Cosmic Grace).
16 The Noahic Covenant is one and the same covenant, that is first established with Noah alone, then afterwards confirmed to everything that comes out of the ark. Thomas Goodwin understands the two manifestations of the Noahic Covenant as fitting
As we study through the Noahic Covenant, it will become especially important for us to see both the temporal and eternal components of the covenant. God makes temporal promises to Noah and his seed: He promises Noah deliverance from the flood, and afterwards, He promises to never destroy the earth again with a flood. These are temporal promises that God makes. But behind them are eternal realities—things that God wants to teach us about Himself and about the gospel; about the Covenant of Grace. Ultimately, God’s covenant with Noah is in the Scriptures to illustrate and teach us about salvation. It’s understanding this principle that will help to keep us away from the error we’ll be examining below.

III. Addressing the Debate about the Noahic Covenant

1. AN INTRODUCTION TO KUYPER’S VIEW: Before we really get into studying this covenant with Noah, we need to spend a little time learning about and responding to a view that actually denies that God’s Covenant here with Noah was one of the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. Indeed, the proponents of this view see God’s covenant with Noah as something actually quite different.

2. A SUMMARY OF KUYPER’S VIEW: Abraham Kuyper is the best known proponent of the view that the covenant with Noah doesn’t belong to the Covenant of Grace. Kuyper was, among many other things, a Dutch Reformed theologian. And he wrote many things, among which was a massive 3-volume discourse on the doctrine of common grace. Significantly, he actually began this treatise by writing around one hundred pages on God’s covenant with Noah in Genesis 9. Kuyper believed that God’s covenant with Noah did not belong to the Covenant of Grace, but was something entirely different. For Kuyper, God’s covenant with Noah in Genesis 9 doesn’t teach us about redeeming grace—rather, it teaches us about common grace. For him, the covenant with Noah doesn’t consist of gospel promises...

together in this way: “[The Lord] had established two covenants with Noah, both before and after them waters; whereas the first prefurigured some eminent pieces of the covenant of grace; the other signified other particulars thereof, and in a special manner the stability of it; and therefore it was they were two in a figure, because no one figure is sufficient to signify the whole; and therefore God revealed it at those sundry times, by parts, but yet so as in their tendency both served to be figures of that covenant; for so the covenant of grace is, which is but one, and is therefore styled in the singular, the covenant of his peace, but typified forth by those two of Noah’s, which in that respect do coalesce in one.” (Works, V9, pp57). Again, he says: “there being two covenants made with Noah about his waters (as they are called), differing in this, that the first was with promise to save him in the waters which were inevitably decreed to come upon the world for their destruction; the other only to secure him, that they should not any more return to drown him and the earth. . .Noah’s two covenants were both of them for his salvation from the waters, but with this difference: the first was with this promise, to save him from those present waters that did drown the rest of the earth; the second, to preserve him, and the earth for his sake, from any more such a flood of waters its coming upon the earth, and so to secure him from all fears of destruction thence. . .” (Goodwin, Works, V9, pp61,63). It may also be that there is one more lesson to learn through these two manifestations of the Noahic Covenant. As we said above, Scripture makes clear that the covenant in Genesis 6 is with Noah alone; while the covenant in Genesis 9 is extended to everything that comes out of the ark. This is drawn out through the use of the Hebrew second-person pronouns, which are singular throughout chapters 6 through 8, but become plural in chapter 9. In light of this, we might say that the first covenant with Noah in Genesis 6 is, among other things, also highlighting truths concerning the Covenant of Redemption (the covenant only being made between God and Noah), while the second covenant in Genesis 9 is especially highlighting truths concerning the Covenant of Grace (being made with Noah’s seed in and through Noah). We’ll cover this more under Noah’s Headship.

17 See Thomas Goodwin, who argues for this extensively and convincingly in his Works V9, pp41-80. Much of the material I have here on the Noahic Covenant is made up of re-hashed insights from Goodwin. His work on the Noahic Covenant is an absolute hidden treasure; I would recommend it more highly than anything else I have read on the Noahic Covenant.

18 See Ronald Cammenga’s article: Common Grace or Cosmic Grace, p2. Cammenga makes clear that Kuyper did not invent the view, but was responsible for introducing this view into the Dutch Reformed Churches (and by doing so, in large measure, also became responsible for introducing the view to the church as a whole). He notes that before Kuyper had popularized the view, Willemens A’ Brakel, a leading theologian in the Dutch Reformed church, had held this view. Herman Bavinck, a contemporary (and co-laborer) of Kuyper’s, also shared Kuyper’s view of the covenant with Noah, and later Louis Berkhof expressed the same general sentiments, with the result that, as Cammenga says: “A large portion of the Dutch Reformed church, both in the Netherlands and in the United States, as well as American Presbyterianism, has been influenced by Abraham Kuyper’s teaching concerning the covenant with Noah. In fact, there appears to be an almost unquestioning acceptance of Kuyper’s explanation of the Noahic covenant as a covenant of common grace among the majority of conservative Reformed and Presbyterian theologians since Kuyper’s day.” (Common or Cosmic Grace, p3).

19 Thus also grounding this doctrine in the covenant with Noah. This he himself makes explicitly clear: “The fixed historical starting point for the doctrine of common grace lies in God’s establishment of a covenant with Noah after the flood.” (2.1).

20 In his words: “If [people] had recognized that the Noahic covenant is not redemptive, but that it applied to the life of every human being, indeed, even to the life of the animals, they would not have made the mistake of putting it on par with the other covenants. Instead, they would have treated it separately, as a covenant of an entirely different kind.” (Chapter 5.1).

21 In his words: “we are not dealing here with a covenant of particular grace, but a covenant of common grace.” (3.2). In defining what he means by common grace, Kuyper explains it as “a grace of God that you as a human being have in common
to God's redeemed people—rather, it consists solely of temporal promises to all humankind.²² Kuyper described his view with statements like this: “In this Noahic covenant there is...nothing that intentionally or primarily pertains to saving grace.”²³ And again he writes: “The promise...includes nothing spiritual whatsoever.”²⁴ Rather, Kuyper asserted: “[The] content of the Noahic covenant lies entirely within the sphere of natural life, envisions temporal and not eternal goods, and applies to unbelievers just as much as it does to those who fear God.”²⁵ So emphatic was Kuyper's position on the Noahic Covenant that he even wrote at one point: “To identify this content in a spiritual manner and to wish to explain it in a redemptive way is therefore preposterous.”²⁶ To put it simply: Kuyper's view was that God's covenant with Noah was only natural, not spiritual; pertained solely to the temporal, not eternal; was made with all human kind, not just believers; and therefore, cannot properly belong to the Covenant of Grace.²⁷

3. THE REASONS FOR KUYPER'S VIEW: Kuyper held to this view of God's covenant with Noah primarily for two reasons:²⁸ First, the covenant in Genesis 9 isn't just made with Noah, but also with his three sons with him, along with their “seed” after them (verse 9). Kuyper reasons that since all humanity would come forth from the “seed” of Noah's three sons, the covenant that God is making here in Genesis

with all people” (1.2); something “apportioned to all people, including the worst apostates” (1.3); and something that “is therefore of an entirely different nature from particular grace or covenant grace.” (1.3). For Kuyper, common grace refers to the “forbearance” (1.5) that God constantly shows toward sinful man, which is especially manifested in: 1) His bridling or restraining man's sin; and 2) His “bearing temporarily” with it, by preserving the order of creation until the final judgment (1.5). ²² “The promise...includes nothing other than this. ...the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh” (3.9).

²³ Chapter 2, section 3.
²⁴ Chapter 3, section 3.
²⁵ Chapter 4, section 1.
²⁶ Chapter 4, section 1.
²⁷ In these beginning chapters, Kuyper is constantly citing Calvin for the view he takes of the covenant in Genesis 9. He says: “the view we have begun to present here...follows the older perspective of Calvin...Calvin says unambiguously. There is no doubt that it was the design of God to provide for all his posterity. It was not there fore a private covenant...but one which is common to all people, and which shall flourish in all ages to the end of the world.” His expression is Foedus omnium populorum commune, that is, ‘a covenant of grace common to all people.’ The choice of these words shows clearly that Calvin did not understand the Noahic Covenant as ‘saving,’ but as pointing to God’s mercy, for the benefit of every human being, among all nations, through every age, until Christ’s return. No more words need to be devoted to arguing that we are indeed following in Calvins’ footsteps. The above quotation from his commentary should suffice and any doubts may be expelled by a close rereading of his entire exposition about the Noahic covenant.” (Chapter 3.2). I did, in fact, take Kuyper up on his challenge, and re-read Calvin’s commentary of Genesis 6-9, and was surprised to find, that the one sentence Kuyper quotes (taken from 9:8) is indeed the only place where Calvin seems to assert what Kuyper is wanting to assert; namely, that the Noahic Covenant contains nothing spiritual and does not belong to the Covenant of Grace. On the other hand, I found in reading these chapters from his commentary, that Calvin does, in several places, seem to hint that the Noahic Covenant did indeed include spiritual truths about God's redeeming grace: 1) Calvin takes the denouncement of depravity in Genesis 6:5 as rightly applying "to the whole human race", saying that, “it is not a mere complaint concerning a few men, but a description of the human mind when left to itself, destitute of the Spirit of God.” Thus, their depravity is meant to teach us about our depravity. 2) Of Noah's sacrifice in 8:20, Calvin says: “when the holy fathers, formerly, professed their piety towards God by sacrifices, the use of them was by no means superfluous...it was right that they should always have before their eyes symbols, by which they would be admonished, that they could have no access to God but through a mediator. Now, however, the manifestation of Christ has taken away these ancient shadows.” Thus, Noah's offering is indeed meant to point us to Jesus. 3) Though Kuyper asserts that God made this covenant with the entire human race, Calvin qualifies this in his own comment on 9:8, saying: “And the clause which follows, ‘and to his sons who were with him,’ is to be referred to this point. For how is it, that God, making his covenant with the sons of Noah, commands them to hope for the best? Truly, because they are joined with their father, who is, as it were, the stipulator of the covenant, so as to be associated with him, in a subordinate place.” Thus, the covenant only flowed to Noah's family, the animals, and the earth, in so far as they were connected with Noah, who stood as the covenant head (pointing to the headship of Christ). 4) Further, in his comments on 9:10, in the context of speaking of the fact that God's covenant in Genesis 9 extended also to the brute beasts, Calvin, immediately applies this truth by saying: “Hence the ignorance of the Anabaptists may be refuted, who deny that the covenant of God is common to infants, because they are destitute of present faith.” As if, truly, when God promises salvation to a thousand generations, the fathers were not intermediate parties between God and their children, whose office it is to deliver to their children (so to speak) from hand to hand the promise received from God.” Thus, Calvin ties together this covenant in Genesis 9 quite specifically to the Covenant of Grace.

²⁸ See especially Kuyper’s Chapter 3: The Noahic Covenant Was Not Particular.
chapter 9 does not only extend to believers, but indeed, to the entire human race. The Covenant of Grace is only made with a particular people called out from the world; but here in Genesis 9, it seems that God is making a covenant with all humanity without exception. Kuyper's question is in effect: If this covenant is also made with unbelievers, how can it be part of the Covenant of Grace? Secondly, noting that the covenant promises of Genesis 9 extend even to the animals, Kuyper is at a loss to understand how any covenant that involves animals can relate to the Covenant of Grace. He draws out the fact that no less than six times, God includes living creatures in the covenant. He also notes that this covenant seems even to extend to the earth itself (9:13). For these reasons, Kuyper concludes that this covenant in Genesis 9 cannot belong to the Covenant of Grace at all, but must indeed be something entirely different.

4. OUR RESPONSE: At first glance, Kuyper's arguments are quite convincing. And though we don't agree with his conclusions, still we've done our best to argue his case as strongly as possible, because we believe that it's important to wrestle through viewpoints that are different than ours. But in short, though Kuyper's explanation is important for us to wrestle through, we believe there's an explanation of Genesis 9 that's even more convincing; one that understands the Noahic Covenant as belonging to the Covenant of Grace. It's this view that we'll be unpacking at length over the course of this lesson. And it will take us the entirety of the lesson to flesh out the many reasons for why we do take the Noahic Covenant as belonging to the Covenant of Grace. In this respect, we ask for your patience, as it will require more time to respond fully to Kuyper's view. But as for Kuyper's two objections, we would respond in this way:

A) Answering Kuyper's FIRST objection: Kuyper's first objection was that God's covenant in Genesis 9 seems to be made not just with believers, but indeed with all humanity. We'll say more about this later, but for now we would just point out that Kuyper, in fact, only deals with the covenant in Genesis 9. The problem with this is that he fails to deal in any way with the covenant God made earlier with Noah in Genesis 6. This is a problem, because it is these two covenants that make up the Noahic Covenant. You can't separate them; just like you can't separate the several covenants that were made to Abraham and make up the Abrahamic Covenant. These two covenants, the one in Genesis 6, the other in Genesis 9, are inseparable. And they're inseparable, not only because they both relate to Noah, but also because God uses the same name to describe them. When God makes the covenant with Noah before the flood, in Genesis 6:18, He calls it, “My covenant.” And when God makes the post-flood covenant with Noah, his sons, their seed, and the animals, He calls it by the same name; “My covenant” (9:9,11,15). So, since Genesis 6 and 9 are two manifestations of the same covenant, the essential meaning must be the same. 29

Now, in unnaturally separating the covenant of Genesis 6 from that of Genesis 9, Kuyper fails to realize something really important: The covenant that God makes in Genesis 9 isn't with all humanity without exception—it's rather with all humanity inside the ark. Remember, all humanity was actually destroyed in the flood. It was only Noah and his family that were spared—and it's with Noah and his family that God makes this second covenant in Genesis 9. So, the covenant in Genesis 9 can't be interpreted apart from the covenant God had made earlier with Noah in Genesis 6. And the covenant in Genesis 6 was about salvation from God's judgment: God saves a certain people from judgment before the flood—and God again covenants with those same people after the flood. So, in Genesis 9, God isn't addressing ALL people—He's addressing HIS REDEEMED people; He isn't addressing the WORLD—He's addressing those He's saved OUT OF THE WORLD; He's not addressing ALL humanity without exception—but a NEW humanity, the few that He had preserved inside the ark to come forth and inherit the new world. 30

This of course points us to truths contained in the Covenant of Grace. And, in this respect, this covenant in Genesis 9 is “universal” only insofar as it applies universally to the particular ones He has redeemed. 31

29 This connection in itself creates another problem for Kuyper's view. This phrase, “My covenant”, as we learned in Lesson One, is one of the most common names for the Covenant of Grace (cf. Genesis 17:2-21; Exodus 19:5; Psalm 89:28,34). Incidentally, God also calls the covenant of Genesis 9 “the everlasting covenant” (9:16), which is also another phrase Scripture uses to refer to the Covenant of Grace (cf. Genesis 17:7-19; Psalm 105:10; Isaiah 55:3; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 16:60; 37:26).

30 A corollary Scripture here might be the last two verses of Isaiah: “And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath, all mankind [Lit. all flesh] will come to bow down before Me,” says the Lord. Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind [Lit. all flesh].” The language of “all flesh” is the same language as Genesis 9, and when Isaiah talks about “all flesh” here, he's talking about people universally but in particular terms. It's clear from the passage that in the new heavens and the new earth, unbelievers don't belong to this group. This “all flesh” is quite particular. Not all humanity without distinction—but all true humanity; all redeemed humanity; the entire new humanity.

31 As Herman Hoeksema puts it: “However, this truth, that God establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations,
B) Answering Kuyper’s SECOND objection: Kuyper’s second objection had to do with the fact that the covenant in Genesis 9 extends even to the living creatures with Noah. Again, we’ll say more about this later, but for now, just think about it this way: It wasn’t just humankind that was directly effected by the fall, but the earth itself and all of creation has come to feel the effects of the curse of Adam’s sin. The Lord told Adam in Genesis 3:17, “Cursed is the ground because of you...” In a sense then, it wasn’t just all humanity that was cursed with Adam when he disobeyed, but also the earth itself. Likewise, Paul tells us in Romans 8:20 that all creation has been “subjected to futility” through the fall. Now again, think of it, when God sent the flood, in Genesis 6, who was it who perished? It wasn’t just mankind. It was every living thing of all flesh. The animals perished too. Now, no one says that the animals perished in the flood because they too had become wicked. No. It was mankind alone that had become wicked. But the animals perished along with man. And not just the animals, but even the earth itself, for Scripture tells us specifically that when God sent the flood, it didn’t just come to destroy every living creature, but also the earth with them: “behold, I am about to destroy them [all flesh] with the earth (6:13). So then, it was man alone who sinned; but both in the fall, and in the flood, all creation suffered the consequences.

Well, it’s the same thing in the Covenant of Grace. All creation is comprehended, in a sense, in the Covenant of Grace. This is so, because the Covenant of Grace deals primarily with redeeming man, but it also deals secondarily with all creation. To put it simply: Just as all creation suffered the consequences for man’s sin in the fall and the flood, so too, the healing of redemption will one day extend, in turn, to all creation. In Christ, men are coming out from under the curse of God and entering into His blessing. But the creation itself also groans for the day when it too will be set free from its corruption, when Christ ushers in the new heavens and the new earth, in which righteousness dwells. As Paul says in Romans 8:19-23: “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And...even we ourselves groan...waiting eagerly for...the redemption of our body.”

is more clearly expressed after the deluge. We have already made it plain that in the covenant with Noah we confront essentially no other covenant than the one covenant of grace which was already announced in general terms in Paradise, which is presently established with Abraham and his seed, and which is maintained in Christ. Noah does not enter into the ark as the representative of the whole world as it is outside of Christ, but as head of the visible church. The church is saved in the ark; the world perishes in the flood. Presently that church comes forth again from the ark; and with that church the Lord God establishes His covenant. The fact that in this connection the covenant of God is revealed as embracing the whole creation does not change matters and is easily understandable in the light of the history of the flood. A covenant of friendship with the wicked world outside of Christ God, the Holy and Righteous One, certainly could not establish. The covenant is essentially always the same. For this reason, also here Scripture does not speak of ‘a covenant,’ but of ‘my covenant.’ That is: My one covenant, which is always the same, and which I establish with My people in Christ Jesus. And when, therefore, the Lord establishes that covenant with Noah, He says: ‘And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you’ (Gen.9:9). Also here, therefore, you have the same idea. When God establishes His covenant in the world, then He does that with believers and their seed.” (From Believers and Their Seed). Thus, far from being incongruent with the Covenant of Grace, the fact that the covenant of Genesis 9 is also made with Noah’s seed after him is further evidence that it indeed belongs to the Covenant of Grace, wherein God’s promises extend not just to believers, but also to their seed.

32 The wording of Genesis 6:5-7 is noteworthy: it was indeed man alone who did evil, but the animals would perish with him.

33 So, does the fact that animals were included in the covenant in Genesis 9 prove that this covenant cannot contain gospel truths? I love how Goodwin answers: “1) No more than that because the beasts and cattle came forth of Egypt with the Israelites, that therefore their redemption typified not forth redemption by Christ. And again: 2) Nor no more, than that because the cattle drank of the rock, as well as the Israelites; that, therefore, that rock was not Christ figuratively and sacramentally; which yet the apostle expressly tells us it was [in] 1 Corinthians 10.” (Goodwin, Works, V2, p66).

34 As Thomas Goodwin puts it: “Nor was that covenant made primarily, or in a direct and principal respect, with the beasts, but with Noah and his sons; and with the beasts but secondarily for his sake, and as appurtenances to man, and belonging to him; otherwise they are not capable of a covenant, because no way to be made sensible of it; and, therefore, but as an accidental appendix of man’s charter, or lease granted, it is that they are put in. And, again, look as for man’s sake the earth, and all things in it, were accursed, Genesis 3, and then they were destroyed for man’s sake by this flood, as God professes, Genesis 6:6-7; so, on the contrary, God declares, that when he saw those creatures in the ark, that it was for his sake; and therefore this clause is twice added, Genesis 6:19-20, to keep them alive with thee; that is, for thy sake. And in like manner it is said, Genesis 9:1-3, ‘And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moves upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea: into your hands are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you: even as the green herb have I given you all things.”’ So as it was to preserve mankind that these creatures were preserved, and that they might have subjects to have dominion over... Yet further; all the creatures may well
5. CONCLUSION: Kuyper himself, as he wrote the things he did about the covenant with Noah in Genesis 9, seems to acknowledge that his position was not, in fact, the majority position. Most Reformed theologians before him and after him have affirmed that the Noahic Covenant is indeed part of the Covenant of Grace. Now, this doesn’t mean that we have to disagree with everything that Kuyper said. And we don’t have to deny that there were indeed temporal elements in God’s covenant with Noah. Those elements are clearly there. God made a real promise to never again flood the earth in a physical way, and that promise extends to us all. But what we’re saying is that even these temporal elements of God’s covenant with Noah were there for a much greater purpose: to teach us about things eternal.

This is, after all, what Scripture itself explicitly teaches us—not only as it relates to God’s covenant with Noah before the flood in Genesis 6, but also as it relates to God’s covenant with everything that came out of the ark after the flood in Genesis 9; for we read in Isaiah 54:9-10 God’s own commentary of His covenant promise in Genesis 9: “For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be

be said to come under this our covenant by Christ; for we profess and believe, not only that Christ, by his death, made a purchase of all, and by his sacrifice procured the standing of the world, in order to the elect for their good, and so their preservation comes to be included in the elect’s covenant and promises; but there is by Christ a liberty one day to be conferred upon the whole creation, in their being delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God: so as in their capacity they have a share in the privileges of the new world, that world to come, typified forth by Noah’s new world, and promised upon his having offered his sacrifice, wherein he was Christ’s type. So that this is so far from being an objection, that it serves, on the contrary, to render the analogy more complete.” (Goodwin, Works, V9, Section II). Francis Roberts says: “God covenanted here with these brute creatures, not properly and directly for themselves, but improperly, indirectly and relatively, with reference and relation to mankind, that they should not any more be generally destroyed with a flood. For as at first these creatures were all made for man’s use and service, and were afterwards drowned in the flood, not for their own sakes, but for man’s; so now man should continue in this world, God covenants that these creatures should continue also for his service and benefit.” (p259). Roberts also draws out a slightly different aspect when he later says: “That they who are spiritually and eternally saved by Christ, shall have all necessary temporal blessings superadded to them in Christ. ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’ Thus in the type, Noah’s family was not only saved in the Ark with Noah; but also for their sakes, a seed of the living creatures were saved in the Ark with them for their after use and service. The free use of the creatures is granted to them, the earth and creatures being put under their power in subjection; and the continued course and revolution of times and seasons, without danger of being destroyed any more, by a universal flood of waters, is assured to them. So in Christ ‘all are ours, the world, and life, and death, and things present, and things to come, all are ours; and we are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” (p280).

He himself cites earlier Reformed theologians such as Pareus, Perkins, Mastricht, and Rivet. He could have cited several more, including Francis Roberts, who quotes some of these men at length and adds to their list Henry Ainsworth as well. Roberts quotes Rivet saying: “and though that Covenant seem only to respect this present life; yet we must ascend higher, to more, including Francis Roberts, who quotes some of these men at length and adds to their list Henry Ainsworth as well. Roberts also quotes Pareus at length, who uses very familiar language to describe his understanding of the Noahic Covenant; namely, in the same way as all the other Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace before the inauguration of the new covenant in Christ; these all being the same in substance as the new covenant, but different in administration. In the words of Pareus: “A question here arises, whether this Covenant be the same with that which we have now with God, or another different from it?” Roberts, pp274-275). Another extremely important writer before Kuyper’s time who took Noah’s covenant as part of the Covenant of Grace was Thomas Goodwin (Works V9).

Though some after him have adopted Kuyper’s position, most have not. For just a few more modern (but important) examples, we could note O Palmer Robertson (cf. his opening pages on Noah, pp109-113) and Ligon Duncan, who writes in his Covenant Theology course the very truth we will soon conclude with: “You may know that there is somewhat of a debate over the place of the covenant with Noah in redemptive history. Some people have approached the Covenant of Noah as if it were an entirely Common Grace Covenant, as if it were, in some senses, not part of the flow of the Covenant of Grace. That is, [it] would not necessarily have a saving focus, but more of a focus on the preservation of the normal order of the world. A common grace covenant. Others have disagreed with that. And I want you to see that there are both common and special aspects of grace displayed in the Covenant of Noah. It is indeed part of the Covenant of Grace, though it does have common grace significance as well as special redeeming or saving grace significance.” IE: the temporal is there but points to the eternal.
removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,’ says the Lord who has compassion on you.” As Thomas Goodwin wrote long ago: “the story of [Noah] and his waters or flood, and God’s covenant with him... though in the letter the semblance they bear was but of the temporal salvation and deliverance from the flood, yet in the mystery thereof they were... intended as figures of God’s eternal covenant and mercies unto his elect church, which were to come out of Noah’s and his sons loins...”

In the end, Kuyper’s mistake was to forget that the interweaving of the temporal and the eternal is a truth that reveals itself over and over again in each successive stage of the Covenant of Grace. We learned about this in the first lesson. In each of the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace, the eternal is wrapped up with the outer shell of the temporal. Eternal gospel truths were wrapped, as it were, with an external husk. Gospel truths were pictured and promised in all these covenants with Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David—but they were wrapped with an earthly, temporal shell. God made promises to Abraham of a land, a seed, and blessing; at face value these were temporal and earthly things, but they were actually gospel promises. God gave instructions to the Israelites concerning the tabernacle, the shedding of the blood of animals for sin, instructions about feasts throughout the year, the priesthood, and many other things. But though, strictly speaking, these things only related to the temporal and earthly, they yet conveyed gospel truths—they point us to Jesus and the gospel. God made covenant promises to David, that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, and that his throne would endure. Looking merely at the outside husk, these were all earthly, temporal promises. But when we pull back the husk, we begin to realize that the inward kernel was always about Christ and the gospel. This is true of each of the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace: temporal and earthly on the outside; but pure gospel on the inside. And it was no different with God’s promises to Noah.

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37 Quote from Goodwin (Works, V9, p43). This was how Goodwin himself responded to the same objections, that, it seems, some also held in his own day: “And the objection is this: that that covenant with Noah, [in] Genesis 9, was but a covenant of common providence, and the concerns thereof, as that summer and winter, day and night, should not cease; yea, and was made with every living thing, as well as with Noah; and answerably had but an outward natural sign to confirm it, the waters should no more destroy the earth; and hath nothing to do with the covenant of grace, nor can be supposed to be a figure of that covenant under gospel times. For answer: As to that, it is but a providential promise of continuance of the world from the judgment of waters any more; outwardly it was no more; but this hinders not from its being in the mystery a typical promise to Noah, and those of his seed elect that were to succeed, to signify the perpetuity of the covenant of grace to them, and that God would never suffer his lovingkindness to depart...” (Goodwin, Works, V9, p66). As Francis Roberts says: “For under the temporal and corporal salvation of Noah's family from the flood of waters, we are to understand the spiritual and eternal salvation of Christ and his family from the flood of God’s wrath.” (p277). And again: “God’s Covenants with Noah before and after the flood, revealed not only a corporal and temporal, but also a spiritual and an eternal salvation. That temporal and corporal salvation in the ark from the flood of waters, with security to the world forever after from such a general flood, typically resembling and representing the spiritual and eternal salvation of lapsed sinners in the church by Christ from the flood of God's wrath and vengeance... These Covenants with Noah revealed a double salvation, an Outward Corporal and Temporal Salvation, and an Inward Spiritual and Eternal Salvation principally intended and typified thereby. This latter belongs only to the elect family of the true Noah, Jesus Christ, and to the new world planted and replenished by him spiritually. The former salvation which is but outward and corporal, from all such future floods, is (in and for the benefit of Christ's elect, and saved family) extended even to all the wicked in the world, and to brute creatures themselves.” (Roberts, pp283-284). We are simply affirming the same truths about God's covenant with Noah that Vos said of Abraham: “The covenant with Abraham already had a double side, one that had in view temporal benefits—like the promise of the land of Canaan, numerous descendants, protection against earthly enemies—and one that had in view spiritual benefits. Nevertheless, this is to be so understood that the earthly and temporal were not for their own sake, but rather so that they would provide a type of the spiritual and heavenly. Thus the Apostle Paul can say that the spiritual promises did not apply to all the seed, but to the spiritual seed, to those included in Christ. By that he meant that the physical children of Abraham with their temporal blessings were an exemplar of the people of God who through faith receive the spiritual benefits.” (Vos, V2, p128). Goodwin again appeals to God’s Covenant with David as an example of the same truth, saying: “If it be said, that this covenant respected only the temporal salvation of Noah in the ark, besides, that it may be answered, that so did the covenant declared to David (in the first delivery of it, in 2 Samuel 7 from verse 12, and so on) speak but of his house, and establishing of his kingdom to his seed; while yet his own salvation (2 Samuel 23:5, 'God made with me a covenant, and this is all my salvation) and the salvation of the elect through Christ, was intended therein; so here, it may also be replied, that the word grace, as it is spoken of God, and to express his grace, is too deep a word to be bestowed only upon a mere temporal salvation.” (Works, V9, p48).

38 A.W. Pink has a lot to say about this, so we'll end by quoting him at length: “There was connected with each covenant that which was literal or material, and also that which was mystical or spiritual; and unless this be duly noted, confusion is bound to ensue. Yea, it is at this very point that many have erred—particularly so with the Abrahamic and Sinaic covenants. Literalists and futurists have been so occupied with the shell or letter, that they have quite missed the kernel or spirit. Allegorizers have been so much engaged with the figurative allusions, they have often failed to discern the historical fulfillment. Still others have so arbitrarily juggled the two, that they have carried out and applied neither consistently. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we use the best possible care in seeking to distinguish between the carnal and the spiritual, the transient and the eternal, what pertains to the earthly and what adumbrated the heavenly in the several covenants... Each covenant that God
Kuyper's main emphasis was that God's covenant with Noah served to preserve the earth for the coming of Christ and the advance of the gospel. This promise to Noah would make redemption possible, in that it would preserve the earth until God had enacted His plan of redemption. We don't disagree with this one iota. We just affirm that, while this covenant conveyed these truths—it also conveyed so much more.

So, what gospel truths in particular do we learn from the Noahic Covenant? We'll take them one by one:

1. The BACKDROP of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn why we need salvation*
2. The AUTHOR of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the character of God*
3. The NATURE of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn how God saves sinners*
4. The SUBSTANCE of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn of what we have been given in Christ*
5. The BASIS of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn how God lavishes His grace on sinners*
6. The STABILITY of Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the security we have in Christ*
7. The SCOPE of Covenant of Grace: *We learn who salvation is for*
8. The SIGN of Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the picture of God's promise*
9. The FRUIT of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the heart of the Christian life*
10. The REQUIREMENTS of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn how grace and obedience fit together*
11. The PRIVILEGE of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the mission God has given His people*
12. The OUTCOME of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn of the sure hope we have in Christ*

IV. What we learn from the Noahic Covenant

1. The BACKDROP of the Covenant of Grace (Genesis 6:5,11-12): *We see why we need salvation*

These verses describe for us the condition of man in the days of Noah. We read in verse 5, "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The last time we read "the Lord saw" was in Genesis 1, when the Lord saw that it was good. But here, the Lord saw something very different. You can't express with words any more than Moses does here the depths of man's depravity. It's hard to imagine a more forceful statement of the wickedness of the human heart. And what is important for us to understand is that this isn't just describing the people of Noah's day—it's talking about you and me. This is the Bible's synopsis of the human condition. And we learn the following in particular:

A) Man's corruption is INWARD (v5; the intent of his thoughts). Notice that Scripture doesn't say: "Everything that man did was only evil continually." The focus in verse 5 isn't on man's actions—but made with men shadowed forth some element of the everlasting covenant which He entered into with Christ before the foundation of the world on behalf of His elect. The covenants which God made with Noah, Abraham, and David as truly exhibited different aspects of the compact of grace as did the several vessels in the tabernacle typify certain characteristics of the person and work of Christ. Yet, just as those vessels also had an immediate and local use, so the covenants respected what was earthly and carnal, as well as what was spiritual and heavenly. This dual fact receives illustration and exemplification in the covenant which is now before us [IE, Noah]. That which was literal and external in it is so obvious and well known that it needs no enlarging upon by us here. The sign and seal of the covenant—the rainbow—and the promise connected therewith were tangible and visible things, which the senses of men have verified for themselves from then till now. But is that all there was to the Noahic covenant? . . .Was there no deeper meaning in the promises than that the earth should never again be destroyed by a flood, that so long as it existed its seasons and harvests were guaranteed, that the fear of man should be upon all the lower creatures? Had those things no spiritual import? Assuredly they have, and in them may be clearly discerned—by those favored with anointed eyes—that which adumbrated the contents of the everlasting covenant. . .It was ever God's way in Old Testament times to employ the event of some temporal deliverance of His people, to renew His intimation of the great spiritual deliverance and restoration by Christ's redemption. . .From all that has been said it should now be abundantly clear that, while the literal aspect of the promises made to Noah concerned the temporal welfare of the earth and its inhabitants yet their mystical import had respect unto the spiritual well-being of the church and its members. . ." (Pink, Divine Covenants). 

39 From Ligon Duncan, Covenant Theology.

40 It may indeed be true that Noah's generation was especially wicked, but this doesn't take away from its broader application to all humanity. As Calvin puts it: "though Moses here speaks of the wickedness which at that time prevailed in the world, the general doctrine [IE, of man's depravity] is properly and consistently hence elicited. Nor do they rashly distort the passage who extend it to the whole human race. So when David says, 'That all have revolted, that they are become unprofitable, that is, none who does good, no not one.' (Psalm 14:3), he deplores, truly the impiety of his own age; yet Paul (Romans 3:12) does not scruple to extend it to all men of every age; and with justice; for it is not a mere complaint concerning a few men, but a description of the human mind when left to itself, destitute of the Spirit of God." (cf. Calvin's notation on Genesis 6:5). As Waltke also writes: "This is a vivid portrayal of the depth and comprehensiveness of human depravity" (Genesis, p118).
on his thoughts and motives. True religion gets past just external appearances. Some people do a lot of good things outwardly—but God alone tests the heart and motives—and this is His testimony of man. As Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.”

B) Man’s corruption is PERVERSIVE (v5; every intent. . .was only evil). Not: “some of the thoughts of his heart were evil,” but “every intent;” not: “the intentions of his heart were sometimes tainted with evil,” but the intent of his heart was “only evil continually.” Man’s thoughts and motives, purposes and desires, weren’t just tainted with evil—but characterized by evil. Scripture is telling us that mankind after the fall is not basically good, but fundamentally evil.

C) Man’s corruption is CONTINUAL (v5; only evil continually). It didn’t stop. This wasn’t describing mankind’s worst day—it was describing mankind every day. And this shows us something really important: If the wickedness was continual—never ending—then it must have been because man was either unable to give up his wickedness, or because he was unwilling to give up his wickedness. Either he couldn’t give up his sin or he didn’t want to give up his sin. Well, Scripture tells us that the reason is actually both: Fallen man is both enslaved to his sin and in love with his sin. Wickedness continues because fallen man has no power to change, and because he has no desire to change.

D) Man’s corruption is UNIVERSAL (vv11-12; all flesh had corrupted their way). “All flesh” means everyone. In Scripture, it can refer both to peoples and individuals: it can mean every kind of people or every single individual. The meaning here is both. No culture or class of people was exempt—not a single person was exempt. Everyone was corrupt. There were no exceptions.

And it’s the same with us. You see, we can’t understand how amazing God’s grace is until we come face to face with just how wretched we are. We’re not a basically good people who just need a little help. We’re corrupt sin-addicts with blood on our hands. We have no power to change and no desire to change. We’re enslaved to our sin, and in love with our sin. We can’t give it up, and we don’t want to. You see, every single one of us stands as guilty criminals before the God of heaven.

And this description of man’s corruption isn’t just meant to teach us about the fallen human condition; it also represents the potential of sin in each of our hearts: it represents what you and I are capable of doing—even as believers. John Owen said, “Be killing sin or it will be killing you” — and that’s not just a catchy little saying—it’s a life and death reality—because, as one pastor said, “There’s enough evil in every single one of our hearts to destroy the world three times over.”

2. The AUTHOR of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about the Character of God

A) He is TENDER-HEARTED: We read of God’s response to man’s great wickedness in Genesis 6:6, “The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” The Hebrew word for “sorry” can also be translated as “repent” (IE, “it repented the Lord that He had made man”). Now, what this doesn’t mean is that God made a mistake or didn’t know this was coming or changed His mind. The Scriptures are clear on this: Malachi 3:6: “For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you. . .are not consumed.” This is rather an example of how sometimes in the Scriptures, human attributes or feelings are attributed to God for the sake of emphasis.
So now we know what this verse isn’t saying: it’s not saying God changed or made a mistake. Well, what IS this verse saying? What do we learn from this verse? We learn that God is not impersonal or unmoved. What is the Lord’s response to man’s wickedness? He’s “grieved in His heart.” What an incredibly affectionate phrase!! The Lord’s response isn’t apathy—He’s not stoic or unmoved. It’s not even anger—or even disgust. It’s grief. He’s griefed in His heart. God is deeply affected. This isn’t the reaction of an impersonal God who doesn’t care about His creatures, who is eager to punish sin. This is the reaction of the most loving, tender father, whose beloved child has broken his heart.

B) He is JUST: “Verse 5 is the divine assessment: God saw the wickedness of man; verse 6 is the divine reaction: He repented that He had made man; verse 7 is the divine resolve: ‘I will destroy man.’” God’s justice and righteousness demand that judgment be brought to the world. God is loving, yes. But He is also just; He loves justice (Isaiah 61:8); and the Scriptures declare that He cannot and will not leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3). God’s justice is a good thing. We don’t have to shrink back from this as Christians. A good judge punishes the guilty—that’s what He ought to do. So then, how much more should the Judge of all the earth do what is right?

When Scripture describes the wickedness that has filled the earth in the days of Noah, it says that “the earth was corrupt in the sight of God.” This is important, because it reminds us that God is the author of justice; He is the one who defines and declares what is righteous and what is wicked. When Jesus chose the story of Noah as His sermon text, He described what people were doing in those days as “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” (Luke 17:26-27). This sounds pretty normal. If human nature is the same then as it was now, I would think most of them thought of themselves as normal people; good people—not perfect, but not so bad. In their own eyes, they weren’t so bad; but they were corrupt in the sight of God, and that’s the only judgment that mattered.

We also learn here about the extent of God’s justice. God didn’t judge the world on a sliding scale because everyone was so wicked. God didn’t look down on the earth and say, “Well, everyone is corrupt; but to destroy the whole world would be a bit extreme.” God didn’t separate those who had committed the most atrocious sins from those who had just committed “regular” sins. God didn’t put to one side all the people that had never committed murder, for instance, and let them live, because at least they had never killed anyone. There was no sliding scale; there was no grading on a curve. There was only one standard; sin was sin. And everyone was guilty. So His wrath fell upon them all.

And God is still just; His character doesn’t change. He wasn’t just holy and righteous in the Old Testament. In fact, it’s the knowledge of God’s justice that leads us to salvation. How so? Well, Scripture tells us that the reason Noah and his family entered the ark was, “because of the water of the flood” (7:7). In other words, they entered the ark because the flood was going to come. The whole point of the ark was deliverance from God’s impending wrath. Wrath was coming upon the world, but deliverance would be found in the ark; with that knowledge, they entered the ark. The idea of getting in the ark would have made no sense at all apart from the reality of an imminent catastrophic flood. And it’s the same way for us. The message of God’s free grace and forgiveness through Jesus makes no sense without an understanding of the context of God’s wrath that is reserved in heaven to be poured out in full measure for all eternity upon all those who are outside the ark of salvation, Jesus Christ. Wrath is coming upon the world—but there is safety in Jesus.

C) He is FAITHFUL: It’s a sober thing to ponder how God was faithful to send the flood, just as He said He would. God told Noah He was going to destroy the earth, and Noah, who was “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), must have been declaring that message to his neighbors; and then one day, it happened. We learn something really important here: God is faithful to uphold His promises of judgment. Don’t ever think that God has given us all the warnings in His Word for no reason; that maybe there won’t be a final judgment after-all; maybe the lake of fire is just an empty threat; maybe God will just forgive everybody in the end. God is faithful to keep His Word, not just in salvation, but in judgment; this is the whole point of 2 Peter 3:5-7: “Know this first of all, that in the last days

49 From Alec Motyer, Covenant and Promise.

50 Which, by the way, has massive implications for what happened on the cross—because God didn’t just sweep our sins under the rug and try to pretend they weren’t there—He actually punished them in full—but upon His Son instead of on you and me.
mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation. For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."

After the flood, the Lord shows His faithfulness in another way. He made a covenant with Noah that He would never again send a flood to destroy the earth, and that as long as the earth remains, "Seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (8:22). Here we see the Lord's faithfulness to uphold the promises He has made to a faithless and sinful (and vastly unconverted) human race. The Scripture quoted above from 2 Peter has some irony in it—here are people mocking God's promise of a coming judgment because "all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:4); and the whole reason it does is because of God's promise to sustain a sinful people who mock Him for sending the rain again so harvest can come. So we see that the reason God keeps up the fixed seasons of the earth, and the reason He has never sent another flood to destroy all mankind, is because of His faithfulness to keep His promise.

Perhaps the clearest way we see God's faithfulness is His saving of Noah through the flood. Think about what would have happened if God had not spared Noah either and wiped out the entire world? And later—if He wanted—made a fresh start with humanity by forming another man from the ground to repopulate the earth? Well, for one thing, we wouldn't be here. But far more importantly, the Messiah—who had promised back in Genesis 3:15 to send—and not only promised to send but promised would come through Eve—that promised Messiah would never have come—at least not as a descendant of Eve. And that means that God would have broken the promise He had made back in Genesis 3:15. God preserved Noah through the flood in order to uphold the solemn covenant promise He had bound Himself to fulfill. God saved Noah because His own name was at stake in upholding the truth of His Word to His people. God preserved Noah to show the world that He never, ever, breaks the covenant promises He makes to His people. And, by the way, this is exactly how He continues to deal with us in Christ (Exodus 32:11-14; Ezekiel 20:5-22; Romans 15:8).

3. The NATURE of the Covenant of Grace: We learn how God saves sinners

A) Salvation is by GRACE alone:

Most of us tend to misunderstand the meaning of Genesis 6:8-9. We read that Noah was "a righteous man," (v9), and so we draw the conclusion that it must have been for that reason that he "found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (v8). We tend to think that Noah found favor with God because he was a righteous man. But is that why Noah found favor with God? Is that why anyone finds favor with God? No way. Noah wasn't saved from the flood because of his righteousness—but by God's grace. Noah was a sinner saved by grace just like you and me.

How do we know that? Look with me how carefully Scripture preserves what it says in Genesis 6:8-9. The first thing we notice is the order of verses 8-9. Scripture records that Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord (in verse 8) before it records that Noah was a righteous man (in verse 9). Noah found favor with God before he was a righteous man. And we don't just see it in the

51 "If you look up this expression 'X found grace,' you will discover it in situations like David and Mephibosheth, or in Genesis 19 in the case of Lot being rescued from Sodom. Every time this expression occurs, it focusses attention as far as the receiving end is concerned on a meritless situation. If a person testifies 'I have found grace,' he is saying, There is nothing about me that could have earned or prompted this.' When, therefore, we read in Genesis 6.8 [that] 'Noah found grace,' the scriptural understanding of that phrase is that 'grace found Noah'" (Alec Motyer, *Covenant and Promise*).

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53 "But pure and unmixed grace...is made the total and only cause of that matter [that Noah walked with God]. He was first found the object of God's grace, and not grace first found in him; thereby plainly to insinuate, that for no righteousness in him it was that God did first absolutely pitch his grace upon him, abstractly from the consideration of his holiness, and that was the fruit of that grace of God's" (Thomas Goodwin, *Works, Volume 9*).

54 "Notice how carefully Genesis safeguards this truth. If we are not permitted by Genesis to reverse the order of verses 8 and 9. What we must say when we come to verse 9 is not 'Now we see why Noah was chosen,' but 'Now we see that Noah was"
chronological order of verses 8-9, but in the structure of the passage. Scripture emphatically puts a great chasm of separation between verses 8 and 9. Look at how verse 9 begins: “These are the records of the generations of Noah.” This is the phrase that the author of Genesis uses for chapter divisions—to start a new chapter (Compare 2:4; 5:1; 10:1; 11:27; 25:19). Genesis 6:8 is the end of the “chapter of Adam,” and Genesis 6:9 is the beginning of a completely new chapter. 

Scripture is telling us that Noah didn't find favor with God because he was a righteous man—God's favor found Noah long before he was a righteous man. The only reason Noah was a righteous man in verse 9 was that God had first drawn Noah by His grace in verse 8. So often people read Genesis 6 and think that Noah wasn't a sinner—or at least not that bad of a sinner—and that's why God saved him. But the truth is, Noah was just as sinful as everyone else. “Noah was with the rest of the world under the wrath of God.” But instead of getting wrath, Noah got grace. And then that same grace that saved him began also to sanctify him—that's why he was a righteous man—after saving him God began to change him, just as He does with us. Noah wasn't saved because he was a righteous man. Noah was a righteous man because he had been saved.

B) Salvation is through FAITH alone:

This is made clear in the account in Hebrews 11:7, “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

What does this verse tell us? Something quite significant: “[These] last words, 'he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith,' . . . [show] us that Noah had . . . the very same righteousness for the object of his faith, which our gospel now proposes to us, and which our faith does lay hold upon. . . Now it was that righteousness Noah had an eye upon . . . And in sign and token that yet he had his eye upon this righteousness out of himself to save him, it was through the same faith he betook himself to that ark, a means wholly out of himself, to save him from the waters, which otherwise all his own righteousness would never have done. . . [thus] the righteousness he believed on, and was made heir of, was this gospel righteousness, signified to him by the ark. . .”

Noah was saved by grace alone—and he was saved through faith alone—and that faith was not just a faith in God in general—but faith in the coming Savior who had been promised in Genesis 3:15.

C) Salvation is in CHRIST alone:

We are pointed to Christ in a number of ways in the account of Noah.

1) Noah's NAME: Noah's name means, “rest,” and we are told that Noah's father, Lamech, named his son Noah, saying, “This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed” (5:29). In one sense, the words were fulfilled in Noah—the old earth, which the Lord had cursed, would be flooded over with water—recreated, as it were. But though the Lord promised after the flood to never again curse the earth (8:21), presumably by flooding it against with water, the original curse was still there. We still live in a fallen world. Lamech's prophecy about his son looked backward to the promise the Lord had given in Genesis 3:15, and forward to Christ, the true fulfillment of that promise, who would chosen.” (Alec Motyer, Covenant and Promise).

As Robertson notes: “structural considerations. . . forbid the conclusion that Noah received 'grace' because of a previously existing righteousness. The phrase 'these are the generations of'. . . decisively separates [verse 8 from verse 9].” (pp112-13).

Alec Motyer, Covenant and Promise.

Thomas Goodwin, Works, V9, p44 (emphasis mine). This is especially evident when comparing this phrase at the end of this verse with the same phrase as found in Romans 4:13 and 9:30. Francis Roberts echoes Goodwin: “This righteousness by faith is that perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, which God of His mere grace imputes to them that by faith accept and receive the same, having renounced all self-righteousness, and all other ways of sinners' justification whatsoever. . . Hence therefore it is evident, that Noah, in all this federal transaction betwixt God and him, had a special eye to Christ by faith, and that beyond the temporal salvation of his house in the ark by waters from the general deluge, he beheld and apprehended the spiritual salvation of Christ's house the Church, and peculiarly of himself from the wrath of God by Jesus Christ and his blood; otherwise how could this act of his faith have made him heir of Christ's righteousness?” (Roberts, pp264-65).
come forth as a seed of Noah, and bring rest and re-creation to redeemed humanity in the fullest sense.\textsuperscript{58} So, Lamech's words find \textit{partial} fulfillment in Noah, but \textit{full} fulfillment in Christ.\textsuperscript{59}

\section*{II) Noah's ARK: } Noah's ark is a type of Jesus our Savior.\textsuperscript{60} When God's wrath fell upon all mankind, it was only those who were in the ark that were saved from judgment. Further, the ark not only protected all those inside, but did so in particular by absorbing the full force of the wrath of God brought upon it in the flood, just as Jesus on the cross saved His people by absorbing God's wrath in their place.\textsuperscript{61} Noah wasn't saved from the flood of God's wrath because he didn't sin or even because his sin wasn't so bad; he was saved because he was inside the ark when the waters came.\textsuperscript{62} And just as there was only one ark in the days of Noah, and only one door on that ark; so too the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus is not just one way of salvation, but the \textit{only} way. If men are to be saved from the judgment to come, they must be saved in Christ alone.

\section*{III) Noah's HEADSHIP: } Noah himself is a type of Christ, the second Adam, who functions as the covenant head for his whole family.\textsuperscript{63} Even though the covenant God makes with Noah in Genesis 6 is exclusively with Noah (Genesis 6:18), \textit{Noah's entire family}—his wife, and his sons, and his sons' wives—along with the animals—are saved from the flood through Noah. We see this in Genesis 6:18-19: The Lord said to Noah, "But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you . . ." In the Hebrew text, it's clear that the covenant is with Noah alone (all the pronouns here are \textit{singular}); but Noah's whole family is saved in and through and by their relation to him. Later, we read in Genesis 7:1: "Then the Lord said to Noah, 'Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.' " Again, the pronouns here are in the singular tense. Noah alone was seen as righteous, but Noah's entire family (or household) was saved on account of Noah. We continue to see the same pattern throughout chapters 7-8. We read in Genesis 7:23: "only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark." Genesis 8:1 tells us: "But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark." And in Genesis 8:16-18, it's emphasized over and over again that everything in the ark was only there on account of their relation to Noah: They were in the ark \textit{with him}.

This points us back to the truths we learned in Romans 5:12-21. Scripture is portraying Noah as the covenant head of his people. It is \textit{his} righteousness that serves as the basis for including the

\textsuperscript{58} See Matthew 11:28 and Galatians 3:13. This is similar to the Davidic covenant, where the Lord made promises to David about his descendant after him, who would build Him a house; in one sense these are fulfilled in Solomon; but in a fuller sense, they are clearly pointing to a more distant descendant of David, Jesus the Messiah, who would fulfill the promises in the truest sense. See also Haggai 2:23 for a similar occurrence, as Christ would come forth from Zerubbabel.

\textsuperscript{59} “[Noah was] the beginner and founder of a new world; and, in that respect, a type of the second Adam, yea, and the father of him, namely, Christ according to the flesh.” (Thomas Goodwin, \textit{Works Volume 9}).

\textsuperscript{60} Explicit from 1 Peter 3:18-22: “The ark, that was the refuge and hiding-place of the church in this time of storm and flood, was a type of Christ, the true hiding-place of the church from the storms and floods of God's wrath” (Jonathan Edwards).

\textsuperscript{61} “[Noah and his family] would be preserved \textit{through} this judgment, and not \textit{from} it, by being brought into the bosom of the ark, where he would be safe. This deliverance, then, was not by being taken entirely out of God's judgment, but by being preserved through it, because of that which he was in: God did not save Noah and his family by simply overlooking them, or forbearing to pour out his wrath upon them alone in all the world; but rather, when he poured out all his wrath upon them, as he did upon the rest of the world, because they were in the ark, the ark itself bore the brunt of the wrath. . .just as we today are delivered from God's wrath, not by being huddled up from it entirely, but by being taken through it and yet preserved, because we are in Christ, who bore the entire brunt of God's wrath.” (Nathan Pitchford, \textit{Images of Christ}).

\textsuperscript{62} See 1 Peter 3:20-21; 2 Peter 3:3; Hebrews 11:7 in light of 12:2. I absolutely love how Goodwin puts it: “All Noah's holiness would not have saved him from the waters, but his being in the ark saved him from the waters. . .” (\textit{Works, V9}, p72).

\textsuperscript{63} As Roberts explains it: “Noah was a singular type of Christ. . .and the temporal saving of his house with himself in the ark by water, a special type of the salvation of Christ's elect in the Church by Jesus Christ. Consequently God's Covenant with Noah touching the saving of him and his family in the ark by water. . .intended herein to signify the elect's salvation by Christ through faith. . .Noah built a material ark, for the saving of his natural posterity therein from the general deluge of waters, according to God's Covenant. So Jesus Christ builds a spiritual ark. . .for the saving of all his elect, his supernatural posterity therein, from the deluge of God's wrath. . .They that were saved in the ark were saved therein with Noah, who forsook his own habitation to dwell with them in the ark and with them to be tossed up and down with winds and waves that they might be saved with him. . .So they that are saved in the ark of the Church, are saved by Christ's gracious and powerful presence. . .Thus Christ endangers himself with us, for our safety. While Christ is in the ship, in the ark, all is safe” (pp263-66, 271-72).

\textsuperscript{64} As Alec Motyer puts it: “When Noah is to gather his family and the animals into the ark, it is specified more than once,
rest of his family. In this respect, Noah typifies Christ, the second Adam, and founder of a new humanity. In the flood, God poured out His wrath upon the world, but all those who belonged to Noah were spared on account of Noah. So too, on the coming day of wrath, all those who belong to Christ will be spared on account of Christ: “As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). So if you belong to Jesus, you can rest knowing that your salvation doesn't depend upon you. Just as Noah's family was saved on account of Noah's righteousness and not their own (7:1), you are saved on account of Christ's righteousness and not your own (Romans 5:12-21): “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:56-57).

IV) Noah's OFFERING: We are also pointed to Christ in the sacrifice made by Noah after the waters of the flood had subsided. Noah took of every clean bird and every clean animal and offered them up as a burnt offering on the alter he had built.65 “The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, 'I will never again curse the ground on account of man. . .’” (Genesis 8:21).66 This imagery of a soothing aroma is echoed in Ephesians 5:1-2: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.” The sweet-smelling offering here in Noah's sacrifice is a fore-picturing of the offering up of Christ on our behalf.67

V) Noah's PROPHECY: A prophecy of the coming of Christ is hinted at—not only at the beginning of the story of Noah, but at the end of the story. Noah's father had made a prophecy about his son in Genesis 5:29; later Noah would make a prophecy about his sons in Genesis 9:26-27. After cursing his grandson Canaan (because of what Ham, his father, had done), Noah goes on to bless his son Shem: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant.” Noah put the blessing upon his son Shem. And it would be through Shem that the seed of the Messiah, who had been promised back in Genesis 3:15, would come. It would be through Shem that Abraham would later come (11:10-32), and through Abraham would one day come Christ.

4. The SUBSTANCE of the Covenant of Grace: We learn of what we have been given in Christ

We can also see in the covenant with Noah some of the things that God has freely bestowed on us in the gospel. 1 Corinthians 2:12 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.” God has freely given us so many things in the gospel—in the Covenant of Grace—and we get a glimpse of what some of these things are in God's covenant with Noah. There are two things in particular we could mention:

A) PEACE with God: We saw how God saved Noah and his household from the wrath of the flood in Genesis 6. After the flood, God confirms His covenant with Noah and his sons in Genesis 9. And God gives His word that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. Now, again, in a very real sense, this was a temporal promise given not just to Noah and his sons—but all humanity—as the earth would be repopulated through Noah's sons. And it wasn't even just to all humanity, but even to all the animals with Noah on the ark (9:10,12). But the question is—is this the only thing that Scripture means to teach us through this passage? I believe that there is more that the Lord wants to teach us here than just the fact that He made a temporal promise to all creation to never again flood the earth. I believe that there are truths here that God wants us to see about the gospel and the Covenant of Grace—not just temporal promises to all humanity—but eternal promises to His people:

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65 That Noah took of every clean bird and every clean animal for his burnt offering is a detail we pass over quickly without giving much thought to. But doubtless, this must have been the most extensive burnt offering in the history of the world.

66 “The Hebrew term for ‘pleasing,’ nikhoakh, conveys the idea of rest and tranquility. It is related to the name 'Noah' (Hb. Noakh) and is probably used here in order to remind the reader of Lamech's remarks in Gen.5:29.” (ESV Study Bible).

67 “Here it is the godward [aspect] that is brought before us. Blessed indeed is it to learn what the sacrifice of Christ obtained for His people—deliverance from the wrath to come, securing an inheritance in Heaven forever; but far more blessed is it to know what that sacrifice meant unto Him to whom it was offered. In the sacrifice of Christ, God Himself found that which was ‘a sweet savor,’ with which He was well pleased” (A.W. Pink, Divine Covenants).
Let's turn to Isaiah and read again together what Scripture tells us in Isaiah 54:9-10: “For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,’ says the Lord who has compassion on you.”

Now remember where Isaiah 54 is. It comes right after Isaiah 53, which is the clearest prophecy in the Old Testament about who the Savior is and how He would accomplish redemption for His people. And it's in that context that we read in Isaiah 54 of the promises that God is making to those for whom the Savior would shed His blood. Isaiah 53 is about how the Messiah would accomplish redemption; Isaiah 54 is about what that means for all those who belong to the Messiah.

And in order to illustrate what the Messiah's atoning death would mean for God's people, the Lord points back to His covenant with Noah in Genesis 9. And, in effect, He is saying: “Look—if you want to understand how incredibly wonderful and secure your standing is in the Covenant of Grace—then go back and study the covenant I made with Noah.” Just as I made a solemn promise to Noah and his sons to never again flood the earth—so it is with My promise to you in the Covenant of Grace: The wrath I poured out on others, I shall never pour out on you. You have entered into My peace.

Notice also that the promise that God made to Noah was completely unconditional. God didn't say: “Noah, I've saved you from the flood. Now, if you obey Me fully and live like a good Christian and always keep My commandments and never stray away from Me, then I won't send another flood.” No, that's not what God said. The promise was totally unconditional; it was in no way conditional on Noah and what he did or didn't do. Don't you think that Noah might have gotten a little nervous, when after the flood, the clouds began to darken once again and it was obvious a big storm was on its way? “Uh oh.” He might have gotten nervous at times—but the wonderful thing is, he didn't have to.

Why? Because God keeps His promises. And as it was with Noah, so it is with us. Here in Isaiah 54, God refers to the covenant He's made with His people as “My covenant of peace” (v10). In Christ, we have come out from under God's wrath, and have entered into His peace: “having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). We may at times still give in to doubts and fears, just like Noah may have. But, just like Noah, we don't have to.

B) The BLESSING of God: And if this was all that God gave us—it would still be unbelievable. But God has given us so much more. Salvation is so much more than just—we don't have to go to hell anymore. In the Covenant of Grace, God hasn't just taken away His wrath—He's lavished upon us His blessing. Let's turn back to Genesis 9 and read together Genesis 9:1: “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” This might sound familiar, and the reason it does is that this is exactly what God had said to Adam back in Genesis 1:28. God is repeating here to Noah the same thing He had said to Adam back in the garden. But the reason this is so amazing is that when God blessed Adam in Genesis 1:28, that was before Adam had sinned. God's blessing was upon Adam—but that was before Adam fell into sin. And we don't read anything about God's blessing for over 1600 years because Adam's fall lost that blessing—and all mankind with him. But now, here once again, in light of the sweet aroma of the burnt offerings at the end of chapter 8, God smells the sweet fragrance, “And God blessed Noah.” What we see here

68 Goodwin says: “That these words speak, in the first place, [to] the pure covenant of grace, and the everlastingness and perpetuity of that grace and covenant, as it flows in God's heart in and from election, may be apparent in the very reading the words. . .” (Works, V9, p42). And Pink also: “How plainly this shows that the covenant with Noah not only afforded a practical demonstration of the unfailling faithfulness of God in fulfilling its temporal promise to the world, but also that the church was the chief object and subject concerned in it. Why did the Lord promise to preserve the earth until the end time, so that it should not again be destroyed by a flood? The answer is, because of the church” (A.W. Pink, Divine Covenants).

69 This is how Goodwin also understood it: “[It is] As if he should say, This is that very thing which I intended to prefigure and fore-signify, then when I sat at the flood (as Psalm 29:11) in and by those passages with Noah, which were at and about his flood, which God calls the waters of Noah. This, even this, which I even now have spoken of, my grace and mercy to my church, who are his sons and posterity, in the words immediately before; even this was the mind and mystery of those my promises, which I made then to him upon occasion of and about those waters. . .” (Goodwin, Works, V9, p57).
is that the blessing that we had in the garden at creation—that Adam lost—is brought back to us in the Covenant of Grace. Isn't that amazing? All that humanity possessed in Eden—but had lost through the fall—is fully restored once again in and through Jesus Christ—in the Covenant of Grace.  

5. The BASIS of the Covenant of Grace: We learn how God lavishes His grace on sinners

Sin brings a curse—so why is it that we find God blessing Noah and his sons in Genesis 9:1? Well, we alluded to it above. The answer is found at the end of Genesis 8. Chapter divisions are good, but we have to remember that they are not part of the original text. Sometimes chapters are put in the right place, and sometimes they're not. And here, in my opinion, Genesis chapter 9 is in the wrong place, because Genesis 8:20 begins a thought that doesn't end until 9:19. Genesis 8:20-9:19 is one unified section of Scripture. And the reason this is important is that there is an intimate connection between Noah's offering (in 8:20-22) and God's covenant with Noah and his sons (in 9:1-17). Noah's burnt offering is inseparably bound together with God's covenant with Noah and his sons.

How are they bound together? God's covenant blessings and promises (in chapter 9) are established upon Noah's sacrifice of atonement (in chapter 8). The sweet-smelling sacrifice on the altar was the basis of God's covenant blessings and promises to Noah and his sons. Why does this matter? Because it points us to the reality that Jesus' finished work is the only basis of the covenant blessings that God continues to pour out upon sinners like us. Jesus' blood purchased every blessing and promise in the Covenant of Grace for all God's people. As one put it: "[the] blessing of Noah and his sons after the offering upon the altar. . .was founded upon a new basis. Adam and Eve received blessing on the ground of their creature purity; Noah and his sons (as the representatives of the entire election of grace) received blessing on the ground of their acceptance and perfection in Christ."  

This becomes even more clear when we read again what the Lord said after Noah offered up the burnt offerings on the altar: Genesis 8:21 says, “The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said, ‘I will not again curse the ground on account of man, because the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth.’” Now, look carefully at the reason the Lord is giving here for promising to never again destroy the earth with a flood: “for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” In other words, human nature hasn’t changed. God would bless Noah and his sons—not because they weren’t sinners anymore—but completely despite the ongoing presence of sin in their hearts and lives.

Now, how could God do this? Before the flood, man’s wickedness was the reason He had destroyed the earth in the first place. Why is it different now? Why is it that God destroyed the earth because

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70 And more. . .is this hinted at in Genesis 9:3? This may be a bit of a stretch, but I think a good example here might be Rapunzel’s song in Disney’s Tangled: “Flower, gleam and glow; let your power shine. Make the clock reverse; bring back what once was mine.” Heal what has been hurt; change the fate’s design. Save what has been lost; bring back what once was mine.” Adam had God’s blessing—but lost it. Jesus came to make the clock reverse; to bring back what once had been ours.

71 Thomas Goodwin: “The Lord smelled a sweet savor, a savor of rest, as in the Hebrew, that is, of peace; and said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the earth any more,’ and thereupon established that covenant that follows. And that Noah, the father of that new world to come, was herein a type of Christ, and that this sacrifice of his was the type of Christ’s sacrifice, we all acknowledge from the warrant of that allusion, and sameness of language the apostle uses of Christ’s sacrifice. . .For look, as father of that new world to come, was herein a type of Christ, and that this sacrifice of his was the type of Christ’s sacrifice, we...
of man's sin then, but He won't destroy it anymore now? Is God just changing His mind? Is God changing His character? Is God saying that from now on He's going to be a loving God instead of a righteous and holy and just God? No. Just as man's condition hasn't changed, God's character hasn't changed either—God's character doesn't change. What has changed is God's disposition. Not His disposition towards sin—but His disposition towards sinners. And the reason God's disposition towards sinners has changed is because of the sweet smelling offering on the altar: "The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself. . . ." Man hadn't gotten any better. And God hadn't decided to stop being righteous. But the sweet fragrance of Noah's burnt offerings had propitiated His wrath. Not even the flood had pacified God's anger against sin (He doesn't say this after 8:19)! But God's wrath was fully and completely satisfied through the blood of atonement.74

A) Christ's blood is the basis of our PEACE with God: We talked about the things freely given to us by God—and how one of those things is peace with God. Now, we have to realize first of all that this is something different than the peace of God. The peace of God is subjective; it comes and goes based on our feelings or experiences. But peace with God is rock-solid. And why do those who belong to Jesus have peace with God? Is it because we don't deserve God's wrath as much anymore because our sin isn't as bad as it used to be? No. It's because, as Scripture says, through Christ God has reconciled all things to Himself, "having made peace through the blood of His cross."75 Think back again to those verses in Isaiah. Why will God not pour out His anger on His people in Isaiah 54? Because He already poured all of it out on His Son in Isaiah 53.76 And the cross continues to be the only basis of our peace with God through all the ups and downs of our Christian life. It was the cross alone that first brought us peace; and it's the cross alone that ever maintains that peace.

B) Christ's blood is the basis of the BLESSING of God: We talked about God's blessing as being one of the things freely given to us by God. And just as it is with God's peace—so it is with God's blessing; the cross is the only basis and source of God's blessing. Jesus' blood purchased God's blessing for all those who belong to Him: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, becoming a curse for us. . . in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles. . . ." (Galatians 3:13-14). Now, what this means is that if you belong to Jesus, God's blessing doesn't come and go depending on how spiritual of a day you're having or how good of a Christian you're being. Do you realize that? Why? Because God's blessing isn't based on you at all. Adam's blessing in the Covenant of Works was contingent on his obedience. But in the Covenant of Grace,

74 As one said: "God's Covenant with Noah and his family, not to curse the ground any more for mans sake, by destroying the earth with a general flood of waters, notwithstanding the imagination of mans heart remained evil from his youth, doth notably point out God's Covenant of faith in Christ, by whom alone the curse due for sin is removed, though sin in his people be not wholly extinguished and obliterated. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, 'cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.' . . . God's covenanting to curse the ground no more with a general flood forever, though mans heart remained corrupt, the more clearly signifies to us God's Covenant of Faith in Christ, touching sinners' recovery and salvation, because God took occasion to make this covenant, upon Noah's sacrificing of burnt-offerings upon an altar to him, whereupon God smelled a sweet savor of rest, and said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more, etc. God made this covenant, being pacified with Noah's burnt-offerings. How could Noah's burnt offerings pacify God, or afford any sweet savor to God? Not in, and of themselves; for the bodies of beasts burnt, of themselves send forth an offensive savor. Not from any merit of Noah; for though he was righteous, yet his righteousness was of faith, not of works; and he was subject to sinful frailties. How then? Only as types of Christ's death for our sins, that Sacrifice of sacrifices which was the substance, end and scope of all the sacrifices under the Old Testament. This was the sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor. This was the true cause of appeasing God's wrath, of removing the curse, and of God's gracious covenanting with Noah no more to drown the world with a flood." (Francis Roberts, God's Covenants with Man, p279).

75 Colossians 1:20. "And this covenant God styles here in Isaiah the covenant of his peace, [chapter 54] verse 10; for as that covenant in Genesis chapters 8-9 was upon Noah's offering that sacrifice and peace offering in it, 8:20, with which God professed himself so well pleased as it is said, he smelled a sweet savor, verse 21, so signifying himself at peace, and atoned with Noah and his sons, and propitious unto the new world they were to be the restorers of (for that was the season God took to express this covenant in)." (Thomas Goodwin, Works, V9, p52).

76 As Goodwin says: "And when God's covenant is in this 10th verse [of Isaiah 54] styled 'the covenant of his peace,' it imports as much as, not of grace simply, but of peace; as of God being pacified by an atonement of a mediator. And the aspect this word peace may seem to have here unto what in the chapter before had foregone, where the sacrifice of Christ being prophesied of, it is said, 'He was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him;' through which, God being pacified towards us, makes a covenant of peace with us. . . . For look, as in the latter part of that 8th chapter he relates the story of Noah's sacrifice, that then in the 9th chapter he records that covenant thereupon, just answerably in Isaiah, after he had in the foregoing 53rd chapter foretold Christ's great sacrifice of himself: Bearing our sins and sorrows, making his soul an offering for sin,' with promise that 'many should be justified thereof; and he should see his seed,' etc." (Works, V9, p74).
the full presence of God's blessing in your life isn't based on what you do—it's based solely on what Jesus did. Through His blood, Jesus purchased for all who belong to Him the full blessing of God.  

God's peace and blessing and everything else He's promised to you are based solely on the finished work of Christ. As with Noah's offering, God has smelled the soothing aroma of the blood of Jesus, and He is well pleased, and now speaks to you nothing but words of blessing and peace. As Noah's offering was the basis of God's covenant blessings and promises to Noah and his sons, Jesus' blood is the basis—and the only basis—of God's covenant blessings and promises to us in Christ.

6. The STABILITY of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about the security we have in Christ

The covenant that God makes with Noah and his sons in Genesis 9 is called an “everlasting covenant.” We see this in two places. In verse 12, the Lord says that the covenant He is making would be, literally, “for everlasting generations.” Then in verse 16, the Lord refers to this covenant as the “everlasting covenant.” Now, we've already seen (in Isaiah 54:9-10) that this covenant God is making with Noah and his sons is about more than just not destroying the earth again with a flood—that it's meant to point us to truths about the Covenant of Grace—about the gospel, and the redemption Christ accomplished, and what that means for God's people. So, the fact that God calls this covenant an everlasting covenant is meant to teach us something about the Covenant of Grace. It's here to point us to the security that we have in Christ. And, if there was any doubt about that from this passage, it's made crystal clear in other parts of Scripture. When Jeremiah looked forward to the New Covenant, he referred to it as “an everlasting covenant” (32:40). In the same way, the Lord spoke through the prophet Ezekiel about the New Covenant in this way: “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them” (37:26). So the New Covenant is spoken of as an everlasting covenant, just as the covenant here with Noah and his sons. And what that means is that the everlasting-ness of God's covenant with Noah is meant to point us to the everlasting-ness of the Covenant of Grace that is promised in the New Covenant.

We can see this in one other way in the context of God's covenant with Noah. At the end of Genesis 8, between Noah's offering in 8:20 and God's blessing of Noah and his sons in 9:1, we read in Genesis 8:21-22: “The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” Alright, now hold your place there and turn with me to Jeremiah 33. Now, Jeremiah 31-33 is a prophecy of the coming of the New Covenant—the reality that all the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament pointed to. And here in Jeremiah 33, this is what the Lord declares in order to illustrate the security and permanence of God's purposes of grace towards us in the New Covenant:

Jeremiah 33:20-26: 20Thus says the Lord, If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, 21then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant. . .22Thus says the Lord, If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, 23then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant. . .

77 Another Scripture here is Romans 4:6-8, “just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.” According to verse 6, then, God's full blessing rests upon the man who has been justified. That is, God's blessing is based on our justification—not on our sanctification. The man on whom God's blessing rests in its entirety still sins (vv7-8)—but his blessing is none the less diminished on account of his sin! What this means, dear friends, is that God's blessing is not based on our performance in the Christian life—it doesn't go up and down with our personal spiritual accomplishments. God's blessing isn't based on whether or not we sin—but on whether or not our sins have been forgiven. The blessing of God resting upon us isn't contingent on the absence of sin, but on the presence of a Savior. And for this reason the blessing of God rests fully and forever upon sinners who belong to Jesus. 

78 Goodwin: “[Jeremiah here] does insert, and (as it were) call in for witnesses to attest and confirm the said stability [of the new covenant]. . .which we find in the covenant made with Noah, which purpose they serve most aptly and suitably unto; for in making that covenant with Noah, God had uttered himself in these words of everlastingness, 'I will establish my covenant with thee,' so to certify and assure the like stability of this covenant of grace. . .As God produced the materials promised and specified in Noah's covenant, so he expressly utters them under the word covenant; yea, and calls that with day and night his covenant; my covenant, twice mentioned, verses 20 and 21, thereby manifestly calling us to look back to Noah's covenant, made for day and night; as in the making of which he had an eye to his like ratification and firm establishment of his covenant
What is the Lord doing? He is referring back to the covenant with Noah—and to Genesis 8:22 in particular. And He's saying—look—if you can do something to break the promise I made to Noah about preserving the fixed patterns of the earth, then—and only then—can you break My Covenant of Grace. If you can stop the sun and moon from coming up, then—and only then—can you nullify or mess up or revoke your standing in the Covenant of Grace. But until then, forget about it—there's nothing you can do to alter the covenant promises I've made to you. And that's not all. Notice that God is not only saying: If you can stop the sun and moon from coming up, you can break My Covenant of Grace (vv20-21)—but He's saying if you can defy time and space so as to make it so that the sun and moon never came up to begin with (v25-26)—only then can you break My Covenant of Grace with you—but not until then. Your standing in the Covenant of Grace is that secure. It's impossible to change God's purposes of grace towards you. You couldn't do it if you tried. You just don't have that kind of power. God is telling us that there is absolutely nothing we can do to nullify or change or revoke the promises that He's made to us in the Covenant of Grace: “For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken” (Isaiah 54:10). God's promises are forever.

7. The SCOPE of the Covenant of Grace: We learn who salvation is for

A) It is for COVENANT CHILDREN: God made the covenant not just with Noah, but with his entire family (6:18; 7:1; 9:9f): “God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, 'Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you...’” Earlier we noted how this has implications for seeing Noah as a type of Christ, our covenant representative. But we also gain an important insight here into how God works. The Lord is pleased to extend His covenant not just to individuals, but to entire families. We'll study this more in detail with Abraham, but even here in God's covenant with Noah, far before Genesis 17, we see that God's covenant extends to whole families—not only to believers, but also to their children. Now, this doesn't mean that covenant children (the children of believers) are automatically saved. Though all the children of believers are in the covenant—not all are necessarily of the covenant. Children of believers will show themselves to be either covenant-keepers (by embracing Christ by faith) or covenant-breakers (by rejecting Him). We see this clearly in Genesis 9, where Noah curses Canaan, the son of Ham, because of what his son Ham had done to him. Though Ham was a covenant child, it seems that he never embraced the covenant from the heart by faith. But what we see here is that God's covenant of grace, and as hiddenly intended by him then, when he uttered this of Noah's. And although the settlement of both of these ordinances began at the creation (as in Genesis 1), yet God having cursed the ground for man's sake upon Adam's fall. He now began with Noah upon a new covenant. . .even the intuition of Christ's sacrifice, typed forth in that of Noah's, [and] did anew say in His heart, and declared also to Noah, I will not again curse the earth for man's sake. But whilst the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.” (Works, V9, pp54-55).

79 This is true also of the church as a whole; outwardly all professing members belong to the visible church, but only true believers belong to the invisible church. So, there are two extremes to avoid: 1) the teaching that the children of believers are not in the covenant, on the one hand; and 2) the teaching that the children of believers are all of the covenant, on the other.

80 This is another way we would respond to Kuyper's claim that the covenant of Genesis 9 is made to all humanity without exception. Earlier we mentioned the importance of reading Genesis 9 in the context of Genesis 6; we noted that all humanity was actually destroyed in the flood—it was only God's chosen people out of all humanity that were spared from the judgment of the flood, and it is this same people with whom God covenants in Genesis 9. Here we can also note that while God's covenant promises extend to the children of believers and their children's children, even to a thousand generations, this does not mean that they encompass every specific child. It is here with Noah as it was later with Abraham. God made promises to Abraham and to his seed; but that did not mean His covenant extended to each and every descendant of Abraham. In time we come to learn that God's promises to Abraham were not to all his seed without distinction, but to the elect children of promise from among his physical seed. As Paul wrote in Romans 9:6-7: “they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: ‘Through Isaac your descendants will be named.’” The covenant line continues forever, but not all who come from Abraham's seed would be included in that covenant line. God would choose Isaac but not Ishmael, and Jacob but not Esau. So too, “God's covenant included Noah and Noah's family. The children of believers in their generations are included in God's covenant. God's covenant with Noah also teaches the truth, the painful truth, but the truth that underscores God's sovereignty in the covenant, that not all the children of believers are included in God's covenant. There are Ham's and there are Canaan's.” (Cammenga, Cosmic Grace). Francis Roberts also draws out the same truths from Genesis 9, noting in particular: “God covenants not only with His people, but with their seed, and with their seed's seed, that keep Covenant with him, even to all generations. . . Doubt: Seeing God established his Covenant not only with Noah, but with his sons, and their seed also, God seems to admit into Covenant with
promises are made, not just to individuals, but to entire families, even for generations to come: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). So, pray for your children. Plead with God to fulfill His covenant promises to your children, and their children, and their children—to confirm His covenant promises to your descendants after you. Also, invest in your children. A lot of father’s in ministry make the mistake of forgetting about their children; they invest in everyone else, but they fail to take the time to really invest in the lives of their own children. And teach your children. Teach them everything you know. Teach them about the gospel, but also teach them about the covenant promises. Tell them that they have been set apart, as born into a covenant family. But also tell them that it all means nothing if they don’t embrace Christ from the heart. Plead with them to show themselves covenant-keepers, and not covenant-breakers.

B) It is for INGRAFTED FOREIGNERS: The covenant of grace isn’t meant to be limited just to covenant children who grow up in the church. We are also given hints in the Noahic covenant that the Lord means to draw a people to Himself from every tribe, tongue, and nation under heaven:

1) Apparent in Noah’s BLESSING: After Noah blesses his son Shem, he goes on to say, “May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem” (9:27). What does this mean? Well, we are told that from the offspring of Japheth, “the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations” (10:2,5). Later in Scripture, in the last chapter of Isaiah, we are given a precious glimpse of future missionary labors among unreached Gentile nations (a Gentile mission to Gentiles). If we compare Genesis 10:1-4 with Isaiah 66:19, it is apparent that it is the scattered sons of Japheth that will bring home the gospel to the Messiah in the latter days. As another put it: the descendants of Japheth are “non-Shemites who become Shemites by embracing the God of Shem.” They're Gentile foreigners, strangers to God, outsiders—who come to take refuge in Christ.

himself the wicked as well as the righteous. For Ham was ungodly, and cursed by his own father; and more of the posterity of these three sons of Noah were wicked than godly, . . Resolution: . . In God's Covenant we must further distinguish betwixt the Outward Administration and common benefits thereof which come short of salvation; and the Inward Efficacy and special benefits thereof which reach unto salvation. In the former sense all the seed of Noah and of his sons were comprehended in this Covenant, and thereby secured against any other universal deluge of waters; but in the latter sense only the elect of their seed are comprised in this Covenant, as tending to secure them from eternal perdition in Christ.” (Roberts, pp238-259).

Again, we'll study this more in depth with the Abrahamic covenant. Ligon Duncan says it this way: “As God said that it was not good for Adam to be alone in the original Covenant of Works, guess what, it is not good to be alone in the Covenant of Grace either. God continues to operate on a family principle. By the way, this is foundational for your understanding of the Church. The Church is not incidental to God’s plan. God’s plan does not save individuals and—oh by the way—we might do a church as well. The Church is fundamental, it is central to what God is doing and in redemption and, of course, this cuts directly against the kind of intense individualism that continues to characterize the western world today.” (Covenant Theology course).

There is one particular family that has had a great impact on me personally and on the world for the kingdom of God. One night I was having dinner with my friend, and when I started asking more about his family, he began telling me the story of his great-grandfather’s conversion. What he said was that when his great-grandfather came to Christ, he made it a point of emphasis to pray for his children, and their children, and their children. The incredible outpouring of the Spirit on this particular family seems to be the result of one man claiming the covenant promises of God for his children and grandchildren.

There's a wonderful phrase I've heard: “missional family.” Most of us are prone to fall off on one side or the other; either we forget about our kids trying to reach the world, or we forget about the world trying to raise our kids. We need to do both.

There's no greater or more powerful illustration that I know of on this point than the story Bill Iverson tells: “I took my grandparents up on the highest building in Miami, and as we looked over Biscayne Bay to the vast Atlantic, I told them a story. A tropical storm came up and a boatload of school children and teachers capsized about one hundred yards offshore. A team of local football players was at the beach and saw the tragedy in the making. As the coach realized the danger, he galvanized the team into action, forming a human chain reaching out into the water. Soon children and adults were pulled along the chain to safety. But one greedy lad saw what looked like a mahogany jewelry box floating by. He reached for it, breaking the chain and drowning himself and several others. How tragic! But there is even a greater tragedy; the broken covenant promise—not God’s, but ours. I looked those youngsters in the eye with earnest tears, and encouraged them as a covenant grandfather: ‘Do not break the chain!’ How I plead for each child and grandchild daily by faith in the blood of the everlasting covenant. Take heart. We frail promise makers are not alone. The covenant God is the ultimate promise keeper.” (cf. www.woh.org).

Though, it is in many ways a comforting thought that every single nation and individual traces their roots ultimately to Noah. In that sense, every person we will meet, and every nation to which God may send us, originally came from a covenant family. Though they may be far from that reality now—all we are doing is calling people back to their true family roots.

Palmer Robertson (?). Goodwin: “You, brethren, even you, are a portion of that seed, Japetians all; and whose forefathers have been persuaded to dwell in the tents of Shem, and the gospel is amongst you to this day; you are, with other nations, the church in all these prophecies pointed at, and children of this covenant, which hath taken hold of many of you.” (V3, p77).
II) Typified through Noah's ANIMALS: Earlier we talked briefly about the significance of the animals in the covenant of Genesis 9. We asked how it could be that animals are included in this covenant, if indeed it is part of the Covenant of Grace? There, we explained that all creation, in a sense, is comprehended in the Covenant of Grace. We noted that just as all creation suffered the consequences for man's sin in the fall, so too, the healing of redemption will one day extend, in turn, to all creation. So far, so good. But I believe there's even more significance to the animals.

Some noted theologians believe that the animals which were gathered from every corner of the earth into Noah's ark were a picture of the reality that people from every tribe and tongue and nation will be gathered to Christ (cf. Revelation 5:9; 7:9). In particular, these theologians affirm that the clean and unclean animals which were gathered into the ark fore-pictured two distinct groups: the clean animals represented the Jews, and the unclean animals represented the Gentiles. This may well be the case, especially in light of what we read elsewhere in Scripture:

Isaiah 43:20, “The beasts of the field will glorify Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people.”

Here, God's chosen people are pictured as unclean and wild animals; they are likened to jackals and ostriches. And we see the same thing echoed in another passage in the New Testament:

87 Including Thomas Goodwin and Jonathan Edwards, who are quoted at length below.

88 It might be helpful to quote a few others at length here: Thomas Goodwin: “I must now again retrieve that objection which I before have made, namely, that there were all sorts of beasts, and fowls, and creeping things in the ark, which were saved from the waters, in a corporeal salvation, as well as Noah and his sons; yea, and with whom, after Noah and they came forth of the ark, that second covenant was made. And the objection is, that therefore this covenant cannot be drawn into a figure of the gospel covenant with the church, his elect. . .We read, Acts 10:11-12, how in the first beginning of the gospel, or of this new Christian church (as Peter speaks of it, Acts 15), there was a vessel let down from heaven in a vision to Peter, wherein were 'all manner of four-footed beasts in the earth: wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.' And the interpretation of this to Peter was, that the catholic church under the New Testament should consist as of men from out of all nations of Noah's seed, whether clean or unclean, Jew or Gentile, who should now be converted to the faith of Christ; and that this was signified unto Peter by all these sorts of creatures. Now, bring this to Noah's ark and covenant, Genesis 7th and 9th chapters, the ancients readily understood the coming in of all nations under the gospel into the church to have been prefigured thereby. And how usual it is Scripture to set out the several sorts of wicked men under the similitude of beasts—as Herod by a fox, Nero by a lion, the circumcision by dogs—needs not be enlarged upon. I may therefore apply what God doth in Ezekiel thereby. And how usual it is Scripture to set out the several sorts of wicked men under the similitude of beasts—as Herod by a fox, Nero by a lion, the circumcision by dogs—needs not be enlarged upon. I may therefore apply what God doth in Ezekiel. . .

Francis Roberts: “The ark had in it all variety of creatures, both clean and unclean; wolf and lamb, sheep and goats, etc. Yea in it was a cursed Ham, as well as a holy Noah and a blessed Shem. So the visible church, the spiritual ark has in it people of all nations, tongues and languages, of all sexes, ages, conditions and degrees; Jews and Gentiles; noble and ignoble; rich and poor; wise and foolish; bond and free; male and female; young and old. In this field, also are tares as well as wheat; in this net, bad, as well as good fish; in this house, foolish, as well as wise virgins; in this ark, hypocrites and reprobates, as well as the sincere and elect.” (p269).

Jonathan Edwards: “A resorting of beasts and a flocking of birds, which is a lively resemblance of what is often foretold of the gathering of God's people into his church from all quarters in the Messiah's days, and coming to him for salvation when all the ends of the earth should look to him to be saved (Isaiah 43:22). When God should bring the seed of his church from the east, and gather them from the west, and would say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back. Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth (Isaiah 43:6-7) and many other parallel places. And God would gather his people from all countries, agreeably to many prophecies, and it shall be said, Who are those that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows? The gathering of all kinds of creatures to the ark, clean and unclean, tame and wild, gentle and rapacious, innocent and venomous; tigers, wolves, bears, lions, leopards, serpents, vipers, dragons; and the door of the ark standing open to them, and their all dwelling there peaceably together under one head, even Noah, who kindly received them and took care of them, fed and saved them, and to whom they tamely submitted, is a lively representation of what is often foretold concerning the Messiah's days, when it is foretold, that not only the Jews should be saved but unclean Gentile nations, when the gates of God's church should be open to all sorts of people (Isaiah 60:11 with the context), when proclamation should be made to every one to come freely (Isaiah 55:1-9).” Nathan Pitchford: “God's command to Noah to bring on board the ark representatives of every kind of animal. . .and to keep them there together safely in the bosom of the ark, from which, being preserved from the flood, they might go out again and repopulate the earth, was a very appropriate shadow of the gospel, by which people of every diverse tongue and nation, even those naturally disposed to tear and rend each other, would be brought together as one in Christ (see Ephesians 2:11-22), and be fruitful in bringing many diverse men and women into the Kingdom of God, where they might live in harmony forevermore (cf. Isaiah 11:1-9).” (Images of Christ).
Acts 10:10-12, “[Peter] fell into a trance; and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. A voice came to him, ‘Get up, Peter, kill and eat!’ But Peter said, ‘By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean. Again a voice came to him a second time, ‘What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.’ ”

Later we come to understand that the animals in the vision symbolized unclean Gentiles—and that God was teaching Peter that He is calling to himself through the gospel not just the clean but the unclean; not just ethnic Jews, but men from every tribe and tongue and nation under heaven.

Pretty amazing, right? And if you’re still not convinced, also think about this: the way that God describes His covenant with Noah—which includes the animals—parallels the way God describes outside Gentile foreigners in His covenant with Abraham and in the New Covenant. In each covenant we see a distinctive 3-fold formula that includes both covenant children and outsiders:89

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVENANT</th>
<th>3 FOLD FORMULA DESCRIBING THE RECIPIENTS OF THE COVENANT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE NOAHIC COVENANT</td>
<td>“Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you...of all that comes out of the ark.” (Genesis 9:9-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT</td>
<td>“I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you...and every male among you...who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants” (Genesis 17:7,12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE NEW COVENANT</td>
<td>“For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself” (Acts 2:39)</td>
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So in light of these Scriptures, and a lot of other Scriptures,90 it’s very probable that these animals that are gathered together to Noah in the ark do indeed symbolize the truth that men and women from every nation under heaven will be gathered together to Christ.91 Just as God brought to Noah, in pairs of two’s and seven’s, every kind of animal on the earth to be preserved with him in the ark, so too the Lord will gather to himself men from every tribe and tongue and people.92 It is this universal imagery that provides the foundation for the universal offer of the Christian gospel: We are to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15).93

8. The SIGN of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about the picture of God’s promise

A rainbow is given as a sign of God’s covenant with Noah (9:12-17). This is the first explicit teaching on covenant signs in the Bible. Later, we’ll see that circumcision would be the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham, and the Sabbath would be the sign of God’s covenant with Israel under Moses. What is the purpose of covenant signs? “Covenant signs declare covenant promises to covenant people. [A covenant sign] is a token and guarantee of the word of God.”94 Our sacraments—the Lord’s supper and baptism—come from the idea of covenant signs. A covenant sign is a tangible picture of God’s everlasting pledge to His people. So the rainbow is given here as a picture of God’s pledge.

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89 Insight gleaned gratefully from Ligon Duncan in his course on Covenant Theology.
91 It is also fitting, in order to fore-picture various truths concerning salvation, that Noah’s animals are both said to have been gathered into the ark by Noah on the one hand (Genesis 6:19; 7:2), and are said, on the other hand, to come to Him of their own accord, in order to keep them alive in the ark (Genesis 6:20). They are saved from the flood because they are brought by Noah; and they are saved from the flood because they come to Noah. Both are equally true. Later we are told that they freely come to Noah because God had first promised them to Noah (Genesis 7:8-9,16). This illustrates two truths: 1) we’re saved because we come to Christ; and yet, 2) we only come to Christ because He himself draws us: “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” (John 6:37). But why do they come? “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also.” (John 10:16; cf. John 12:39-43; Romans 9-10; 1 Peter 2:8; etc).
92 This might be stretching the analogy past its proper limit, but could there also be significance to the amount of clean and unclean animals? Why seven times the number of clean animals? Could it be that Scripture here is also fore-picturing the truths that Paul would write about in Romans 11? For there he tells us of an incredible revival that will one day occur among the Jews, following the “fullness of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:25), which will be so widespread and pervasive, that Paul tells us “all Israel will be saved.” (Romans 11:26). So that in the end, Jews outnumber Gentiles! (See The Puritan Hope, Murray).
93 The last insight gleaned from O Palmer Robertson.
94 Alec Motyer, Covenant and Promise.
The picture was the rainbow (Genesis 9:12-13). The pledge was that God would never again send a flood to destroy every living thing on the earth (Genesis 9:14-15). So the rainbow served as a very tangible picture of God’s solemn promise. It was a guarantee to all those in the ark that the same wrath that swept away the rest of the world would never, ever, come upon them. Dark clouds may come again—God never promised it wouldn’t rain anymore—but God’s promise was that the rain would never again be sent in wrath for the purpose of flooding the earth. And again, remember that the promise God is making here is not only a temporal promise being made to every living thing in the world. Isaiah 54 makes clear that this promise is meant to teach us about the Covenant of Grace.

So, what does this teach us as believers in Christ? Well, one thing it teaches us is that as believers, dark storms may still come upon us. God never promised that the Christian life would be easy, that there would be no storms. But though the dark rain clouds will sometimes come—the flood of God’s wrath never will. As believers, what we can know as we go through seasons of hardship and distress and confusion is that there’s not a single drop of God’s anger in the trials that He sends us.

We see this hinted at in another place in Scripture where we read about a rainbow. Revelation 4:3 says, “And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.” I love what one writer says about this: “this rainbow…signifies to us that memorial which God himself has of his everlasting kindness to his church in the midst of all thundering dispensations whatsoever, as a sign and symbol unto his church of the light of his countenance shining on them in their thickest and darkest clouds. And this New Testament rainbow excels that other [sign] the old was but as a half-moon rainbow, a semi-circle, whereas this is round about the throne, and encompasses it; it is a whole circle. So let God turn himself in various dispensations, and look which way he pleases, yet still he does, and must necessarily, view his church through his rainbow, putting him in mind of mercy.”

Another thing that the covenant sign of the rainbow teaches us as believers relates to what is taking place when we partake of the sacraments. We mentioned that covenant signs are the foundation for our understanding of the sacraments: they are tangible pictures of God’s unwavering promises. So, we should be thinking about the sacraments—the Lord’s supper and baptism—as we read what God says in Genesis 9:14-16. First, in verses 14-15, notice that God is not saying, “Noah, when you see the bow in the cloud, you remember the covenant I made with you.” No, God is saying to Noah: When you see the bow in the cloud, “I will remember.” It’s like a husband who gives a ring to his wife on their wedding day, and he says to her, “when you look at that ring, I will remember that I gave myself to you.” The emphasis here is God’s remembering. When we see the sign, God remembers His covenant. So when there is a baptism taking place, or when we partake of the Lord’s supper—it’s not just us remembering what God has done—it’s God himself remembering. When we eat and drink of Christ’s body and blood, God remembers the promises He’s made to us.

95 Why a rainbow? How does a rainbow act as a picture of the Lord’s promise to never destroy the earth again with a flood? First, because of how it is described: We can better understand another function of the rainbow in understanding the word that is used to describe it. The original Hebrew doesn’t actually say, “rainbow,” it just says “bow,” and it is the exact same word that is used throughout Scripture for describing the battle war-bow (bow and arrow). The Lord is saying His wrath has been spent, and now He is hanging up His war-bow in the sky for all to see as living proof. Second, because of when it is displayed: God had destroyed the earth with rain; and rain comes from clouds. And so the Lord said to Noah, “It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.” (Genesis 9:14-15). In this way the rainbow is a picture of God’s promise to never destroy the earth again with a flood. Even as the rain falls to the earth, the Lord sends with it the rainbow as a visible token of the promise He had made.

96 Thomas Goodwin, Works, V9, p79.
97 “it is gloriously put, not upon our memory, which is fickle and frail, but upon God’s memory, which is infinite and immutable. Oh, it is not my remembering God, it is God’s remembering me which is the ground of my safety; it is not my laying hold of His covenant, but His covenant’s laying hold on me. My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God’s looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all His elect.” (Charles Spurgeon).
98 The insights here were gratefully gleaned from Ligon Duncan’s Covenant Theology course.
99 The insights here were gratefully gleaned from Ligon Duncan’s Covenant Theology course.
So verses 14-15 emphasize how when we look, God remembers. Then, in verse 16, God is the One who will both look and remember the sign: “When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant. . .” In verse 14, it’s us who sees the rainbow and then God remembers His covenant. In verse 16, it’s God who both looks at the sign and remembers His covenant. God gave the sign to Noah so that he could look at it—but isn’t it glorious that even in giving the sign, the important thing is not Noah looking at the sign and remembering God’s promise—the important thing is that God looks at the sign and remembers His promise—whether Noah looks at it or not. It’s God’s way of saying “I’m not going to forget the promise that I made to you. You may forget the promise I made to you—that’s why I have to give you a sign—but I will not forget. . .”

9. The FRUIT of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about the heart of the Christian life

Let’s turn back to Genesis 6:9. We looked at this passage before and saw that Noah wasn’t chosen because he was righteous—but rather Noah was righteous because he was chosen. That is, Noah was changed into a righteous man only because God had first chosen him and saved him by grace. So earlier, we basically focused on what verse 9 doesn’t mean; now we’re going to focus in on what it does mean. And we read in verse 9, “. . .Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.” Now, the first thing we need to understand is that when Scripture says that Noah was righteous and blameless, it doesn’t mean that he was perfect. When you read through the Psalms and constantly see the contrast between “the righteous” and “the wicked,” it’s not contrasting perfect people and sinners—there are no perfect people. It’s talking about those who know and love and follow God and those who don’t. And it’s the same thing here. When Scripture says that Noah was righteous and blameless, it’s saying that he was a man of character; a man of integrity; a man who feared and loved and followed God—and his life proved it. Noah’s life backed up his profession.

So, one the one hand, Noah wasn’t a hypocrite. He lived out what he preached to others. He was a holy man. But also, on the other hand, Noah’s righteousness wasn’t just an outward righteousness. A lot of people thought the Pharisees of Jesus’ day were a pretty righteous group of people, but the Savior called them “sons of hell” because their righteousness was nothing more than an external shell done for the applause of others. But Noah’s righteousness wasn’t like that—it was a true righteousness that went much deeper than just outward behavior. We’re told that he was a man who walked with God (6:9). Noah was a righteous man because he was a man who lived in communion with God.

And this is the essence of the Christian life; walking with God. Now, remember, Noah was a preacher; Peter 2:5 tells us that Noah was “a preacher of righteousness.” But that’s not what characterized his life. What characterized his life was that he was a man who walked with God. It wasn’t what Noah did—it wasn’t his occupation or job title or even daily activities that God was concerned about—it wasn’t what Noah did but who he was that God cared about. God cares about who we are. The goal of the Christian life isn’t to do more and more stuff for God, or even to know more and more about God—it’s to know God more and more: “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). So, knowing God is what eternal life is all about. Not knowing about God, but knowing God. And not doing a lot of stuff for God. That’s what Martha tried to do, remember, in Luke 10? Martha was so busy doing things for Jesus that she missed the whole point. We’re told she was “distracted with all her preparations” (Luke 10:40); and the word used there is actually one of the words Scripture uses for ministry (in Acts 6:4 and 2 Timothy 4:5). Martha was distracted with ministry. Doing a lot of stuff for Jesus, but her heart had become distant. Mary had chosen the good portion. The Christian life isn’t about knowing about God—and it’s not about doing things for God—it’s about knowing and loving and walking with God. This is what God desires of us. This is the heart of the Christian life.

Ibid. Duncan goes on: “And note that the sign does not procure God’s blessing—it confirms it. The bow in the cloud is not what got blessing for Noah. What got blessing for Noah is God’s election of him, God’s promise to him, and God’s redemption of him. The bow is given to confirm those things, not to procure them, but to confirm what God had already done. And now the sign confirms all of those things. So the sign does not procure the blessing; the sign confirms it.”

The Greek word is *diakonia*, from which we get the English word “deacon.”
10. The REQUIREMENTS of the Covenant of Grace: We learn how grace and obedience fit together

So, walking with God is the essence of the Christian life. God wants us to be a holy people who worship Him in spirit and truth; who seek Him and love Him and know Him more and more. But how is it exactly that our obedience as believers fits together with God’s grace? How is it exactly, for believers, that the law fits together with the gospel? How are we to think about the role of our obedience as those under God’s grace? Well, let’s read together what Scripture says in Genesis 9:3-7:

Genesis 9:3-7: 1Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. 2Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 3Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. 4Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. 5As for you, be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply on it.

This passages helps to show us a few ways that our Christian obedience fits together with God’s grace:

A) In the Covenant of Grace, obedience is commanded. In verse 3, God tells Noah and his sons that He has given every animal to them as food. Then in verse 4, the Lord forbids Noah and his sons to eat flesh with its blood. So here in verse 4 we have a command; God is giving Noah and his sons a command. Then, in verse 7, the Lord essentially repeats what He had said in verse 1: “As for you; be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply on it.” This is another command that the Lord is giving to Noah and his sons. And these commands are right in the middle of the covenant He’s making with them; and as we’ve seen, this covenant is part of the Covenant of Grace. So what this means is that there are commands in the Covenant of Grace—God gives His people commands to obey. And if we love Him, we will keep His commands (John 14:15). Not perfectly, of course, as we even see later with Noah. But our lives will be characterized by obedience.

B) In the Covenant of Grace, obedience is liberated. Notice that God does not make His covenant with Noah and his sons contingent on their obedience. God gives them a command in verse 4, and again, in verses 1 and 7 there are more commands: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” So God gives believers commands. But none of these commands are what merits God’s blessing. God had already blessed Noah and his sons—they had already entered into His blessing. God does not say in verse 4, “If you keep My command about the animals and their blood, then I will confirm My covenant with you.” God’s covenant isn’t based on their obedience at all. God’s commands to Noah and his sons are radically and entirely different than His command to Adam in the garden. In the garden, Adam’s continuance in God’s blessing was based entirely on his obedience to God’s command. But in the Covenant of Grace it doesn’t work that way. In the Covenant of Grace, we obey God’s commands—not in order to be accepted by God—but because we’ve already been accepted by God in Christ. We obey our heavenly father, not in order to sustain His favor, but because Christ has already and entirely secured His favor through His finished work on the cross. We obey, not as a Covenant of Works but as a rule of life; we obey not for life but rather from life.

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102 One thing that is important to see here is that this included both clean and unclean animals. Scripture had been distinguishing between clean and unclean animals throughout the account of Noah (Genesis 7:2,8-9; 8:20). So, when God tells Noah and his sons here in Genesis 9:3 that every animal has been given to them for food, we are to understand that as meaning both the clean and unclean animals. Under the Covenant of Grace, all food is clean. So, when Jesus declared all foods to be clean (Mark 7:19), this wasn’t a completely new teaching. At the beginning, all food was clean. God would later give stipulations about what was clean and unclean under the Law—but it wasn’t because certain foods are inherently bad. Old Testament ceremonial laws were never intended to be taken merely at face value (compare Deuteronomy 23:1-3 with Isaiah 56:3-7 regarding eunuchs and foreigners). God gave the food regulations in the Law as a temporary arrangement to teach us about holiness—to be a tangible reminder that God’s people are to be a holy people—a people set apart from the world.

103 In some parts of Asia, an important question that arises here is if New Testament believers are hereby forbidden from consuming the blood of animals. The sense of the command seems to be aimed at respecting the sacredness of life rather than forbidding the consumption of the blood of animals. Ainsworth writes: “With the soul: Or, ‘in the soul,’ that is, ‘the life;’ for so the soul often signifies: Job 2:6; John 10:15,17. The blood: This declares what the former meant; ‘in the soul,’ that is, ‘the blood;’ . . . So this law against eating flesh with the life or blood, ‘seems to be against cruelty, not to eat any part while the creature is alive, or the flesh not orderly mortified and cleansed of the blood;’ 1 Sam. 14:32-34, and this the reason following does confirm. Also the Hebrew Doctors. . . understand to forbid the eating of any member, or of the flesh of a beast taken from it alive.” (Genesis 9:4). Waltke says: “By forbidding the eating of blood, this regulation instills a respect for the sacredness of life and protects against wanton abuse. . . Adding meat to the human diet is ‘not a license for savagery.’” (p144).
C) In the Covenant of Grace, obedience is crucial. In Genesis 9:5-6, we see that there are consequences for sin. Here in verses 5-6, God is actually establishing the ordinance of capital punishment; the one who intentionally and unlawfully sheds the blood of another is to have his blood shed in return. Paul referenced the same truth when he said in Romans 13:4 that the state does not bear the sworn for nothing, “for it is a minister of God to you for good.” God has given to human governments the power of enforcing capital punishment. The death penalty in cases of murder is not contrary to Scripture—but actually commanded in Scripture. So, we see that there are consequences for sin. And the same principle is true for us as believers. Being a Christian doesn't mean that there's no longer going to be earthly consequences for your sin. King David didn't lose his salvation when committed adultery with Bathsheba and indirectly murdered her husband. But he sure plunged himself into an ocean of misery. So being in the Covenant of Grace doesn't mean there won't be very real consequences for our sin in this life. We ought to greatly fear our sin as Christians.

11. The PRIVILEGE of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about the mission God has given His people

We read in Genesis 9:1, “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’ ” We looked at this passage earlier in speaking about God's blessing of Noah. We saw how God is repeating here the same thing that He had spoken to Adam back in Genesis 1:28. And we saw that the reason this is so amazing was that when God blessed Adam, God was blessing a man who was not yet a sinner. But now, with Noah and his sons here in Genesis 9, God is repeating the same blessing to sinners. Through the atonement fore-pictured in Noah’s burnt offerings, God is restoring to mankind the blessing that Adam had lost at the fall. Precious truths.

Well, what we’re going to see here is that, in the Covenant of Grace, God is not only restoring the blessing of God—He’s also restoring the mission of God. Just like the blessing of God, this command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth was the exact same command God had given to Adam back in Genesis 1:28. So, when the Lord said to Noah and his sons, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” He was restoring to redeemed sinners the sacred privilege of filling the earth with His glory. And this command to Noah and his sons doesn’t only point us backwards in Scripture—it also points us forward—to Christ and the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Think about it this way:

“The first Adam failed to carry out God’s mandate. Now Jesus, the last Adam, is fulfilling the original mandate which God gave to humanity. . .God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful, to multiply, to fill the earth, and to subdue it for God’s glory. Jesus, the second Adam, has taken up that task. Just as the first Adam had a bride to serve as his helper (Gen.2:18-25), so the second Adam has chosen a bride to serve as his helper: the church (Eph. 5:29-32). Together with his bride, Jesus is fulfilling the original mandate by filling the earth with regenerated images of God, who in turn submit to God’s rule and subdue the earth for His glory. To state it a little differently, the cultural mandate, which God gave to the first Adam and his bride, has now become the Great Commission.”

104 See Ainsworth, Calvin (a bit modified), O Palmer Robertson, etc. Ligon Duncan says: “Here see a direct command for capital punishment. . .So you see a nice little Hebrew parallelism here. He who sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, in that first phrase of Genesis 9:6. So this is not a statement of what will just inevitably happen, that when people kill, other people will kill them. This verse is explaining how God will demand an accounting for the manslayer, whether he is human or beast. . .like so many other principles, capital punishment existed prior to the Mosaic legislation as we see in other people will kill them. This verse is explaining how God will demand an accounting for the manslayer, whether he is human or beast. . .like so many other principles, capital punishment existed prior to the Mosaic legislation as we see in .

105 Not only is this very principle of a life for a life reiterated in the Law, which was given as God's rule for the church, but the very giving of the principle is in the context of God's covenant in Genesis 9, which again, is part of the Covenant of Grace. Another example of this principle is the familiar refrain through the book of Deuteronomy—“that it may be well with you.” (Covenant Theology course). Waltke says: “The instruction about capital punishment (Gen. 9:5-6) is set within the frame of the Lord’s promise (8:20-22) and covenant (9:8-17), which is given to all humanity, to preserve all human life. In that context, the legislation to execute capital punishment pertains to all people (9:5-6). Capital punishment is founded upon the truth that all human beings bear the image of God, setting them apart from the rest of the living creatures. . .The legislation, ‘whoever sheds the blood of man by man shall his blood be shed,’ gives evidence that the civil authority as God's minister now has the responsibility to execute capital punishment for a capital offense.” (Waltke, pp157-58).

106 Taken from The Cultural Mandate and Your Work Today, Hugh Whelchel, theresurgence.com/2013/08/29. The quote finishes, “. . .which God has given to Christ (Isa. 42:1-12; 49:1-26), and through Christ to the church (Matt.28:18-20; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8; 13:17; Rom. 15:18). We could even say it a little differently than that: the cultural mandate, which God gave to the first Adam and his bride, has always been the Great Commission. The mission to be fruitful and multiply and fill out the earth and subdue it was never intended to be taken only in a physical, temporal kind of way. God’s plan from the beginning was to fill the earth with His glory in the fullest possible sense (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14). Isaiah 27:6 says, “In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with fruit.” The fruit
It's also good to be reminded again here of the context of Genesis 9:1. God gives this awesome privilege to Noah and his sons immediately after we are told that the flood hadn't cured man's nature. Genesis 8:21 reminds us that Noah and his sons are still a people that struggle with sin; they're still sinners. **So who is God going to use in powerful ways to fill the earth with His glory? Christians who still find themselves struggling with sin.** By the way, we see the same truth in Matthew 28. Who does Jesus send out in the Great Commission? Right before verse 18 we have verse 17: “When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.” These are the people Jesus was pleased to send out to the world and use to gather entire nations and kingdoms. Jesus is pleased to use us as His instruments—not just on our best days or when we're following Him the closest—but even in the midst of our worst failures and blunders. He uses us in the midst of our sin. He's pleased to use struggling, failing Christians—weak and broken vessels—to do wonderful things for His glory.

And this isn't just something for pastors or missionaries. If you're a believer in Jesus, this awesome privilege is for you, wherever He may call you to serve. Whether you're a minister or a mechanic or a mom—God has given you this sacred privilege—to fill your little section of the earth with His glory. Whoever you are, wherever you are; you can teach, live, pray and give to God's global mission of redemption. In Christ, your life has incredible eternal significance, whatever it is that you do.  

So, God gives His people a charge: “Be fruitful and multiply” (9:1,7). But again, God's covenant is in no way conditional on us keeping this charge. God doesn't say to Noah and his sons, “If you are fruitful and multiply, then I will confirm My covenant with you.” God gives Noah and his sons a commission, but His covenant with Noah—His peace and blessing—was never based on obedience to that mission. And that's exactly the way it is in the gospel. God has given us commands. And God has given us a mission: to fill the earth with His glory. But God never says to us: “If you go and make disciples of all nations, then I will bless you and give you My peace.” God has given us His blessing and peace to the fullest measure—and it's in that knowledge that we fill the earth with His glory.

12. The OUTCOME of the Covenant of Grace: **We learn of the sure hope we have in Christ**

When Noah stepped out of the ark, along with his family and the animals, he entered into a new world; an earth that had been purged of wickedness and recreated in holiness and righteousness. Scripture emphasizes this when it tells us in Genesis 8:13 that the day the water was dried up from the earth was the first day of the first month of the first year since the flood. Now, on the one hand, this is to signify the new birth. Scripture refers to believers as “new creations” in Christ, because when God saves someone, everything about them becomes new—new desires, new longings, a new will, a new purpose, a new Lord. Just as it was with the earth, we have become new creations in Christ. So in one sense, this new world is pointing us to what believers experience in regeneration.

But in another sense, this new world is pointing us to what believers will experience in glorification. When Noah and his family and the animals stepped off the ark, they became the inheritors of a new earth. And this is to signify the coming reality for all those in Christ. For, “according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:3-13).  

Isaiah is talking about here isn't figs or grapes—it's the work of the Spirit imparting life and changing lives for the glory of God (See also Isaiah 4:2; 37:31; Hosea 14:4-8; John 1:1-5,8; Romans 7:4; Galatians 5:22-23). God's desire from Genesis 1 was a people who worship Him in Spirit and truth. So when God said to Noah and his sons, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” He was giving them (in Old Testament language) the sacred honor of participating in His global plan of redemption.  

We could add here that being fruitful and multiplying in the truest intended sense isn't just an awesome privilege God has given the redeemed—it's also one of the purposes of redemption: Romans 7:4 says, “Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.” It may be that this truth is also being hinted at in the story of Noah. In light of what we discovered about the possible significance of the animals together with Noah on the ark, we may hear Romans 7:4 being echoed in Genesis 8:17, where the Lord said to Noah: “Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they maybreed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”

107 See also 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 and Revelation 21:1-8. Waltke says: “The theme of this toledot, the annihilation of the
Now, let’s meditate on this theme of glorification a little more. Scripture tells us that every living thing that entered into the ark also went out together with Noah from the ark (8:17-19); “Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird. . .went out by their families from the ark” (v19). No life was lost through the storm. In the same way, Scripture tells us that Christ will bring home to glory with Him every single person who has been united to Him by faith—no exceptions. Jesus said, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day” (John 6:39). In Romans 8:29-30, Paul describes our hope of glory as believers with such certainty that he uses the past tense: “and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” The reality of inheriting eternal glory is so certain for believers that we can talk about it in the past tense.111

God wants us to live in this hope. He could have saved us without letting us know all He had done and all He had promised to do. But He didn't do that—He wants us to know; He wants us to live in the absolute assurance that He who promised is faithful; that He will bring us home to glory. Friends, if you belong to Jesus, then you are are inside the ark of salvation, and there is only one destination. You may feel like a lowly worm—but even the worms that boarded the ark were brought safely through to the new world! He will do what He promised; and He wants you and I to live upon that promise! He wants us to know that we are bound for glory. We may feel the wind and the waves—of course we will—but if we are in the ark we have nothing to fear. The day is quickly coming when we who have entered into the ark will again step out into a new world, to live and reign with Christ forever; “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

V. A Few Final Applications from the Noahic Covenant

1. There are WARNINGS here:

A) A warning to THE WORLD of the coming of Christ and the judgment to come: Jesus said in Luke 17:26-27: “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.” There is a warning for us here. The final judgment will come the same way that it did with the flood. There will be no time to suddenly change your mind; it will be like a lightning flash. Now is the acceptable time; today is the day of salvation. I'm not sure how Noah's neighbors reacted to his preaching. Maybe they laughed at him; maybe they ignored him. But then, one day, the door shut, and the sky began to get incredibly black. Perhaps it was a giant tsunami.112 Maybe they saw a great wave from a distance and started banging on the ark for Noah to open the door. But it was too late. The final judgment is coming, whether the world is ready for it or not. Flee to Christ, the only ark of salvation.

B) A warning to THE CHURCH of the coming of Christ and the judgment to come: The warning isn't just for those outside of the church. Though Noah's son Ham was safe in the ark when the flood came, in the end he showed himself to be of the seed of the serpent (Genesis 9:20-27). He had been in the ark like the rest of Noah's family. He was a member of Noah's church. He was a covenant seed of the Serpent's kingdom and the earth they have corrupted and the preservation of the seed of the woman through it to a renewed earth, foreshadows the future destruction of this present evil world by fire and the preservation of the faithful by the specified salvation in Christ to inherit a regenerated earth that will never pass away (Matt.24:30-31,37-39; Luke17:26-32; 2 Thess.1:5-9; 2Peter 3:6-7). The elect covenant family going through a sea of death and coming forth from their burial chamber (Isa.26:19-21) is a pledge that the redeemed will be brought through the cataclysm of the final judgment." (Waltke, pp151-52).

111 And it's not only certain because God has promised it to His people; it's certain because God has promised it for His people. This is hinted at in Genesis 7:2-3, “You shall take with you of every clean animal,. . .and of the animals that are not clean. . .also of the birds of the sky. . .to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth.” The whole reason the animals were kept in the ark was to repopulate the new world. This also points us to God's purposes for us in salvation. Ephesians 2:4-7 says, “But God, being rich in mercy. . .made us alive together with Christ. . .and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." In other words, the whole reason God saved us was in order that He might forever lavish the riches of His kindness upon us—not just in this life—but for all eternity. Paul says the same thing in 2 Thessalonians 2:14, “It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We also see this dual foundation for assurance, both God's promise and God's purpose, in Hebrews 6:13-20.

112 May be hinted at in Isaiah 54:9, where the Hebrew reads that God swore the waters would not cross over the earth again.
child, and a professor of the true religion. But it seems that after the flood had died down, he began to show his true colors. In the end, all his offspring are cursed. So it will be in the resurrection of the dead. Our Savior tells us that there will be many on that day who will be thrust out of the kingdom. But they are not atheists or Hindus or Muslims or Buddhists. They had been professors of the true religion. They were those who had called Jesus "Lord," and even those who had healed and cast out demons in his name (Matt.7:21-23). Maybe some of them had been powerful preachers or the kind of Christians known for their incredible zeal for Christ. But you know what? They never really knew Christ. Just like Ham sat in the ark, all their lives they sat in the church. But they missed the reality. They were part of the visible church, but never true members of the church invisible. They busied themselves doing Christian things all their life, but they had never truly known Christ, and on the day of judgment they will be cast away. My friends: Don't let this happen to you.

2. There are COMFORTS here:

In God's dealings with Noah and his family in the ark, we are given a precious insight into the heart of God towards His people in the midst of all their distresses. Let's read Isaiah 54 one more time:

Isaiah 54:9-11: 9 For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. 10 For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken. 11 O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires. . .

Verses 9-10 of Isaiah 54 teach us about the surety and stability of God's people in the Covenant of Grace—they refer back to the promise that God had made after the flood. But here in verse 11, we get a precious glimpse into God's disposition towards His people in the midst of the flood. Verse 11 tells us what God was experiencing as His people were being battered to and fro, and swept up and down on the waves in the ark. Listen to how one pastor describes God's words here in verse 11:

"There is no speech or passage which we find our God to utter in Scripture more pathetic or passionate than this. . .than to hear God, in the midst of their afflictions and temptations, cry out on the sudden, and with the greatest vehemency, 'O thou afflicted, and tossed with tempests, and not comforted!' . . .it is as if the dearest friend, or most loving husband or father, having his dearest relations of wife, and children, and friends in a ship at sea, and viewing them to sit within the rage of wild waves and winds, which he, standing himself safe on the immediate shore, sees and beholds with his own eyes, and at every bending of the ship near to a suppression under those waves, his heart beats, and he lamentably cries out at every toss and motion, and thinks with himself, how must their hearts be afflicted, and not comforted in the midst of all, that are shiftless and helpless in this storm, and know not what to do! Like to such a one doth God express his affections here."113

Our days as pilgrims in this world are like Noah's voyage in the ark. The Lord has saved us from His judgment and brought us into the ark of salvation, who is our Savior, Jesus Christ. And we know that the day is coming soon when we will step out into a new world; a new heavens and earth in which righteousness dwells. But the voyage can be long. It can be hard. It can be scary. At times we are storm-tossed. We feel like we're reeling, and there's no comfort. We wonder, where is God? It's in those moments that we need to fight with all that we have to believe the truth expressed in this verse: God isn't unmoved by the sufferings and trials we go through in this life. He's not indifferent when we're hurting or reeling, or when we're lonely and scared. His heart goes out to us, even as He also sovereignty guides us. And the day is quickly coming when He will usher us home to himself.114

113 Thomas Goodwin, Works V9, p75.
114 “The ark was a great while tossed to and fro on the face of the flood, ready to be overwhelmed; but at last rested on a high mountain or rock, and the company in it had enlargement and liberty, and were brought into a new world. So the church in the Messiah's days is long in a state of affliction, tossed with tempest and not comforted (Isaiah 54:11). But when she is ready to be overwhelmed, God will lead her to the rock that is higher than she (Psalm 61:2), and she shall be brought out of her affliction into a new world (Isaiah 65:17-18), and shall dwell in God's holy mountain." (Edwards, Types of the Messiah).
The Covenant with Abraham
The Abrahamic Covenant

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The Abrahamic Covenant

I. The Background of the Abrahamic Covenant

1. The Descendants of NOAH: Genesis 10

   A) JAPHETH (Genesis 10:2-5): From the sons of Japheth, we're told, “the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands...” (v5). We mentioned in our lesson with Noah that these names listed in verses 2-4 become especially significant in light of the last chapter of Isaiah. This is because in Isaiah 66 we're given what is probably the clearest Old Testament prophecy of the missionary labors that would take place in the New Testament age. Isaiah 66:18-21 describes the fulfillment of the Great Commission. And in the midst of that passage in Isaiah, we are told that missionary laborers would be sent to places like Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tarshish; these are the same places recorded in Genesis 10:2-4. It's the sons of Japheth who would be brought home to the Savior in the latter days. Noah said in Genesis 9:27, “May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem.” What's he saying? Well, the Jews would come from Shem—the Savior would come from Shem. But the sons of Japheth would be Gentile outsiders who would embrace the God of the Jews.

   B) HAM (Genesis 10:6-20): In Genesis 9:20-27 we read how Noah cursed Canaan, the son of Ham, because of what he had done to him. Now, here in chapter 10, we learn about the impact this curse had on all of Ham's offspring: From CUSH (through Nimrod, verse 8) would come Babylon (v10) and Assyria (v11), pagan kingdoms that would later drive God's people out of their land into exile (Israel would be exiled by Assyria; Judah later by Babylon). From MIZRAIM would come not only the Egyptians (the nation who enslaved the Hebrews in the days leading up to the deliverance of Moses), but also the Philistines (v14), some of the worst enemies of the Old Testament church in the days of the judges and the kings. From CANAAN would come all the nations who made up the Canaanites (v19), the people who dwelt in the promised land that God's people had to drive out, and who became stumbling blocks to God's people later when they couldn't drive them out completely.

   C) SHEM (Genesis 10:21-31): From Shem would come Eber (v21), which, in turn, is where we get the term Hebrews; because it would be through Eber's line that Abraham would come; and of course, through Abraham's line that the Messiah would one day come (as we'll find out later). We'll deal with Shem and his descendants in more detail below as we consider the ancestry of Abraham.

2. The Tower of BABEL: Genesis 11:1-9

   A) The STORY of the Tower of Babel: God's command to Noah and his seed was to “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1). The story of the tower of Babel describes for us how mankind rebelled against God by attempting to do exactly the opposite. Instead of filling the earth, they planned to stay in one place. And instead of seeking God's glory, they sought to make a name for themselves (11:4). Staying in one place and building a city seems to reflect a desire for security. On the other hand, building a tower and making a name for themselves seems to reflect a desire for significance. These two things: security and significance, are not bad things in and of themselves. The problem was that these men were trying to seek after these things apart from God. Instead of seeking the protection that comes from God they sought for it in high walls and man-power; instead of seeking the praise that comes from God they sought for it from those around them. The heart of their sin was self-sufficiency; “the tower is a symbol of human autonomy.” Some people think that the tower of Babel presents before us a picture of man-made religion; the men in this story are trying to climb up to God by their own works and effort. And it's a helpful analogy in some respects. But

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1 It even seems that this passage in Isaiah is describing the Gentile mission to the Gentiles.
2 Mizraim is the Hebrew word for Egypt; and Psalm 78:51 specifically reference the Egyptians as the descendants of Ham.
3 “The designation 'Hebrew' (Hb. 'ibri' see 14:13) is derived from 'Eber' (Hb. 'eber).” (ESV Study Bible note on 10:21).
4 ESV Study Bible note on Genesis 11:1-9.
actually, the people in this story weren't trying to get to God at all; their whole goal was trying to find ways to live without Him. Actually then, these men were trying to exist without God—and trying to exist without God is the epitome of rebellion against God. They thought their tower was pretty great, but Scripture says that God had to come down to see it (v5). The Lord then confuses their languages (Babel means “confusion”), and scatters them abroad over the face of the earth (v9). All their efforts were for naught; and the very thing they feared came upon them after all. We're left with the truth of Psalm 127:1 ringing in our ears: “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.”

**B) The SIGNIFICANCE the Tower of Babel:** The tower of Babel points us backward to the rebellion of Adam in Genesis 3; for ultimately, their actions were the fruit of Adam’s sin. It also points us forward, because from Babel would one day emerge Babylon, the city of destruction whose people are epitomized in Scripture as those who set themselves in opposition to God. We're also pointed inward, to examine our own hearts before the Lord. Those living in Babel had sought security and praise in things other than God. What ways do we do the same thing? What ways do we seek security and praise elsewhere? Even for those of us in ministry: What ways do we try to gain praise and significance through our ministry; or what are the ways that we try to do our ministry solely by means of our own efforts, or gifts, but apart from God? Lastly, we're pointed upward, to God, and what He’s promised. The Lord would later say: “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great” (Genesis 15:1; cf. Psalm 3:3). What's God saying here? He’s saying: *Abram, you don’t have to seek security in other things—because I AM your shield; and He’s saying: Abram, you don’t have to seek a reward anywhere else, because I'm going to lavish upon you rewards far greater than you could ever dream, Abram.* So then, what we learn is that God knows how to protect His people, and God knows how to reward His people, and He’s promised to do both. 

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3. The Ancestry of ABRAHAM: Genesis 11:10-32

The genealogy in Genesis 11:10-32 records the ancestry of Abraham. It’s similar to the genealogy back in Genesis 5, in that both genealogies span the length of 10 generations. It also differs from the genealogy back in Genesis 5 in at least a few ways: First, we notice that people recorded in Genesis 5 lived a lot longer than they do now in Genesis 11. Secondly, the phrase that was repeated over and over again in Genesis 5, that “all the days of [Adam] were [so many] years, and he died”, is missing here in Genesis 11. Thirdly, though it seems the covenant line in Genesis 5 was preserved faithful to the Lord, we come to learn that the covenant line in Genesis 11 had fallen into paganism. We know this because of what Scripture records in Joshua 24:2: “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “From

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5 Jay Sklar notes the play on words here: “in contrast to humanity's desire to make a name [Heb. Šĕm] for its own glory, the Lord himself, through the line of Shem ["name"] will make Abram's name great.” (Sklar, Notes on the Pentateuch, p.50).

6 One of the questions that confronts us here is simply: Will we live and spend ourselves here on earth for the glory that fades away, or for the glory that endures forever? A few powerful examples to me personally: 1) The city of Tyre in Ezekiel 26: 2) Many film stars now who are out of their prime. Just 20 years before, they were basking in all the glory the world could afford. But now they've gained weight, they've aged; they're no longer being cast for the big films or asked to be interviewed on the late night shows. There's nothing wrong with aging and gaining weight—it happens to all of us! But the point is that this is the glory they (many of them) were living for. And now, after just a few short years, it's already fading and shriveling up. The lesson for us: Don't live your life for the glory that fades and withers. Live for the glory that lasts forever.

7 This could be because of the nature of the catastrophic atmospheric changes that took place in the flood. Remember, it wasn't just rain that came down in the flood—rain lasting for 40 days can't flood the earth—we're told that “the floodgates of the sky were opened” (7:11), which were the waters that God had placed “above the expanse” in Genesis 1:7. So something massive was happening here environmentally that may easily have affected life expectancy in a major way, to say the least.
ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham. . .”  So then, somewhere between Shem and Terah, the covenant line had fallen away from God into idol worship. We can also mention something here about Abram’s father. Again, we’re told in Joshua 24 that Abram’s father and grandfather served other gods. But notice that in Genesis 11:31, it wasn’t only Abram and Sarai—but Abram’s father Terah—that set out for the land of Canaan, the land of promise. On the way they stopped in Haran and settled there (v31). Later, Abram continued the journey; but Terah never made it; he died in Haran (v32). Why didn’t Terah make it all the way to Canaan? What happened? Well, his name might give us a hint. In Hebrew, Terah means “delay.” Terah delayed. He went half way, but never made it home. And what a sober lesson for us. Never rest short of salvation. Being outside of Christ means no salvation no matter how close you got. There’s no middle ground. Either we’ve come home to Christ and entered His rest or we haven’t.10

II. An Overview of the Abrahamic Covenant

* The covenant with Abraham is the next stage in the Covenant of Grace:

I. The Covenant of Works with Adam

II. The Genesis 3:15 promise of a Redeemer:

A) The Noachic Covenant
B) The Abrahamic Covenant
C) The Mosaic Covenant
D) The Davidic Covenant
E) The New Covenant

* The main passages involving the covenant with Abraham are Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-27; and 22:15-19. The covenant that God makes with Abraham is established with him and then confirmed throughout his life over the course of several years. The covenant isn’t just confirmed to Abraham, but also to Isaac and then Jacob.11 Though the word “covenant” occurs only in Genesis 15 and 17, we also see covenant language and promises earlier in Genesis 12 with Abraham’s call, and then again in Genesis 22 on Mount Moriah. So all these passages are important for understanding the covenant with Abraham.

* God’s covenant with Abraham is so central to the Scriptures, that it’s been said that Genesis 12:1-3 is “the center point of the promises of the covenant of grace in the history of redemption. Everything 8

8 We don’t know exactly how long they were in Haran before Abram left for Canaan, but the fact that they “settled there” (v31) implies it was a long time. This was more than just someone getting sick or needing to pick up more supplies in Haran. 

9 There is some ambiguity about whether Abram left Terah in Haran before or after Terah had died. The account in Genesis seems to imply that Abram left Terah in Haran while he was still alive, and that he continued to live in Haran another 60 years before his death. We come to this conclusion by simply calculating the numbers: Terah was 70 years old when he had Abram (v26); Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran for Canaan; and 70 + 75 would make Terah 145 years old when Abram left Haran; we’re told in verse 32 that Terah lived to be 205 years old, which would mean that Abram left his father Terah in Haran and he continued to live there in Haran another 60 years. But in Acts 4, Stephen says that Abram only left Haran for Canaan after his father had died. Three main solutions have been proposed: 1) In Acts 7, Stephen is speaking of Terah’s spiritual death. Having begun his spiritual journey to Canaan, he apostatized in Haran 60 years before his death, at which time Abram left Haran for Canaan. 2) Stephen is following an alternate text (the “Samaritan Pentateuch”), which says that Terah died when he was 145 years old (rather than 205). 3) We don’t actually know who it was that was born to Terah when he was 70 years old, as 11:26 tells us: “Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.” It’s likely that Abram is mentioned first, not because he was the first-born, but on account of his importance in the story. In this case, Terah had his first son when he was 70 years old, but didn’t have Abram until he was at least 130 years old. 

10 One more application here: We never know what God is doing. If we were to just take this passage of Scripture at face value, without knowing what would happen in Genesis 12 and beyond, it would seem to us that Terah is very much the focus of the story. It’s not Abram who takes along his father Terah, but “Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans, . . .” (v31). Terah seems to be very much the main character and central figure of the story in verse 31. From the outside looking in, we would think this story is about Terah; we would think God is at work in Terah; God is drawing this man Terah to himself. But all along, God’s purpose was actually for Terah’s son. All along, God’s plan was to use Terah to draw Abram. The lesson? We never know what God is doing. Often we are wrong; and often, He is drawing to himself those we don’t expect.

11 Exodus 6:4 speaks of the “covenant” (singular) God made with “them” (plural): It was the same covenant being confirmed.
before Genesis 12:1-3 is leading up to it. Everything after Genesis 12:1-3 in the Bible is fulfilling it.”

*The New Testament constantly refers back to God's covenantal dealings with Abraham to explain the foundation of our salvation in Christ. Our salvation is built upon God's covenant with Abraham. So we can only understand our own salvation to the degree that we understand God's covenant with Abraham.

"Just as we saw in God's covenant with Noah, there are both temporal and eternal components in God's covenant with Abraham. God makes temporal promises (land, seed, blessing)—but behind the temporal promises were eternal realities. Just like all the other manifestations of the Covenant of Grace, God's covenant with Abraham is here to teach us about the Savior and salvation. In particular, we learn about:

1. The CALL of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about how God draws us to himself
2. The RECIPIENTS of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about who God's people are
3. The PROMISES of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about what we've been given in Christ
4. The NATURE of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about how sinners come into favor with God
5. The STABILITY of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about the security we have in Christ
6. The MARK of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about how we can know our faith is real
7. The SIGN of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about the badge God has given to His people

III. What we learn from the Abrahamic Covenant

1. The CALL of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about how God draws us to himself

   A) The NATURE of God's Call: Genesis 12:1-3 records God's calling of Abram to leave kin and country for the land that God would show him. There are both commands and promises in the call of Abram. We see the COMMANDS in 12:1: “Now the Lord said to Abram, Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house. . .” God is calling Abram to leave: 1) his country (land); 2) his relatives (people); and 3) his father's house, which probably signifies both his father's authority and his family heritage; as he is being called to submit to a new authority and obtain a new heritage. But along with the commands God gives Abram to leave his country, relatives and father's house, the Lord also gives him PROMISES. We see seven promises in verses 2-3:

   1) And I will make you a great nation: In Genesis 17:4-5, the Lord expands this promise from one great nation to “a multitude of nations.” From Abram would come forth entire physical nations—not

12 Quote from Ligon Duncan from his Covenant Theology course.
13 Traditionally, the various promises made to Abraham have been classified in different ways. Perhaps the most simply way to classify the promises are the communicable versus the incommunicable. This same language is also used as it relates to the doctrine of God: which attributes we also reflect (communicable) versus which are His alone (incommunicable). But the same terminology can also be used with respect to the promises to Abraham. Many of the promises to Abraham are communicable to us; that is, we have a share in them just as much as Abraham did. For instance, Paul writes in Galatians 3:9 that “those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.” But some of the promises to Abraham are incommunicable to us; that is, they were made to him alone and we have no share in them. For instance, speaking of the promise to Abraham that the Lord would make him into a great nation, Goodwin notes that, “as we all know, [this] is to us incommunicable” (Children in the Covenant, Works V9, p428f). Witsius puts it this way: “The promises annexed to the stipulation are of various kinds; some are spiritual, others corporal. The spiritual, are either general and common to all believers, or special and peculiar to Abraham.” (V2, p140). Others have been even more specific. For instance, Roberts divides up the promises into as much as five different groups: 1) Some of these covenant privileges tend to, and terminate in Jesus Christ alone the Head of the covenant, as only accomplishable in him. As, those promises: ‘In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.’ All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. ‘And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’ These promises were directed to Abraham, but only fulfilled in Abraham's primary seed, Jesus Christ, as the New Testament abundantly witnesses. 2) Some of these covenant privileges seem peculiarly applicable to Abraham. As, the eminency and greatness of his name; that he should be a blessing; that he should be a father of many nations, etc. 3) Some of these privileges belonged more especially to Abraham's Jewish seed, and not to his Christian seed. As, the inheritance of Canaan; the token of circumcision. 4) Some of these privileges belonged both to Abraham, and to Abraham's Jewish and Christian seed. As, all the temporals of common concernment; divine benediction, protection, remuneration, etc. And all the spirituals, as the Lord's being a God to them; the blessing in Jesus Christ, etc. 5) Finally, the outside, the visible advantage only of the covenant state, covenant promises, covenant inauguration, and other covenant administrations, belong to the mere visible seed of Abraham, that are his merely by profession; but the inside, the invisible advantages and saving efficacy of all these, as well as the outside, belong to the true believing and gracious seed of Abraham, whether Jewish, or Christian, respectively.” (Roberts, pp319-20).
only the **Israelites** (from Jacob), but also the **Ishmaelites** (from Ishmael), the **Edomites** (from Esau). But there was also much more meant by this promise than physical nations. The New Testament in referring back to these promises, tells us that they extended not only to those who were the *physical descendants* of Abraham, but also to those who would “follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham” from *among the Gentiles* (Romans 4:16-17). In other words, this promise has its ultimate fulfillment in the church. The great nation and multitude of nations that the Lord was promising Abraham was ultimately *the people of God*—those who with Abraham would call upon the God of Abraham; a great multitude indeed gathered from every tribe, tongue, and nation under heaven.\(^\text{14}\)

2) **And I will bless you:** The blessing isn't specified here, but it becomes clear later. We'll be talking about it in more detail ahead, but for now we can simply note that this same blessing rests on all of God's people, for the New Testament tells us that “those who are of faith are *blessed with Abraham*, the believer” (Galatians 3:9). It's the blessing that David would write about years later: “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity” (Psalm 32:1-2). It's the blessing that our Savior would speak of in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the poor in spirit...” (Matthew 5:1-12). And it's the blessing that Paul would reflect on when he wrote: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...” (Ephesians 1:3).

3) **And [I will] make your name great:** This points us back again to the story of the tower of Babel. If you remember, the reason those men were building the tower was to *make a name for themselves*. God is telling Abraham: Don't waste your time trying to make a name for yourself. Seek after Me, and I will make you a name that will endure forever. We're told in Genesis 10:8-10 that the founder of Babel was Nimrod, and that he “became a mighty one on the earth.” So, Nimrod was “a mighty one” on the earth... but who has ever heard his name? Nobody knows who he is. We have to be told that he used to be big-time back in the day to even know who in the world he is!\(^\text{15}\) Not so with Abraham. You don't have to tell anyone who Abraham is. Why? God made his name great.

4) **And so you shall be a blessing:** Earlier in verse 2, God had promised to bless Abraham; but here, God is promising to bless others through him. In other words, God's blessing would not only *come to* Abraham (v2b), but it would also *flow through* him (v2d). God wouldn't just bless him, He would make him an instrument of blessing in the lives of those around him. What an amazing thing! The blessing of God didn't just mean *deliverance from sins' punishment*—it also meant *fruitfulness for God's glory*. God's blessing wasn't just about *salvation in the next life*—it was about *significance in this life*. And doesn't God promise us the same thing in Christ? Paul says, “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.” (2 Corinthians 2:14). And our Savior cried out in John 7:38-39, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'” Just like Abraham, God has promised to make *us* instruments of His blessing in this life for eternity.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{14}\) See Revelation 7:9. This is also confirmed in the Old Testament itself by the fact that God promises, not only Abraham, but also Jacob, that a *company of nations* would come forth from him (Genesis 35:11). Though someone might argue that the multitude of nations from Abraham were the three physical nations mentioned above, it would only be one nation that would come forth from Jacob (the Israelites)—and yet God also promises that a company of nations would come forth from him. Ainsworth notes on Genesis 12:2: “But under this promised nation, was implied also a spiritual seed, of faithful people, Romans 4:11-12; Galatians 3:7.” And Roberts likewise writes: “A father of many nations have I made thee; Thou shalt be a father of multitudes of nations. ‘That is, not only of the Jews, which was but one nation; but also of the Gentiles.’” (p306).

\(^{15}\) Actually, in the English language, his name is even used as slang for “idiot.”

\(^{16}\) And how sweet is it that fruitfulness is a promise for believers. In the garden it was a *command*. In Genesis 1:28, God said to Adam, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...” But here with Abram, God does so much more than command him to be fruitful and multiply. What God had given to Adam in the garden as a *command*—He now gives to Abram as a *promise*. Ligon Duncan in his audio series on Covenant Theology notes that it's debatable whether this clause in v2d is an *indicative promise* (the way we've way we've seen it) or an *imperative command* (IE, “and so be a blessing”). He goes on to say that however we take the clause here, both things are true: God both promises to make us instruments of blessing as well as commands us to be so. I take it as a promise, since it would seem strange to include a single exhortation in the middle of verses 2-3 that are otherwise an exclusive list of promises alone (the exhortations were in verse 1). Another thing Duncan notes here is that Abram had to come out from the world in order to be a blessing to the world. He had to be set apart from the nations in order to be a blessing to the nations. And this is exactly what Christ is calling us to when He calls us to be salt and light, a city on a hill. The reason we're to be in the world but not of the world is in order to reach the world. Christians tend to have a hard time holding these two truths in tension: either we live too much like the world or we despise the world. But Scripture
5) And I will bless those who bless you: What does this mean? We can understand this clause by recalling Noah's prophecy in Genesis 9:26-27, where he says, “May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem. . . ” What's Noah saying? He's saying that the descendants of Japheth would be blessed as they dwelt in the tents of Shem. Why? Because the Messiah would come from Shem, and the blessing is in the Messiah. So if you're dwelling with Shem, ultimately, you're dwelling with the Messiah who would come from Shem. If you're at peace with Shem, you're at peace with the Messiah who would come from Shem, and God's blessing is upon you. So again, for Japheth, to dwell with Shem meant to dwell with the Messiah who would come from Shem. And it's the same thing here: To bless Abram meant to bless the Messiah who would come from Abram. Those who bless Abram in the truest sense are those who bless the Savior who would come forth from him.17

6) And the one who curses you I will curse: This clause isn't as pleasant but it's no less important. Abraham won't just be the door for a blessing—but also for a curse. If those who bless Abram are by implication blessing the Messiah, then those who curse him are by implication cursing the Messiah. As Simeon held the baby Jesus in his arms at the temple, he declared to Mary: “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed. . . ” (Luke 2:34). Many would rise to life and blessing through faith in the Messiah, but many would also stumble and fall on account of Him. It's the same truth that Paul wrote of when he said in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, “For we are a fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.” There is no neutral response to Jesus: To receive Him is to be blessed, but to reject Him is to be cursed.18

7) And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed: Blessing is promised over and over again to Abram in these two short verses (12:2-3). But each time it's mentioned, the meaning is distinct. In verse 2b, blessing would come to him; in verse 2d, blessing would flow through him; and now here in verse 3c, blessing would spring from him. This clause is incredibly significant. We're going to deal with it in depth later, and show why it is that, in Galatians 3:8, Paul actually refers to this clause as the gospel. But for now, I want us to just notice the language that the Lord chooses to use here in His promise to Abram; that in him “all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” God's plan from the beginning was never just to bless Abram, but in him to bless all peoples. His desire has always been to draw every tribe and tongue and nation to himself. Christian missions started long before Matthew 28! In fact, God's promise here in Genesis 12:3 is actually the basis for the Great Commission: God sends us to the nations with hope because He's promised to extend His blessing to them as well.19

Aside from these seven promises in verses 2-3, the Lord gives Abram another promise in verse 7, where after Abram had come into the land of Canaan, we read: “The Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.'” So, the Lord makes several promises to Abram here in Genesis 12. Really, we could condense them all down to three promises that equate exactly to the commands God had given to him: The Lord is telling Abram: 1) leave your land (country), 2) your people (relatives), 3) and your heritage (father's house); because: 1) I am going to give you a new land, 2) I'm going to make you into a new people, and 3) I'm going to give you a new heritage:

calls us to come out from the world and be set apart from the world—but to do so in order to be a blessing to the world.
17 Insight again gleaned from Ligon Duncan's Covenant Theology course. The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible notes on this clause: “Those who bless. That is, those who acknowledge Abraham and his offspring as God's agent of blessing.”
18 Still, it's also true: “God's greater intention was to bless, not curse. This is indicated in the Hebrew text by switching from a form indicating resolve (I will bless) to a simple statement of fact (I will curse) and by switching from the plural (those who bless) to the singular (whoever curses).” (Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible; cf. also Walkie on Genesis 12:3, p206).
19 Ibid Duncan. Thomas Goodwin sees another truth in that phrase, families of the earth; namely, that God's covenant blessing is not limited to a believing individual, but also extends to the children of believers and their household, or family: “The promise (Genesis 12:3) runs in these terms, 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed;' as elsewhere, [in] Genesis 18:18, and 22:18, it runs in these terms, 'All the nations of the earth shall be blessed.' These expressions are both used; the one to show, the seed should be of all nations and people, yet so as withal the covenant was to run by families in those nations. Therefore the New Testament quotes it in both senses: Galatians 3:8 says, panta ta ethne'; all nations, or, heathens, because some of all nations shall be converted; but Peter, when he makes mention of the covenant, [in] Acts 3:25, though chiefly for the end to show the Jews were the first children of the covenant, yet he expounds these words spoken to Abraham, 'In thy seed shall the families of the earth be blessed.'” (Works, V9, pp431-32). Well speak more of this later.
So, there's both commands and promises in God's calling of Abram. There were commands: This wasn't just a suggestion for Abram—to leave everything he knew and go to the land that God would show him—it was a command; so there were commands. But there were also promises: God doesn't tell Abram to leave everything just because; just for the sake of sacrifice. God tells him to leave these things behind because He has something infinitely better in store for him (Genesis 12:2-3).

And this is meant to highlight for us the way that God calls us as believers to himself in the gospel, in the Covenant of Grace. The way that God calls Abram to the land of Canaan is exactly the same way that He calls us home to himself in the gospel. There are commands. God called Abram to leave everything and follow Him; and it's no different for us. Jesus said to the rugged fisherman, “Follow Me” (Mark 1:17). Christ was calling His disciples to walk away from everything they knew for a new life. This is how it is in the Covenant of Grace. Abram had to count the cost, and so do we.

There are commands, but there are also promises. God tells Abram to leave his land, his people, and his inheritance for something much, much greater: he will inherit an infinitely better land, he will father an innumerable people, and he will gain an everlasting inheritance. It's a pretty good trade. Losing the world in order to gain Christ is no sacrifice. Jesus describes it this way: “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44). Jim Elliot, missionary to Ecuador, put it this way, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

B) The POWER of God's Call: How did Abram respond to God's call? Genesis 12:4 says, “So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him...” But that wasn’t exactly the whole story. We know this because of what Scripture records in Acts 7:2-3. In making his defense to the Sanhedrin, Stephen begins by saying, “Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, ‘Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.’ ” It seems that Abram had lived in Haran a long time (cf. 12:5). And Acts tells us that God spoke to Abram the words recorded in Genesis 12:1-3 before Abram even lived in Haran; which means that Abram did obey, but only years after God had first appeared to him. Abram followed God's call, but it took him a long time.

Well, what happened? How did Abram finally come to his senses in Haran and make the rest of the journey to Canaan? Stephen tells us in the next verse, in verse 4: “after his father died, God removed him from there [Haran] into this land in which you are now living” (ESV). What happened? “God removed him.” And by the way, the Greek word used here (Gr. metoikizo) is only used twice in Scripture; once here and then later in verse 43, where Stephen quotes from a passage in Amos that describes how God would send Israel into exile for their sins: “I will remove you beyond Babylon.” That’s a violent removal. And yet that’s the same word that’s being used here for how it was that God brought Abram into Canaan! Ultimately, God did it—God caused Abram to leave Haran and come into the land of promise. God didn’t just call Abram to the land of promise—He drew Abram to the land of promise.20 There was a command, but in the Covenant of Grace, all that God requires, He also provides. This was more than a call—it was an effectual call; it was a call that Abram couldn't resist, because God himself would cause him to obey. And it's no different with us; with God's calling us to turn from our sins and believe upon Christ. If you are a believer in Jesus, you need to know that the reason you left all to follow Christ wasn't because you made a decision—it was because God made a decision. It wasn't because you chose Him but because He chose you. What we see here with Abram is the same truth Jesus spoke of in the gospels: “Many are called, but few are chosen.”21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT ABRAM LEFT</th>
<th>LAND</th>
<th>PEOPLE</th>
<th>HERITAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>His country (12:1)</td>
<td>His relatives (12:1)</td>
<td>His father's house (12:1)</td>
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<td>WHAT GOD PROMISED</td>
<td>Possess a new land (12:1,7)</td>
<td>Father a new people (12:2)</td>
<td>Gain a new heritage (12:2-3)</td>
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20 God declares this truth himself in Genesis 15:7, “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it;” and we hear of the same truth from Abraham's own lips later in Genesis 20:13 as he begins to explain to Abimelech why he called Sarah his sister: “it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house...”

21 Matthew 22:14. We see the same truth later with Isaac instead of Ishmael and Jacob instead of Esau (see Romans 9:6-13).
2. The RECIPIENTS of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about who God's people are

In Genesis 12:1-3, we learned about the call of God. Through the rest of the chapter (Genesis 12:4-20), we learn about the children of God: who are God's redeemed people? What do their lives look like? What are the characteristics that mark their lives? What sort of people are they? And in answering these questions from the rest of Genesis 12 (verses 4-20), we can say two things. First:

A) God's people are NEW CREATURES: We see this in Genesis 12:4-9. Abram follows God's call to the land of Canaan, going forth “as the Lord had spoken to him” (v4). As he travels through the land, we're told twice that he builds altars to the Lord; one in Shechem (v6), and then again near Bethel, where we're told, “he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord” (v8).

These verses are describing for us Abram's relationship with the Lord. He's now a man who calls upon the name of the Lord. He's a man of prayer. A man of worship. A man who loves the Lord. A man with new desires, a new Lord, and a new life.22 Abram is a new creature in Christ.

These verses also describe for us Abram's relationship towards the world. When Abram get's to Canaan, he doesn't settle down in one place. He goes from Shechem, to Bethel, then further south. This is to show us that Abram was a stranger and an exile on the earth (Hebrews 11:13), even as he lived in Canaan. Even in the land of promise, Abram was a pilgrim; this world was never his home.

B) God's people are STRUGGLING SINNERS: The first half of Genesis 12 (vv1-9) is filled with glory and wonder; the second half (vv10-20) is filled with shame and defeat. We're a little shocked as we read through verses 10-20; but we shouldn't be. We see here in Abraham's life a truth we're all too familiar with: There are both highs and lows in the Christian life; there are incredible mountain-tops, but there are also dark valleys. If Genesis 12:4-9 teaches us that Christians are new creatures in Christ; Genesis 12:10-20 teaches us that Christians are still a people who struggle with sin.

Abram and his family head down to Egypt because there is a famine in the land. And along the way, Abram asks his wife Sarai to pretend she is his sister and not his wife. He does this because Sarai is so beautiful that Abram's afraid the Egyptians would kill him to take her. When they arrive, Pharaoh hears about Sarai, as Abram predicted, and takes her into his harem. Abram uses his own wife as a shield to protect himself. He gives Sarai into the arms of a pagan king to have free access to do to her as he wished.23 Praise God, that wasn't the end of the story. Abram failed God, but God didn't fail Sarai. The Lord rescued her from the harem and gave her back into the arms of Abram.

What does this dark passage teach us? For one thing, it teaches us that there are no “heroes in the faith;” there are no “great men of God.” That's even an understatement. What Abram did was so bad, that he was sternly rebuked by a pagan king for his moral behavior (vv18-19) — and then promptly deported from the country (v20)! A lot of Christian biographies nowadays make Christian men and women out to be heroes. But the truth is, there are no Christian heroes. Even the greatest in God's kingdom are sinners who are ever prone to wander—ever in need of God's grace.

22 We could clarify that he has a new life because he has new desires for a new Lord; he's now a man of prayer and worship because he has a new heart that longs for God. There are two distinct doctrines here: regeneration and sanctification. Christians are a people who are being sanctified because they are a people who have been regenerated. Throughout Genesis, we see the Spirit's sanctifying power in the lives of His people, changing them more and more into His image. Another example is Jacob in Genesis 33. Though some take Jacob here as playing the role of a winsome diplomat, I believe this interaction with his brother Esau powerfully puts on display the grace of God that had been so deeply at work in his life. In this passage we see that Jacob had moved: 1) from deceiving his family to defending them: for in the past he was known for his deception, but now he not only makes himself a shield to protect his family from any harm at the hands of Esau (vv1-3), but refuses to let any harm come to them by driving them on too quickly (vv13-14); 2) from ruling others to serving them: for in the past, Jacob did whatever he had to, “by hook or crook,” to ensure that he would never be the one serving or bowing down to his brother, but now we see him intentionally doing just that, bowing down in v3 (cf.27:29) and either calling himself Esau's servant or Esau his lord no less than seven times (vv4,8,13-15; cf.27:29); 3) from stealing blessings to giving them: for before he had stolen the blessing from Esau, but in verse 11 he's giving blessings away (the Heb. word here for gift is lit. blessing).

23 This would happen again in Genesis 20.
One way we can see Christ in the pages of the Old Testament is by observing how God's people fail to exemplify their Savior. In the account recorded in the second half of Genesis 12, Abram's actions are actually diametrically opposed to those of Christ. Genesis 12:13 tells us that the reason Abram told Sarai to lie was that it would go well with him because of her, and that he would live on account of her. Well, the reason Christ went to the cross was exactly the opposite: that it would go well with us on account of him, and that we would live on account of him. Abram put his bride in harm's way in order to protect himself; but Jesus put himself in harm's way in order to protect his bride.

3. The PROMISES of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about what we've been given in Christ

We talked briefly about the promises God made to Abram when He called him to journey to the land of Canaan in Genesis 12:1-3; and there we described the promises as: a land, a people, and a heritage. But we could also summarize the promises in this way: 1) a land, 2) a seed, and 3) blessing. These promises are first made to Abram in Genesis 12, and then reaffirmed throughout Abram's life. The same promises are then also confirmed to Abram's son Isaac, and then to Isaac's son, Jacob:

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<th>GOD'S PROMISES</th>
<th>GIVEN TO ABRAHAM</th>
<th>CONFIRMED TO ISAAC AND JACOB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promise of the LAND</td>
<td>Genesis 12:7; 13:15,17; 15:7; 17:8</td>
<td>Genesis 26:3-4; 28:13-14; 35:12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promise of BLESSING</td>
<td>Genesis 12:2,3; (17:6);18:17-18; 22:17-18</td>
<td>Genesis 26:3-4,24; 28:14</td>
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Well, how are we to understand these promises? There was a TEMPORAL aspect to the promises. There was a physical land\(^{24}\) that God had promised to Abram and his descendants; there would be a numerous physical seed (or offspring)\(^{25}\) that would come forth from Abram; and God would lavish physical and temporal blessings\(^{26}\) upon Abram. But the promises that God had made to Abram were so much more than just temporal promises. In a stalk of corn there is both the outer husk and the inner kernel. And so it was in the promises to Abram. There was the husk of a temporal land, seed, and blessing. But Abram understood that inside the husk was the kernel—something far more precious. Behind the temporal promises made to Abram were realities of ETERNAL significance.

A) LAND: In a sense, the promise God made to Abram of the land was fulfilled in the possession of Canaan during the days of Joshua (cf. Joshua 21:43-45). But the promise was always about so much more than just a temporal piece of land. The Scriptures make it emphatically clear that God's promise to give Abram the land looked forward to the possession of an eternal inheritance.

1) The true BOUNDARIES of the land: In Romans 4:13, Paul says: “For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.” Paul is telling us something incredibly significant here: the promise to Abram

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\(^{24}\) God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abram and his offspring, and this promise was fulfilled under Joshua, when he and the people of Israel crossed the Jordan and went in to take possession of the land. After recording how the land was divided up to the sons of Israel under Joshua, Scripture says, “So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.” (Joshua 21:43-45).

\(^{25}\) Though Abram had no children, God also promised to give him a seed; not only a single child, but a numerous posterity. The Lord would multiply his descendants like the dust of the earth (Genesis 15:16), the stars in the sky (15:5) and the sand on the seashore (22:17); not only making him a great nation (Genesis 12:2), but the father of a multitude of nations (17:4-5). God did this. God gave Abram Ishmael, and then Isaac, and other children as well (25:1-6). Ishmael became the father of twelve princes and became a great nation (17:20; cf. 25:13-14,5). Isaac had two sons: Esau his firstborn became the father of the Edomites; and Jacob his second-born became the father of the 12 tribes of Israel—the father of the nation of Israel. So Abram truly became the father of whole nations; God multiplied his physical offspring like the sand of the sea and the stars in the sky.

\(^{26}\) God truly lavished rich blessings on Abram. One example of this is in Genesis 24, where Abram's servant goes back to Mesopotamia to find a bride for Isaac. In this passage, the servant describes his master (Abram) to Rebecca and her family in this way: “The Lord has greatly blessed my master, so that he has become rich; and He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and servants and maids, and camels and donkeys” (Genesis 24:35). Abram had hundreds of servants (14:14). He was so prosperous that when Lot, his nephew, is taken away by a powerful army coalition made up of four kings (who had just defeated another army), Abram takes his own “trained men,” chases them down, and defeats them! Abram and his household servants put to flight entire kingdoms. So, there's no question that God had blessed Abram in a temporal sense.
concerning the land was actually something far more vast than the boundaries of the land of Canaan: God was promising Abram that he would be the heir—not just of Canaan—but, “heir of the world.” This teaches us that the actual scope of the land that God was promising to Abram was far more vast than just the area called Canaan. What God was promising Abram was the same thing Jesus was promising when He declared, “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

2) The true DURATION of the land: In Genesis 17:8, the Lord says to Abram: “I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession. . .”’ The Lord is promising here, not only to one day give the land of Canaan to Abram and his seed, but to give it to them “for an everlasting possession. . .” The Jews indeed possessed the land for a while, but eventually they were cast out of the land at the time of the exile. It’s rather the new heavens and the new earth that the Lord has promised to give His people as an everlasting possession. The prophet Isaiah picks up on this truth: looking ahead to a glorified church, he says: “Then all your people will be righteous; they will possess the land forever” (60:21).27

3) The true ENJOYMENT of the land: The verse we read above, Genesis 17:8, tells us something else significant about the land. The Lord there had told Abram: “I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings. . .”’ Scripture tells us here that the promise of the land was spoken to Abram himself, as well as his seed (cf. 13:15, 17; 15:7). Yet we’re told in Acts 7:5 that, “[The Lord] gave [Abram] no inheritance in [the land], not even a foot of ground.” This is a major problem if God’s promise only had to do with the land of Canaan in a temporal sense. If God promised to give Abram a land, and if the land God promised to give Abram was the physical area of Canaan, and if God never gave that land to Abram—then God failed to keep His Word. We say God did not fail to keep His word; because ultimately the promise was of a heavenly inheritance.

What Scripture would teach us is that the promise of a land was always meant to be understood as so much more than just a physical piece of property. It was never ultimately meant to be understood as a place on earth, but as a place in heaven. This is why David wrote in Psalm 37:29, “The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.”28 David lived in the land of Canaan; he reigned as king over the land promised to Abram; he was living proof that God had fulfilled His promise to Abram by giving the land of Canaan to his descendants. But David still spoke of inheriting the land as something yet to come: “The righteous will inherit the land.” Why does he put it in the future tense? Why not say: “the righteous have inherited the land”? Because ultimately the promise of the land was never about an earthly piece of property in the Middle East. It looked forward to the possession of an eternal inheritance. Abram himself understood this, as the author of the book of Hebrews makes clear: “By faith [Abram] lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise, for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11:9-10; cf. 13-16).

B) SEED: The second promise to Abraham was the promise of a seed. We see this in several Scriptures. For instance, in Genesis 22:17-18 the Lord said to Abraham, “indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” So, what is this promise of a seed that God was making to Abram? Who is Abram’s seed? Scripture gives us two answers to this question:

27 Though it’s true that the Hebrew word here for everlasting (Heb. olam) has a range of meaning that includes temporary periods of time (IE, “a long time”), it’s also true that this kind of meaning is incredibly rare. The word is used 438 times in the Old Testament, and while the vast majority of these occurrences take on the meaning we would normally associate with the English word for everlasting (IE, perpetual; without end), the times it is used in a way that would imply a long season that eventually comes to an end we could probably count on one hand. Scriptures such as Isaiah 60:21; Psalm 37; and Hebrews 11 remove any doubt as to what is meant. Ainsworth notes on Genesis 17:8: “Everlasting. So in Isaiah he says, ‘thy people shall possess the land forever,’ (Isaiah 60:21); howbeit they possessed the earthly land, ‘but a little while,’ (Isaiah 63:18); but the ‘eternal inheritance,’ was to be received by Christ, reserved in the heavens for them and us (Hebrews 9:15; 1 Peter 1:4).”

28 See also verses 9, 11, 22, 34. This Psalm is absolutely jam-packed with the imagery of the righteous inheriting the land and dwelling there forever, on the one hand; but also of the wicked, on the other hand, being finally and eternally cut off from it.

29 Literally in Hebrew, the text reads “his enemies.” We’ll see the significance of the singular pronoun below.
1) The CHILD OF PROMISE: The promised seed at times referred to the coming Messiah. This is what Paul was saying in Galatians 3:16, “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, Christ.” Now, just like in English, the Hebrew word “seed” (zera) can designate either the singular (a single person) or the plural (many people). So Paul’s point isn’t that some of the promises made to Abram of a seed were in the singular tense in Hebrew (and thus, referred to Christ). But though the Hebrew word “seed” can mean either the singular or the plural, Paul’s point here is that there are still times in the course of God’s promises to Abram when that word seed is indeed referring to a single person—to the coming Messiah.30 If you remember, we saw this same principle at work in Genesis 3:15, where speaking to the serpent, the Lord says: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” Here, the seed the Lord was speaking of was a particular individual; the promised Messiah, who would one day come from Eve and finally crush the serpent.31 In the same way, in the course of God’s promises to Abram, there are times when the seed being promised is referring to a particular individual, to the Christ, who would come from Abram and bring blessing to the world.32

We mentioned earlier that the last clause in Genesis 12:3 was incredibly significant, where the Lord says to Abram: “And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” What is Scripture telling us here? All the families of the earth would be blessed—so far, so good—but what does it mean that they would be blessed in Abram? Well, thankfully, this verse is reaffirmed and clarified once again a little later, in Genesis 22:18, where the Lord tells Abram: “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. . .” So how will the nations be blessed in Abram? They will be blessed in and through Abram’s seed. And here in Genesis 22:18, this seed is referring to a particular individual.33 So, the nations would be blessed in and through a particular descendant that would one day come forth from Abram: This seed is the Messiah. All nations would be blessed in Abram because the Messiah was in Abram’s loins and would come forth from him. The promise God was making was that the Christ would come forth from Abram, and in and through Him, blessing would come to the nations. That’s why Paul said in Galatians 3:8: “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in you.’” Paul calls Genesis 12:3 the gospel because it tells us that all the nations would be blessed in Christ.

30 The specific passage Paul is quoting here isn’t absolutely clear. Some scholars believe Paul is referring to Genesis 13:15, and others to Genesis 17:8. The problem with these passages is it’s not immediately clear how the seed being referred to was meant to be taken as singular (indeed, the seed in Genesis 17:8 is modified by a plural pronoun, giving seed a plural meaning; see below). Collins follows Desmond Alexander in his article, Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete was Paul? Here, Collins argues that in Galatians 3:16, Paul is referring back to Genesis 22:18. He heartily concur with his reasoning, which is given in the footnotes below. If we argue in the footnotes below is true, the implication is that, as he penned Galatians 3:16, “Paul, in alluding to [Genesis 22:18], was drawing out the meaning that was already there in the Hebrew of Genesis” (Collins’ article).

31 We mentioned in our study of Genesis 3:15 (in Lesson 2), that one of the reasons we know this is the use of the pronouns that are modifying the word “seed.” We cited another Collins’ article that shows how, in Scripture, though the word seed itself in Hebrew can be either singular or plural, still we can deduce a singular or plural meaning based on the pronouns that modify “seed.” If a modifying pronoun is singular (I.E., he, his), the seed is singular; if it is plural (I.E., they, them), the seed is plural. In the passage in Genesis 3:15, we know that the last seed spoken of is singular because of its pronoun: “you shall bruise him.”

32 In Genesis 3:15, we learned that the line of the Messiah would run through Eve; now we learn it would also run through Abram. Later, Scripture tells us that the Messiah’s lineage would run through Isaac (rather than Ishmael; 17:19-21; 26:4), then through Jacob (rather than Esau; 28:14). In Genesis 49:10, Jacob prophecies that the Messiah’s line would run through his son Judah. Many years later, the Lord makes the same promise in His covenant with David. The Lord tells king David that the Messiah would come forth as one of his descendants; which is why the Messiah was sometimes called the son of David.

33 See the footnote dealing with Genesis 3:15 above; it’s the same principle here: Again, the pronouns associated with the seed indicate the meaning. In the broader context of the passage, Genesis 22:13-18, “seed” occurs three times; and though the first occurrence is clearly referring to Abram’s offspring in the plural, the second occurrence is just as clearly referring now to a particular individual. We know that this second time seed must be singular, because the pronoun modifying it is singular: “. . .your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.” The context would dictate assuming that the seed mentioned at the beginning of verse 18 is the same seed that was mentioned just prior at the end of verse 17. Besides, the overarching narrative of Genesis (3:15; 49:10), as well as all of Scripture (Acts 2:29-31), would compel us to take seed in verse 18 as singular. How else could we make sense of Paul’s words in Galatians 3:8, that Genesis 12:3 was the gospel? Just as it was Christ, the special seed, that was referred to in Genesis 3:15, so it is again here in Genesis 22:18. Ainsworth says of Genesis 22:18, “In thy seed: Here the word seed is in special meant of one, that is, Christ (Galatians 3:16,18), who was both of the seed of David, and son of Abraham according to the flesh (Romans 1:3), and also ‘God over all blessed forever’ (Romans 9:5), in whom the nations do bless themselves, and glory (Jeremiah 4:2; Psalm 72:17).” And the ESV Study Bible likewise notes on Genesis 22:17-18, “The oath falls into two parts: whereas the first half focuses on Abraham’s many descendants, the second part concentrates on a single descendant who will overcome his enemies (Genesis 22:17) and mediate blessing to all the nations of the earth (v18),”
2) **The CHILDREN OF PROMISE:** So, one meaning of God's promise to Abram of a seed is the unique seed of promise: the coming Messiah. But there are also times in the Genesis narrative when it's clear that the promise of the seed is referring to a corporate group of people. God promises to make Abram's seed like the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16), the stars in the sky (15:5) and the sand on the seashore (22:17) in abundance. This is a vast company of people. And in Genesis 17:7, we are told of their defining characteristic. Here, the Lord says to Abram: “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.” This is the mark of Abram's seed; the Lord would be their God. Just as He was Abram's God, He would be the God of Abram's seed. But who is this seed referring to? We might assume that it means all the children of Abram. But the narrative of Genesis goes on to explain that the promised seed wasn't necessarily each and every child without exception. In Genesis 17:19, while announcing the birth of Isaac, the Lord tells Abraham: “Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.” Later, the Lord made clear to Abraham what this really meant, when He told him: “through Isaac your descendants shall be named.” (Genesis 22:12). In other words, the lineage of that seed God had promised to Abram would be traced through Isaac—but not through Ishmael. And later, we come to find out that the lineage of the promised seed would be traced through Isaac's son Jacob, but not through Esau. What we learn from this is that the seed God had promised to Abram was *not all of his descendants without exception*; rather, the seed God had promised to Abram was a *distinct group among them*. Some of the Jews in Jesus' day saw this truth in Scripture, but they misunderstood it. They saw that God chose Isaac and his descendants, not Ishmael; and then they saw that God chose Jacob and his descendants, rather than Esau. And who were the Jews? They were the descendants of Jacob! They were the ones who had been chosen. And so they loved this truth. They basked in the fact that it wasn't all of Abraham's descendants who were truly the people of God. The way they saw it, the true seed didn't go through Ishmael, but Isaac; and it didn't go through Esau, but Jacob; and since they were the offspring of Jacob, they thought that they were the true, distinct, promised seed of Abram. This is why the Jews said to Jesus in John 8:33, “We are Abraham's descendants. . .” What were they saying? “Jesus, why are you talking to us as if we don't know God? We are the chosen seed. We're the true seed; the seed within the seed.” But what did Jesus tell them? “I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. . .He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.” (John 8:37,47). These words would have been absolutely shocking; because Jesus was telling them that physically they were children of Isaac; spiritually they were actually children of Ishmael. Physically they were the children of Jacob, but spiritually they were actually the children of Esau.

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34 We'll see from the rest of the paragraph that there is actually a dual aspect in the seed promise: God made promises of this innumerable seed to Abram—but He also made promises to this innumerable seed. *God was not just making promises of an offspring to Abram; He was also making promises to Abram's offspring.* God promised to give the land of Canaan—not just to Abram—but also to his seed (12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:8). God promised to establish His covenant—not just with Abram—but also with his seed (17:7). God promised not only to be the God of Abram—but also to be the God of his seed (17:7-8).

35 The Lord later reaffirms this promise to Isaac himself in Genesis 26:3-5; and Paul quotes it in Romans 9:7 (see below).

36 See Genesis 28:10-15, where the same promises God had made to Abram are extended here to Jacob (cf. Romans 9:6-13).

37 This is the truth Paul was getting at in Romans 9:6-8. Here he says: “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's seed, but: ‘through Isaac your seed will be named.’ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.” Haldane says of Romans 9:7, “The promise to Abraham and his seed was not made to him and all his descendants in general, but to him and a particular seed. . .from the beginning a distinction had been made among the descendants of Abraham, indicating that they are not all Israel which are of Israel. Only a part of that nation, which he calls a remnant (verse 27), and afterwards ‘a remnant according to the election of grace’ (11:5), was to participate in the spiritual blessings to be conveyed by promise.”

38 Not even being Jacob's natural children was a guarantee that you were children of God. We can learn this truth also from Romans 9:6-8 (quoted in the footnote above). Here Paul tells us not only that it's not all the natural children of Abraham who are his true children, but that it's not all the natural children of Jacob who are true children of Abraham, for not only are they not all children because they are Abraham's seed, but “they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.” Paul's meaning is that not all of Abraham's (or Jacob's) physical offspring were truly the promised seed. He's *not* making a blanket statement that the physical seed of Abraham are not his true seed (we'll deal with this in a bit more depth below); but rather informing us that they are not “all children because they are Abraham's seed”, nor are they “all Israel who are descended from Israel”; IE,
So then, being a physical descendant of Jacob never guaranteed you were the true seed of Abraham. And the New Testament tells us that the opposite was just as true: the fact that you aren’t a physical descendant of Jacob doesn’t mean you’re not the true seed of Abraham. Paul talks about this a lot in Galatians. Now, Galatians was a letter that Paul wrote to Gentiles; these were non-Jews; those who were definitely not descendants of Abraham or Jacob. But what does Paul tell them? He says: “And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.” (Galatians 4:28). So: The Jews, though physically the offspring of Jacob, weren’t actually Abram’s children at all. And the Gentiles, though physically unrelated to Abram, are actually his true children. Paul is telling us that your physical lineage actually doesn’t have anything to do with whether or not you’re a true child of Abraham. He writes to them: “Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7); and he concludes, saying: “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.” (3:29). So, who are the children of promise? Abraham’s true seed are his spiritual descendants—a community that both excludes many of his physical descendants and includes many of his non-physical descendants. Abraham’s true seed are believers in Jesus; it’s as simple as that.

Now, there’s one last question that arises here: If all this is true, what does it mean for ethnic Israel? What is Scripture telling us about how Abraham’s spiritual seed relates to his physical seed? Did God’s promise never actually have anything at all to do with Abraham’s physical seed? Was God promising to Abraham a spiritual seed instead of a physical seed? Have believing Gentiles, in effect, now replaced the Jews as the people of God? Paul answers this question for us in Romans 11. Speaking of ethnic Israel, Paul says in verse 1: “I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” He goes on to describe what he means in verses 17-24, where he likens Abraham and his physical seed to an olive tree: Abraham is the root; his physical descendants are the branches. In his analogy, some of Abraham’s physical seed—ethnic Jews—were cut off from God’s promises (as a branch from the tree) because of their unbelief in Christ; while other “wild” branches—Gentiles—were grafted into the olive tree (and the promises of the covenant) through faith in Jesus. But notice what Paul is saying: God didn’t cut down the whole Jewish tree and plant a new Gentile tree. Rather, He cut off certain branches; and grafted in others. What Paul is telling us is that when the Lord promised to be God to Abraham and to his seed, He was making promises to Abraham’s physical offspring—just not to each and every one of them. God was never promising Abraham a spiritual seed instead of a physical seed—but a spiritual seed among his physical seed. It’s just that others also of his physical seed could be cut off from those promises (through unbelief); and so too, Gentiles could be grafted into those promises (by faith). But Paul tells us there will always be a spiritual seed for the Lord among Abraham’s physical seed (Romans 11:1-6). And so, it’s not that the Gentiles replaced the Jews as the true seed of Abraham; rather, we were given the amazing privilege of joining them.

Not all of his children according to the flesh were truly his true children according to the Spirit. As Hodge says of Romans 9:7, “Paul’s immediate object is to show that natural descent from Abraham did not make a man one of his true seed.” (Romans). Palmer Robertson speaks of this in Christ of the Covenants: “First of all, the ‘grafting’ principle must be remembered. . . Any definition of the biblical significance of ‘Israel’ must not fail to include this dimension. ‘Israel’ cannot be restricted in its essence to an ethnic community. Israel must include the proselyte who does not belong to ‘Israel’ according to the flesh, but is absorbed into Israel by process of ingrafting. The New Testament displays an awareness of this principle when it speaks of the ‘ingrafting’ of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:17,19). . . Secondly, and from the opposite perspective, the ‘pruning’ principle must be noted. Not only is it possible for a new branch to be grafted into genealogical relation to Abraham. It is also possible for a natural seed of Abraham to be removed from its position of privilege. This principle also may be traced back into the earliest experience of the line of promise. To demonstrate the sovereignty of God in the electing process, it was said, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated (Rom. 9:13; cf. Mal. 1:2:3; Gen. 25:29). This concept of pruning also must be given full weight in the definition of ‘Israel.’ Again, ‘Israel’ cannot be identified merely as ethnic descendants of Abraham, for ‘they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel’ (Rom. 9:6). It is those who, in addition to being related to Abraham by natural descendency, also relate to him by faith, plus those Gentiles who are ingrafted by faith, that constitute the true Israel.” (p40).

Some may object to this teaching on the basis of Romans 9:8: “That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.” But this verse must be taken in its context; both in its immediate context of vv6-13 as well as in its larger context in Romans. In its immediate context, vv6-7 help to show what Paul means here, and as we pointed out in an earlier footnote, his intent is not to say: “Abraham’s true seed are his physical seed as opposed to his physical seed.” We know this, in part, because of the language he uses in vv6-7a: Paul does not say: “For they are not any (or actually or truly) Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they any (or actually or truly) children because they are Abraham’s descendants.” Rather, he says: “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants.” Paul is not telling us that the promise never had anything to do with
C) BLESSING: Along with the promise of a land and a seed, God promises to bless Abraham and to bless all the families of the earth through him. We read in Genesis 12:2-3, “. . . and I will bless you. . . and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” Again, in Genesis 22:17-18, “indeed I will greatly bless you. . . In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. . .” The same promise is later confirmed to Isaac (26:3-4) and Jacob (28:14). So, what is this promise of blessing?

1) First, Scripture equates the blessing of Abraham with SALVATION: We see this in Galatians 3:8-9. Here, Paul says: “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in you.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.” In this passage, Paul refers back to the Scripture in Genesis 12:3, where the Lord tells Abram: “All the nations will be blessed in you”, and tells us that Abraham's physical descendants; he's rather simply telling us that it was not all of his physical descendants who were truly the seed of promise. This is confirmed by what Paul goes on to say in v7b-13. In these verses, who, according to Paul, are the children of promise, the true seed and rightful heirs of God's promise to Abraham? Isaac (v7b) and Jacob (v12-13); who are emphatically indeed Abraham's children according to the flesh— but not solely according to the flesh; they were also of his true seed, descendants according to the Spirit. As Haldane explains: “Ishmael, who was of the bondwoman, it is said, was born after the flesh.” This denoted that though he was descended from Abraham according to the laws of nature, he was not a son of Abraham's faith. Isaac was also in a certain sense born like Ishmael after the flesh, because he was naturally descended from Abraham; but not of the flesh merely. . .He was not only a son of Abraham's flesh, but his son as born after the Spirit. . .” (Romans 9:8). And Murray says of this passage: “there is an Israel' within ethnic Israel. . .The Israel distinguished from the Israel of natural descent is the true Israel. "They are indeed 'of Israel' but not coextensive with the latter.” (Romans, V2, p9). Vos says: “God has not chosen an association of individuals, but a people. . . And Paul teaches us that the root of this old people has continued to exist, though the majority of the branches are cut off.” (V5, p166). Calvin deals with this at length. He writes: “[Anabaptists] find this difference: those who had their origin from [Abraham's] seed were called the children of Abraham under the Old Testament; now, those who imitate his faith are called by this name. They therefore say that that physical infancy which was engrafted into the fellowship of the covenant through circumcision foreshadowed the spiritual infants of the New Testament. But if, as they plainly indicate, they mean that God's spiritual blessing was never promised to Abraham's physical offspring, they are gravely mistaken in this. . .the Lord promises Abraham that he will have offspring in whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:3), and at the same time assures him that He will be his God and the God of his descendants (Genesis 17:7). All those who by faith receive Christ as author of the blessing are heirs of this promise, and are therefore called children of Abraham.” (Institutes, 4.16.12). And again: “But they will bring forward in opposition another passage of the apostle (Romans 9:7), where he teaches that those who are of the flesh are not children of Abraham, but that only those who are children of the promise are counted among his offspring. This seems to limit that physical descent from Abraham, to which we give some place, is nothing. But we must mark more carefully the case which the apostle is discussing there. For, intending to show the Jews how God's goodness was not bound to the offspring of Abraham, indeed that of itself such descent conferred nothing. Paul cites, by way of proof, of Ishmael and Esau (Romans 9:6-13), who were rejected just as if they were strangers; even though they were real offspring of Abraham according to the flesh, the blessing rests upon Isaac and Jacob. . .Nevertheless, when Paul cast them down from vain confidence in their kindred, he still saw, on the other hand, that the covenant which God had made once for all with the descendants of Abraham could in no way be made void. Consequently, in the eleventh chapter [of Romans] he argues that Abraham's physical progeny must not be deprived of their dignity. By the virtue of this, he teaches, the Jews are the first and natural heirs of the gospel. . .Therefore, that they might not be defrauded of their privilege, the gospel had to be announced to them first. For they are, so to say, the first-born in God's household.” (4.16.14). Throughout Romans, we see Paul deeply grappling with this question: If God had made a solemn covenant with Abraham, and that covenant was primarily about salvation in the fullest sense, and if God did not only make that covenant with Abraham but also his children after him, then how is it that salvation failed to reach every single ethnic Jew (cf. Romans 3:1-4; 9:1-8; and 11:1-32)? “What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?” (Romans 3:3). “For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. . . But it is not as though the word of God has failed.” (Romans 9:3). How has God's covenant not failed? How will the fact that Israel didn't believe not nullify the promise God had made to them? Paul gives the answer in primarily two places. Paul quotes from Isaiah in Romans 9:27, “Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved.” There are two truths here. Paul is saying, on the one hand, that many ethnic Jews wouldn't be saved. But he's also saying on the other hand, that a remnant of them would be. And in Romans 11:1-5, Paul writes, “I say then, God has not rejected his people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ‘Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.’ But what is the divine response to him? ‘I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal, in the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.'” So, Paul's answer is that God hasn't actually rejected ethnic Israel— because the promises were never given to each and every physical descendant of Abraham without exception; and though the great majority of the Jews had indeed turned away from the Savior—God has and will continue to preserve a believing remnant for himself among ethnic Israel. In other words, there will always be at least a remnant of believing Jews who bow the knee to the Messiah.
this Scripture is fulfilled in the Gentiles being *justified* by faith (v8); and then again, that those who are *justified* by faith are *blessed* with Abraham (v9). So then, the *blessing of Abraham* is being equated with *justification by faith*. So, what was the blessing the Lord had promised to Abraham? It was the blessing of *justification*: It's those who are justified that enter into the promised blessing of God.\(^{41}\)

We've now come to a complete understanding of why Paul calls Genesis 12:3 the gospel: Earlier we saw that the clause, “in you” referred to Christ, who would come forth from Abraham. This is how blessing would come to the world. In the last section, we talked about who this blessing would extend to; namely, not just to the believing among Abraham's physical descendants, but also to “the nations,” that is, the Gentiles. Here, Paul is telling us what this blessing actually was; namely, the blessing of justification. So, how does Paul call Genesis 12:3 the gospel, which says: “All the nations will be blessed in you”? Because the *nations* means the Gentiles, *in you* means Christ, and *blessed* means justified. We could paraphrase it this way: In Christ, salvation will extend to people from all nations.

### How Paul Unpacks the Promise of Genesis 12:3 in Galatians

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2) Secondly, Scripture equates the blessing of Abraham with THE SPIRIT. We see this later in the same chapter. In Galatians 3:13-14, Paul writes: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’ — in order that *in Christ* Jesus the *blessing of Abraham* might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive *the promise of the Spirit* through faith.” Earlier (vv8-9), Paul had equated the blessing of Abraham with justification; but here he equates it with *the Holy Spirit*: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles. What is that blessing? It is the promise of the Spirit, which we receive by faith. So here, the blessing of Abraham is *the Spirit*.\(^{42}\)

And by the way, this wasn't just an idea that started with the New Testament. Long before Paul, the prophets were announcing the same thing. We read in Isaiah 44:1-3: “But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus says the Lord who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you, ‘Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; and you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. For I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants.” So then, the blessing is the Spirit; and it has now been richly poured out upon God's people in and through and because of Christ.

So then, the blessing of Abraham *salvation* or is it *the Spirit*? It's both. *It's the blessing of salvation that is given through the Spirit*. The blessing is salvation—but that very salvation is a *gift* of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus himself said, “It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” (John 6:63).\(^{43}\)

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\(^{41}\) Roberts notes on this passage: “Hence it is evident, that the Gentiles' justification by faith, is part of the blessedness promised the nations in Abraham and in his seed. They that have their sins pardoned, and their persons accepted as righteous, are blessed indeed. David speaks emphatically: ‘Oh the blessedness of him whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!’ ‘Oh the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.’ (p346). And John Brown likewise writes of this Scripture: “Now, how was he blessed? ‘To be blessed’ and ‘to be justified,’ seem to be here used as synonymous, and it is not to be supposed that he should; for, how can he be blessed who is condemned of God? And how can he be otherwise than blessed who is the object of God's favor?” In the declaration, then, that with him all nations should be blessed, God beforehand gave an intimation to Abraham that it was his design to justify Gentiles by believing; in other words, to make them blessed in the same way in which he had been made blessed.” (Galatians, p122). Moo also says: “Paul closely associates, if he does not identify, the ‘blessing’ promised to Abraham and his descendants with justification.” (Galatians, p200).

\(^{42}\) Roberts says on Galatians 3:13-14, “To me this seems to be the Apostle's meaning, as to our present purpose, Christ's redemption of us from the curse, is here described, partly by the manner of it, [namely], Christ being made a curse for us; partly by the effects, or fruits of it; more general, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; more particular, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. The promise of the Spirit being an eminent branch of the blessing of Abraham.” (p345). And Moo likewise says: “Most scholars think that the parallelism of the clauses suggests that the promise of the Spirit is identical to, or at least forms a part of, the blessing of Abraham...” Though he modifies this slightly, he goes on to say: “The Spirit as the promised blessing of new covenant fulfillment is a significant prophetic theme...Isaiah 43 might be especially important since it brings together the words ‘blessing’ and Spirit.” (p216).

\(^{43}\) Scripture clearly teaches us that even faith and repentance themselves are *gifts* that God must give us (Acts 5:31; 11:18;
A FINAL WORD: So, God promised to Abram a land, a seed, and blessing. And though each of these had temporal aspects, ultimately they looked to the fulfillment of eternal gospel realities:

| Land | Physical land | An eternal habitation | Gen.17:8; Ps.37; Rom.4:13; Heb.11:8-13 |
| Seed | Physical offspring | Christ and believers in Christ | Gal.3:16 & Rom.9:6-8; Gal.3:6-9,29; 4:28 |

But we could really summarize all these things in this simple way: God's promises to Abraham were about the Savior and salvation. God would be Abraham's God (Genesis 17:7-8). This is the heart of the promises. God would send a Messiah to redeem His people. And He would be their God.

God made promises to Abraham: land, seed, blessing. For much of the time, though, Abraham's experience seemed to completely contradict what God had said. God didn't fulfill the promises right away—it took time. And so Abraham had to wait on God, to trust Him to do what He said that He would. Often all that Abraham had to hang on to was what God had said, despite all evidence to the contrary. This is true of each and every promise God had made to him: 1) The promise of the LAND: God promised to give the land of Canaan, not only to Abraham, but also to his seed. And He made this promise long before Abraham even had any “seed” to speak of! We can imagine Abraham thinking: “Lord, let's slow down here; I don't even have children to put in that land which you've promised to give to them!” And when Sarah dies, Abraham has to buy a plot of land from the Canaanites because he doesn't even own a single square foot (Acts 7:5). 2) The promise of a SEED: Abraham was 75 years old when the Lord first began to promise that He would multiply his offspring. That's when God began to make this promise—but it wouldn't actually come to fulfillment until much, much later: Isaac wouldn't even be born for another 25 years. Romans 4 tells us that Abraham needed a lot of faith to even believe the promise to begin with as a 75 year old man (vv18-21). But he didn't just need faith to believe the promise when God made it; he also needed faith to continue to believe the promise as the years continued to roll by, and he was still childless. 3) The promise of BLESSING: The Lord promised to bless Abraham and make him a blessing. But most of the time, Abraham seems to be more of a curse to his neighbors than a blessing. Twice he gives his wife over into the arms of pagan kings to protect himself (Genesis 12 and 20), which also brought judgment upon those kings and surely must have left permanent scars on his bride. He also takes his wife's maid as a second wife, which brings nothing but turmoil on his own family (Genesis 16:4-6) and in the end leaves Hagar and her son devastated, ruined and desolate. . .And yet, who can calculate now what kind of impact Abraham's life has had on bringing true and lasting blessing to the nations?

God's promise of the land at first seemed not to be true; God's promise of a seed at first seemed not to be true; and God's promise to make Abraham a blessing at times seemed not to be true. But God who promised was so faithful. In the same way, God has made promises to us in Christ. But just like with Abraham, what God has said often seems to contradict our daily experience. We often find ourselves living in the gap between what God has promised and what our eyes can see. What do we do? We cling to God's Word; that's what we do. There might be a lot of waiting; there might be a lot of tears; we might not understand everything. But the day is coming when we'll be able to look back, just like Abraham, and say—perhaps with tears of praise—that God who promised was so, so faithful.

4. The NATURE of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about how sinners come into favor with God

So, the covenant that God made with Abram is about the Savior and salvation. God would send into the world a Savior who would come forth from Abram, and in and through Him, the blessings of salvation would reach to all the families of the earth: the Savior would bring salvation to God's people. But exactly how would He do that? How exactly does God save His people? We talked
about this in God's covenant with Noah, and we're going to see the same thing here that we saw with Noah: *Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone*. That's how God saves His people. It wasn't any different for Abraham than it is for us today. God's people in the Old Testament weren't saved in any other way than the way we're saved today. There's only one Savior and there's only one way of salvation, and that is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

**A) God freely lavishes His favor on sinners by GRACE alone:** Abraham was an object of God's favor all his life. But he never deserved any of it. That's what grace is. God dealt with Abraham in grace. Now, that doesn't mean that God never gave Abraham any commands to obey. In Genesis 17:1, for example, the Lord says to Abraham, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless.” God called Abraham to live a holy life; to be blameless; to walk before Him. God gave him commands. But God's favor towards Abraham was never based on Abraham keeping those commands. God's disposition towards him was never based on Abraham fulfilling certain conditions. We see this in the way that God made the promises to Abraham. God never came to him saying, “Abraham, IF you obey Me and live a holy life and walk blamelessly before Me, THEN I will confirm these promises to you.” Or: “If you CONTINUE to obey Me and live a holy life, I will CONTINUE to confirm My promises to you.” The promises God made to him were *unconditional*: “I will give [this land] to you and to your descendants forever” (13:15); “I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth” (13:16); “I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you” (17:6). God simply made promises to Abraham; there were no conditions attached.

Even Abraham's sin couldn't nullify or revoke God's promises. Remember what happened in the last half of Genesis 12? Abraham had used his wife as a shield to protect himself. His behavior was so bad they had him deported (12:19-20). So, in his first test since entering Canaan, Abraham fell flat on his face. How does God respond? Does He revoke the promises He made back in Genesis 12? (Or at least threaten to revoke them if Abraham doesn't shape up?) No. Rather, God continues to reaffirm those promises to Abraham throughout the rest of his life (13:14-18; 15:1-21; 17:1-22; 22:15-19). Then, later, in Genesis 20, we find Abraham doing the same thing again: He leaves the land of Canaan, he introduces his wife as his sister, and once again, she ends up in a king's harem—probably for quite some time. When everything comes to light, Abraham is again severely rebuked by a pagan king (vv8-10). Now, this was anywhere from 15-25 years after the first time this had happened in Genesis 12. Abraham is a mature believer now. He knows better. But here in Genesis 20, we find him, yet again, relapsing back into his old sins. Well, how is God going to respond *this* time? The chapter headings say it all: “Genesis 20: Abraham's treachery. Genesis 21: Isaac is born.” In other words: God fulfills His promise to Abraham—not at the height of his obedient faith—but in the midst of the very worst of his sin and failure. *That's* how God responds to Abraham's sin. Are you amazed? You should be. This is the gospel. God's covenant mercies were never mediated by Abraham's obedience, nor could they ever be nullified by his sin. God's blessing didn't come to him apart from his sin—but *in the midst of it*. He would at times fail God, but God would never fail him.

Fact is, Abraham couldn't get away from God's mercies. No matter what he did; no matter how hard he seemed to try. At times he wandered away from the Lord; at times he fell flat on his face. But he could never get away from God's blessing or nullify the promises God made to him. Abraham had good days, and he had bad days, but God's blessing never went up and down based on his obedience. And it's the same for you if you belong to Christ. Your sin can never nullify God's promises to you, because God's promises to you were never conditional on your obedience to His commands. God's blessing doesn't stop when we stumble and fall—it continues and runs through even our worst failures. This is what the gospel is all about. God lavishes His blessing upon weak Christians who continue to fall flat on our faces. Like Abraham, we too will have good days, and we will have bad days: “But the loving-kindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him.” (Psalm 103:17).

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44 Anthony Burgess puts it this way in his work, *The Vindication of the Law*: “There are these three main concurrent causes to our justification: The grace of God as the efficient, Christ as the meritorious, and faith as the instrumental.” (Burgess, p23).

45 Genesis 20:17-18 hint at this. Abraham here prays for Abimelech, after which God again opens up the wombs of his wife and maids to bear children again (for the Lord had closed all their wombs from the time Sarah had been taken into the harem). Now, if the closing of the wombs of the women in the palace was noticeable, Sarah must have been there some time.

46 We could describe all this in just two words, the words recorded at the beginning of Genesis 20:3, after Abraham's grievous sin: “But God.” Abraham failed God again and again. But God never, ever failed to keep His promise to Abraham.
B) God freely lavishes His favor on sinners through FAITH alone: How was it that Abraham was able to enter into these covenant mercies, and live out all of his days under the blessing and favor of God? We're given the answer in Genesis 15:6. We'll be looking at Genesis 15 in more detail later, but let's just look at this verse together now. The Lord had just promised in verses 4-5 that He would multiply Abraham's descendants like the stars of the heavens. We then read in verse 6: “Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.” This is the first time in the Bible where faith is explicitly joined together with justification; it's the first time that we're told that the way justification happens is through faith.\(^47\) When and how was it that God credited righteousness to Abraham? When he believed God's Word—that's all he did.\(^48\) The truth in this single verse is so important that the New Testament quotes it four times. For instance, Paul says in Galatians 3:6-7: “Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to Him as righteousness.” Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.” (cf. Romans 4:3,22 and James 2:23). So, justification comes about through faith. We could note here a few things in particular about faith:

1) Faith is alone. Paul writes in Romans 4:3-5, saying: “For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes...” Paul here quotes from the passage in Genesis 15:6 and draws out one implication for us: Abraham was not justified by a combination of faith in Jesus plus his own obedience. Genesis tells us that Abraham was justified by faith, and Paul clarifies that he was justified by faith alone.\(^49\) Notice how Paul puts it. Paul doesn't say: “But to the one who does not work, but ALSO believes...” Rather, he puts them at a complete contrast: “But to the one who does NOT work, BUT believes...” In other words, Paul is not saying: “NOT ONLY works, BUT ALSO faith.” Rather, he's actually saying: “NOT ALSO works, BUT ONLY faith.” It's not just that we're justified by faith—Paul's point is that we're justified by faith alone.\(^50\)

\(^47\) From Ligon Duncan course on Covenant Theology. Jonathan Edwards puts it this way: “[with Abraham] the great condition of the covenant of grace, which is faith, was now more fully made known” (A History of Redemption). With Noah, we're told later in Hebrews that he was made righteous by faith. But here with Abraham it is clear from Genesis itself (15:5-6). Another Old Testament passage that connects faith and justification is Habakkuk 2:4: “but the righteous shall live by faith.”

\(^48\) Someone may ask: Is Scripture only now describing Abraham's justification? Wasn't Abraham already justified at this point? Calvin answers in his note on Genesis 15:6: “We must now notice the circumstance of time, by a consideration of the time in which this was said to Abram, we certainly gather...that holy men are only justified by faith, as long as they live in the world. If any one object, that Abram previously believed God, when he followed Him at His call, and committed himself to His direction and guardianship, the solution is ready; that we are not here told when Abram first began to be justified, or to believe in God; but that in this one place it is declared, or related, how he had been justified through his whole life. For if Moses had spoken thus immediately on Abram's first vocation, the cavil of which I have spoken would have been more specious; namely, that the righteousness of faith was only initial (so to speak) and not perpetual. But now since after such great progress, he is still said to be justified by faith, it thence easily appears that the saints are justified freely even unto death...”

\(^49\) Paul makes this even more clear in Galatians 2:16, where he says: “nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.” See also Romans 4:13.

\(^50\) As Motyer puts it: “Abraham takes a second wife and has a child, Ishmael. But God simply disallows this device. He will not permit Abraham to contribute to the fulfilling of the divine promises. When Abraham does seem to make a contribution, when he and Sarah have a child by the ordinary processes which God has ordained, the narrative is very careful to tell us that he does so totally by the enabling of God. God fulfills his promises in his own time, in his own way, and by his own power. The covenant points to a salvation which is all of God; man is in no position to contribute or to co-operate.” (Covenant and Promise). This Scripture (Romans 4:3-5) speaks of works of God justifying “the ungodly” (v3) by faith. Here the unrighteous man, who even has no works to speak of, without and apart from any moral uprightness or religious deeds, simply believes in Jesus—and is justified. It is a slightly different truth in Galatians 3:11, where Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4 (see also Romans 1:17). Here, Paul tells us: “Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, ‘the righteous man shall live by faith.’” In Romans 4, it's a ungodly man who is justified by faith, but here in Galatians 3:11, it's actually “the righteous man” who is also justified by faith. What is the significance? It is a beautiful truth: We enter into God's favor at the beginning by faith alone, completely apart from works. But it's also true that even a mature Christian man who has learned to walk with the Lord and has begun, out of love for Christ and a desire for his glory, to engage in good works—yet still, even that man always and forever continues to be justified not by those works—but only through faith in Christ; for even the righteous man shall still be justified by faith. So, faith alone isn't just what justifies us at the beginning; faith alone is what continues to justify us till our dying breath. Anthony Burgess has some wonderful sayings on this point as well in his Vindication of the Law. He says: “Take notice of this, that justification by works does not only exclude the works of the Law, but all works of the gospel, yea,
2) Faith is instrumental. Again, speaking of faith, Paul tells us in Romans 4:13, “For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.” The Greek preposition that Paul chooses to use here has a very particular meaning attached to it. It's clear Paul is telling us that this promise given to Abraham was received through (or by) faith, as opposed to because of his faith or on the basis of his faith. This is the way that Paul consistently speaks: we're not justified on the basis of our faith; we're simply justified through faith. In other words, faith isn't meritorious; it's simply instrumental. Faith isn't the cause of our justification; it's simply the means. Abraham didn't achieve God's blessing because his faith was so great; he simply received the promise God was making to him, through simple faith in His Word. This is important, because sometimes it's almost as though we start trying to turn faith into another kind of work—something we must do, or attain to. But Scripture tells us that God's favor isn't something that can be achieved. Entering into God's covenant mercies isn't something that's even achieved by faith—rather, it's simply received by faith. God holds out His promises to us as a free gift. We simply open our hand and take them.

3) Faith can be weak. As we read through the Genesis narrative, we see that Abraham's faith in God was constantly going up and down. At the beginning of Genesis 12, he has enough faith in the Lord to leave everything he knows behind, and take his family to the land where God was calling him. But by the end of the same chapter, he doesn't even have enough faith in God to be honest and tell the Egyptians that Sarah was his wife. In Genesis 13, the Lord promises to give Abraham a son, and we read in verse 6 that he believes in the Lord. But in the very next chapter, we see Abraham and Sarah struggling in faith, starting to think maybe they needed to help God out with His promise. And so, Abraham takes Sarah's maid Hagar as another wife, in order that God's promise of an offspring might be reckoned through her, because they couldn't believe at that point that God could really still give Abraham a son through Sarah. So, sometimes Abraham's faith seems unwavering; but other times it seems almost non-existent! Abraham was a man of faith—but even his faith was never a perfect faith. And this is so comforting for us. Isn't it good news that it's not the amount of our faith that brings us into God's favor, but the object of our faith. As one put it: "A little faith in the Lord Jesus saves."

and the works of grace also." (p21). Again: “we know, that the Apostle excludes the works of David and Abraham, that they did in obedience to the Law, to which they were enabled by grace; so necessary is it in matter of justification and pardon to exclude all works, anything that is ours. . .” (pp233-34). And lastly: “Why is that doctrine of making Angels and Saints mediators and intercessors so odious, but because it joins Christ and others together in that great work? Do you not do the like, when you join your love and grace with Christ's obedience? . . Idolatry maketh the works of Christ, a Christ.” (pp25).

This Greek preposition (Gr. dia) can be used in two different ways, which in turn, give it two different meanings. When it's used in the accusative tense, it takes on the meaning of “on account of,” or “because of”; whereas when it's used in the genitive tense, it takes on the meaning of “through,” or “by means of.” Paul consistently uses dia in the genitive when speaking of faith. Colquhoun puts it this way: “It is one thing to be justified by faith, merely as an instrument by which, a man receives the righteousness of Christ; and another, to be justified for faith, as an act or work of the law. If a sinner, then, rely on his actions of faith, or works of obedience to any of the commands of the law, for a title to eternal life; he seeks to be justified by the works of the law, as really as if his works were perfect. If he depend, either in whole or in part, on his faith and repentance, for a right to any promised blessing: he thereby, so annexes that promise to the commands to believe and repent, as to form them for himself, into a covenant of works.” (Treatise of the Law and Gospel, p25). And again he says: “All indeed who, according to the covenant of grace, attain justification, are justified by faith; but, it is one thing to be justified by faith, as merely the instrument of justification; and another, to be justified for faith, as an act, or work, affording a title to justification. It is one thing, for faith as an act of obedience, and as being seminally all sincere obedience, to give a title to justification; and a very different thing, for faith as a mean[s] or instrument, to receive a title to it. Faith, according to the gospel, gives no manner of title, to the smallest blessing of the everlasting covenant; but it receives the surety-righteousness of the second Adam, which gives a full title to every one of them.” Burgess likewise says: “Now to set up works is to oppose faith, as the Apostle argues; therefore faith, as it is a work, is to be opposed to itself, as it is an instrument justifying.” (p24). And again, Burgess writes: [Justification] is not, because of the dignity of faith, but by Christ. You see the hyssop (or whatever it was) which did sprinkle the blood, was a contemptible herb, yet the instrument to represent great deliverance.” (Vindication of the Law, p29).

Watson speaks of this in his Body of Divinity: “We must distinguish between weakness of faith and no faith. A weak faith is true. The bruised reed is but weak, yet it is such as Christ will not break. Though thy faith be weak, be not discouraged. 1) A weak faith may receive a strong Christ. A weak hand can tie the knot in marriage as well as a strong one; and a weak eye might have seen the brazen serpent. The woman in the gospel did but touch Christ's garment, and received virtue from him. It was the touch of faith. 2) The promise is not made to strong faith, but to true. The promise says not whosoever has a giant-might have seen the brazen serpent. The woman in the gospel did but touch Christ's garment, and received virtue from him. It was the touch of faith. 2) The promise is not made to strong faith, but to true. The promise says not whosoever has a giant

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C) God freely lavishes His favor on sinners in CHRIST alone: God's favor comes by grace alone through faith alone. But this faith is not just faith in God in general. God's favor comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation only comes through the Savior. We can see this in a few different ways:

1) First, Jesus is the SEED that God promised. We saw this earlier. Jesus is the seed that God promised to Abraham—the seed through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. It's only in Christ, Abraham's true seed, that God's blessing flowed to Abraham himself and then would flow to all the nations. All the promises that God made to Abraham are only fulfilled in Christ.

2) Secondly, Jesus is the SAVIOR that Abraham trusted. We've seen that Abraham was a sinner—and yet God dealt with him in grace. But how could God do that? If Abraham was truly a guilty sinner, and if God is just and will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3), then how could God deal with Abraham in grace without compromising His justice? The answer is that the day was coming that Jesus would go to the cross to take all the punishment of all those who belong to Him—including Abraham. Abraham was a believer in Christ. That's why Jesus said to the Jews in John 8:56, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” That's why we find Abraham building altars and offering up burnt offerings. He was acknowledging his sin and his need for atonement. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away his sin, but they pointed forward to the One who would. Abraham looked forward to the coming Savior, the lamb of God.

3) Thirdly, Jesus is the SUBSTANCE that the narratives fore-pictured. Genesis doesn't just point us to Christ through the promises God was making. Throughout Genesis, we're also pointed to Christ through the various pictures Scripture was setting before us. In particular, Scripture sets forth both Abraham and Isaac, not only as believers in Christ, but as pictures of Christ, in the following ways:

A) ISAAC is set forth as a picture of Christ's SUFFERINGS: Genesis 22 tells the story of how God tested Abraham, asking him to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering. It is a remarkable testimony of Abraham's faith; that he was willing to give up to the Lord what was most precious to him in all the world. But this narrative also serves in many ways to point us forward to the cross: Just as it was with Isaac, Christ was God's beloved son; the son of promise; His “only” son (verse 2). And just like with Isaac, Jesus was given a load of wood to carry up a mountain; it was given to him by his father, and he was to be offered up upon it on the mountain (verse 6). Just like Isaac, who walked with his father and even submitted himself to being bound by his father on the mountain, so too Christ raised no objections to the plan and purpose of his father, but submitted himself entirely to Him, even to the point of death (verse 9). And Hebrews tells us that Abraham received Isaac back from the dead as a type of Christ's death and resurrection (verse 13; cf. Hebrews 11:19). It's significant that, at the end of the narrative, Abraham names that place, “The Lord Will Provide” (verse 14). Why not name it, “The Lord Did Provide”? Probably because Abraham himself understood that these events were

who would have us receive them that are weak in faith, will not himself refuse them. Rom. 14:4: A weak believer is a member of Christ; and though Christ will cut off rotten members from his body, he will not cut off weak members.” (Watson, p220).

34 This is exactly what Paul is saying in Romans 3:23-26: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed, for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Paul is explaining how it is that God could pass over the sins of Old Testament believers and yet not compromise His justice: He didn't sweep their sins under the rug and pretend they weren't so bad. God dealt with all of Abraham's sin; it's just that instead of punishing Abraham for his sin, God punished His own Son in his place. (Roberts, p579).

35 Francis Roberts draws this truth out from the Scripture we've been looking at, Genesis 15:6. He writes: “Abraham the father of all believers was justified; not by a general faith, assenting to God's Word as true in general, but by a particular faith. . He believed in the Lord; which here notes, not only assent, but also particular application of it to himself by assurance, trust, confidence, remuneration, etc, in the Lord. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.”

36 Bruce Waltke describes the narrative in Genesis 22 in this way: “Within the canon of Scripture, the story of Abraham's willingness to obediently sacrifice his son of promise typifies Christ's sacrifice. Abraham's declaration that 'God himself will provide the lamb' (22:8) resonates with God's offer of the Lamb to save the world. . .Like Isaac, Christ is a lamb led to the slaughter, yet he does not open his mouth. Just as Isaac carries his own wood for the alter up the steep mount, Christ carries his own wooden cross toward Golgotha (see John 19:17). Just as Abraham sacrificially and obediently lays Isaac on the altar (Gen. 22:9), so Christ sacrificially and obediently submits to his father's will. . Symbolically, Abraham receives Isaac back from death, which typifies Christ's resurrection from the death of the cross (Heb. 11:19).” (Waltke, Genesis, pp210-11).
ultimately looking forward to something else still yet to come.\textsuperscript{37} Later, we learn that this same place, Mount Moriah, was actually the very place the temple would be built. We read in 2 Chronicles 3:1, “Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord \textit{in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah. . . .}” It would be here that God would provide sacrifices of atonement for the many sins and failures of His people. But, ultimately, even those offerings point us forward further still, to Christ. Abraham can tell us that the Lord \textit{will} provide because he was looking forward to the promised Messiah—the One who would provide for His people in a way that his son and the ram only faintly fore-pictured. Abraham looked forward to the lamb of God who, through his sufferings, would take away the sin of the world.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{B) ABRAHAM is set forth as a picture of Christ’s OBEDIENCE:} Isaac isn’t the only type of Christ in Genesis 22. Abraham is also set forth as a type of Christ—only in a different way. Isaac serves to picture \textit{Christ in his sufferings}; Abraham serves to picture \textit{Christ and his obedience}. We see this in Genesis 22:18, where, after Abraham had offered up the ram, the Lord declares to him: “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” Earlier, we saw that Christ was the promised seed, through whom blessing would come to the nations. But we also see Christ here in another way. Towards the end of the verse, we’re told that \textit{the nations} would be blessed because of \textit{Abraham’s obedience}. What do we make of this? Scripture clearly tells us that Abraham inherited the promises by grace \textit{alone} through faith \textit{alone}—emphatically \textit{not} on the basis of his obedience—indeed, the two are completely mutually exclusive systems (Romans 4:13-16; Galatians 3:16-18). So how are we to interpret these words? We interpret them the same way we did with Noah. Remember how the Lord had told Noah in Genesis 7:1 that his entire household was to enter the ark, but that \textit{they} were only saved because \textit{he} alone was righteous? Noah was a picture of Christ, in that his entire family was saved only because of and through and in union with him.\textsuperscript{59} So it is here with Abraham. Notice what God is saying: NOT: “Abraham, you will be blessed because you have obeyed My voice”; NOR: \textit{the nations} will be blessed because \textit{they} will obey My voice”; BUT: “Abraham, \textit{the nations} will be blessed because you have obeyed My voice.” This is not a personal, merited righteousness—but a covenantal, imputed righteousness. Scripture is giving us a glimpse of the truth that \textit{the nations would enter into God’s blessing on the basis of the obedience of another}. Here Abraham serves as a type of Christ: we \textit{(the nations)} are blessed because \textit{he} (Jesus) obeyed.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{37} This insight about the future tense of v14 and its implications was gratefully gleaned from Tim Cain (Kaleo Church, CA).

\textsuperscript{58} Isaac is an eminent type of Christ in other ways as well. We see Christ, also, \textit{in the birth of Isaac}, when we consider that: 1) the birth of Isaac came about as the direct fulfillment of God’s promise (as with Christ); 2) the birth of Isaac only took place after much waiting and longing for the promise (as with Christ); 3) the birth of Isaac took place at the precise appointed time God had set (18:14; 21:12; as with Christ, cf. Galatians 4:3); 4) the birth of Isaac was marvellous (as with the virgin birth); 5) and the birth of Isaac brought great joy to some (IE, Sarah) but distress to others (IE, Hagar and Ishmael who are then cast out; as it was with Christ, cf. Luke 2:34). We also see Christ in \textit{the marriage of Isaac} recorded in Genesis 24. Here the father (Abraham) commissions his servant with the great task of bringing home a bride for his son (Isaac). And this is a beautiful picture of our mission as God’s people: God the Father has thus commissioned His servants with the great task of bringing home a bride for His Son, Jesus—this is what our mission is—to bring home the bride of Christ from among the nations.

\textsuperscript{59} Noah served both to show us \textit{how} God deals with believers (on the basis of grace alone) as well as \textit{why} God deals with believers the way He does (as a type of the second Adam in his covenant headship). On the one hand, Noah is a sinner saved by grace. But on the other hand, he is a type of Christ the second Adam in that his whole family was saved only because of and through and in union with him. So it is here with Abraham. He is a sinner saved by grace, but he’s also a picture here of the second Adam, as Paul wrote in Romans 5:18-19: “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man’s disobedience, the many were made sinners, \textit{even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.}”

\textsuperscript{60} Bruce Waltke puts it this way in his commentary on Genesis: “Abraham’s obedience prefigures the active obedience of Christ, who secures the covenantal blessings for Abraham’s innumerable offspring.” (p311). \textit{The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible} likewise affirms this truth: “Abraham’s obedience prefigured the active obedience of Christ, who secured the covenantal blessings for Abraham’s innumerable offspring who share his faith in the God who gives life to the dead.” It might be argued at this point that this is irrefutable Scriptural evidence that God fulfills His promises to us by means of our faith \textit{plus} our obedience. For God had promised this same thing earlier to Abraham, and now, along with this same promise, the Lord adds this qualification: “because you have obeyed My voice.” So that it seems that it was not truly by faith alone (as we’ve been advocating) that Abraham received and inherited the promises, but a mixture of his faith and his obedience; indeed, faith \textit{plus} obedience. To this objection, we would cite another Scripture a few chapters later. For the Lord uses the very same language in telling Isaac the same truth, when He declares to him in Genesis 26:4-5: “I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; \textit{because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.}” Now, this Scripture fully refutes the objection; for it uses the very same language to teach us something completely different than what is alleged to be taught in Genesis 22:18. Thus, Genesis 26:4-5 helps us to truly and rightly interpret Genesis 22:18. And what we find is this: In Genesis 22:18, we’re told that the nations would be blessed because Abraham obeyed the Lord. But notice what is said in
THE LORD’S WORDS TO ABRAHAM IN GENESIS 22:18

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<th>NOT</th>
<th>“Abraham, YOU will be blessed because you obeyed My voice”</th>
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<td>BUT</td>
<td>“Abraham, the nations will be blessed because you obeyed My voice”</td>
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Don’t we often begin to think that God blesses us as Christians when and as we obey Him and keep His commandments? Now, God wants us to obey Him and keep His commandments! And we’ll talk more about that ahead. But isn’t it freeing, isn’t it wonderful to know that, actually, God blesses us, not on the basis of our obedience, but because of the obedience of another? The truth is, God’s blessing flows to us because of Jesus. God continues every day to pour out His full blessing upon us in the midst of, and despite our many sins (by grace alone). What’s more, He continues to pour out this blessing upon us completely apart from any of our Christian obedience (by faith alone). And He does so because Jesus paid your sin debt in full and His righteousness has now been credited to you (in Christ alone). God’s blessing wasn’t based on Abraham’s spiritual achievements in the Christian life. It wasn’t based on his obedience, or on his devotion, or even on his feelings. It wasn’t based on him at all. And it’s the same for us in Christ. God’s favor is based on His promise to bless all those who belong to Jesus. We didn’t earn God’s favor at conversion. We don’t earn it now by trying to be good Christians. We never deserved it in the first place, and we never will. But if you belong to Jesus, then God’s favor is upon you, and just like Abraham, you won’t be able to get away from it.

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<td>God blesses real sinners</td>
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<td>Freely given through faith alone</td>
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5. The STABILITY of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about the security we have in Christ

Earlier we referenced the Lord’s words to Abram in Genesis 15:1. This is where the Lord comes to him and says: “Do not fear, Abram. I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great.” We talked about God’s promise here in the context of the Tower of Babel; Abram didn’t need to seek security anywhere else because God was his shield; and he didn’t need to seek significance anywhere else because the Lord was promising rewards greater than he could dream. Well, we talked about this verse (15:1), but what we haven’t talked about is the context in which the Lord spoke these words to Abraham. What was it? Well, the background of Genesis 15 is Genesis 14. And Genesis 14 is the account of how Lot was taken captive by an invading army, and how in response, Abram and his servants went after them, and overtook and overpowered them, and rescued Lot and many others, and brought them safely back home. At the end of the account, the king of Sodom tells Abram to take all the possessions that he had rescued as compensation. But Abram is afraid that if he takes anything, the king of Sodom would take credit for making him prosperous. So Abram says no—he refuses to take anything. And it’s “after these things” that the Lord comes to Abram in Genesis 15:1 and says, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great.” So, what’s the lesson? It’s not just that God knows how to protect and reward His people. It’s more than that. God is telling Abram that his integrity hasn’t gone unnoticed. God was watching. Abram wasn’t living with integrity for nothing. I think sometimes we get weary because we forget this. And so, the Lord wants to remind Abram, and to remind us, that He is watching, and that He sees every little thing we do for His sake—and not even the smallest thing we do in His name will go unrewarded (Matthew 10:42). 61

Genesis 26:4-5; here, the Lord tells Isaac that the nations would be blessed—once again—because Abraham obeyed the Lord. Now, if the intended meaning of Genesis 22:18 was that Abraham inherited the promises in and through his obedience, then we would find the Lord affirming the same truth to Isaac; but here with Isaac we find the Lord affirming a completely different truth. For in Genesis 26:4-5, the Lord does not tell Isaac, as He had told Abraham: the nations will be blessed because you, Isaac, have obeyed Me. But to the contrary, the Lord tells Isaac: the nations will be blessed because Abraham obeyed Me. Isaac is blessed, and the nations are blessed—not because of their own obedience—but because of the obedience of Another. 61 It’s the same truth Paul writes of in Galatians 6:9, “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” And when is it that we are tempted to lose heart? It’s when we start thinking, It doesn’t matter; it’s not doing anything it’s all for nothing. But what we have to see is this phrase: “in due time we will reap. . .” In due time we will reap.
Well, in response to the Lord's words in Genesis 15:1, Abram says, “O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” (v2). God had promised to give children to Abram (12:7). In fact, at this point, the Lord hadn't just promised to give Abram offspring; He had sworn to him: “I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.” (13:15-16). But, probably years had gone by and Abram still didn't have any children. And so Abram is wrestling here with God in prayer between the promise that God had made on the one hand, but on the other hand the present reality that he still had no children, and he wasn't getting any younger: “Lord, you've promised multitudes...but You've yet to give me a single child.” It's not that Abram didn't believe what God had said. It's that he did believe what God had said, but the reality of his present situation stood in direct opposition to God's promise. So Abram is being honest here with God in prayer: “Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.” (1:5:3). Abram isn't accusing God; he's just honestly wrestling. He's being honest with the Lord as he fights to believe His promise. And it's as he wrestles with God in prayer that God confirms His promise to him:

1 Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.'  And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.'  And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'  2 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.  3 And He said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.'  (Genesis 15:4-7).

So God confirms His promise to Abram; and Abram believes in the Lord (1:5:6): We've already looked at this verse and shown how it's a central passage that the New Testament quotes to prove that justification comes about through faith. And even as Abram believes God's promise in verse 6, God reminds him in verse 7 that even his own faith was ultimately due to God's electing grace. We saw this truth earlier: Abram only believed in the Lord because the Lord had first chosen him. Even our faith is a gift of God. We don't believe because we chose Him; we believe because He chose us.

But Abram continues to wrestle with God in prayer. We pick up again with Genesis 15:8 and read:

8 He said, 'O Lord God, how may I know that I will possess it?'  9 So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.'  10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.  11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away... 12 It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces.  13 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates... (Genesis 15:8-11, 17-18).

Not right now. Now is the time to sow. You see this even in the Greek: Verse 9: Later will be the time (Gr. kairos) for reaping. Verse 10: But now is the time (Gr. kairos) for sowing. We get discouraged because it's hard work sowing, and all we're doing is sowing and never reaping. Farmers sow for a month then they get to see the harvest at the end of the year. All our life we're sowing but we don't get to reap a single sheaf. That is, until after we've sown our last seed, and we ourselves are sown in the ground, and we arise at the Resurrection. Then, then, then—we will get to reap. And it is not a probability, it's a certainty: “we will reap.” But till then we have to live by faith. So, friends, the harvest is coming. But first we have to sow. All our days as pilgrims here in this world are the days of sowing. It's hard; it gets discouraging. But also remember: How we sow or sows is intimately connected to how we will reap then; for “whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (v7). The reaping then is divinely intertwined to our sowing now. And these are the only days we get to sow. These are the days to live for Christ; these are the days to pour out our lives, these are the days of sowing. Let's sowe like we believe in the coming harvest.

Insight from Ligon Duncan's Covenant Theology course.

63 Think back to John 11 and the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. One of the things that story teaches us is that honest prayers are better than right theology. Martha rattled off right answers about Jesus; but Mary wrestled and wept. And it was Mary's wrestling and weeping that prevailed, because being honest with Jesus is better than a right theology about Jesus.

64 Abraham believed, but even his faith was the fruit of God's electing grace. Scripture teaches that even faith and repentance are gifts that God must give us (Acts 5:31; 11:18; Ephesians 2:8-9). Faith isn't something we can produce—it's a gift that God must give—and that He does give to all who call upon Him. Alec Motyer puts it this way: “In Genesis 15:6 we read of Abram that he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness...Here is the essence of justification by faith. But notice what God says to him in verse 7: ‘I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.’ Now Abram, says God, ‘please don't think that by believing you have climbed into a position by your own merits or deservings. Let me take your story back to where it began. I brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees.’” (See his article, Covenant and Promise). Isn't this so often our experience as believers! There's a wonderful example of this in the Gospels, in John 1:43-45. Verse 43 tells us that Jesus found Philip. But that's not how Philip saw it, because he goes and tells Nathanael, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote...” Philip thought he was the one who found Jesus. But later, Jesus would gently correct his thinking: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you...” (John 15:16).
A) What is this oath? We referred to this passage in the first Lesson, when we were defining what a covenant was. And there we saw that what God is doing here is taking a self-maledictory oath upon himself. God is saying, in effect: *May I become just like these animals if I do not make good on My promise to you.* We know this because of a similar passage in Jeremiah 34:13-22. The Babylonians come up to attack Israel, and the people are terrified and so they make promises to God and engage in this same covenant ceremony. They slaughter animals and walk between the pieces and tell God they’ll get rid of their Hebrew slaves. But when the Babylonians go away, they go back on their word; they take their Hebrew slaves back. And Jeremiah comes to them and tells them that they are going to become just like the animals they had slaughtered and passed between the pieces. Why? Because when they took the oath, they were saying: “May I become like these animals if I break my promise.” And they did break their promise; so God is saying: “Alright, I will deal with you just as you said.”

B) Who takes this oath? And so notice what is happening here in Genesis 15. It’s not Abram that is making a covenant with God. It’s not Abram who is passing between the pieces of the slaughtered animals and taking upon himself the self-maledictory oath to keep God’s covenant. Abraham doesn’t even walk through the pieces at all—in fact—it seems he had actually fallen asleep (v12). *God* is the One who passes between the pieces, in the form of “a smoking oven and a flaming torch.” *God* is the One who takes upon himself the self-maledictory oath: “May I become like these animals if I do not make good on My promise.” It’s amazing what is happening here. God puts His own name on the line as He swears a solemn oath to Abram. And the outcome is so certain that, for the first time, the promise God had made to Abram is put in the past tense. We read in Genesis 15:18, “On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land.’”

C) How to understand this oath? One question might arise here: Didn’t God already promise to give the land to Abram and his seed? Why the need for this formal ceremony? It might help to give an illustration, though it’s from from a perfect one: Think of a father, who had acquired at some point in his life a very special car; and this father had promised his son many times over that one day he would give the car to him. Well, it’s one thing for the father to make that promise, but it’s another thing for him to actually deed over that car. To legally deed over the car to his son, there’s a process that must take place. So, imagine that the father comes to his son one day and says: “Today, I’m deeding the car over to you.” He signs the back of the title; he submits the ownership documents; he fills out the application forms and pays the fees. And after that, the ownership of the car transfers in such a way that it *now belongs legally* to his son. At that point, the father could no longer legally take the car back as his own—even if he wanted to. This is what God is doing here for Abram in Genesis 15. He had been making promises to him, but now it’s as though He’s actually “putting it in writing.” Here in this passage, it’s as though the Lord is saying: “Abram, while you were sleeping, I went ahead and officially deeded over the land to you. I put it in writing. It’s a done deal now. It’s yours.”

It’s the same for us in Christ. God has given us promises, He’s put them in writing, and He will never go back on them. The reason He will continue to lead and guide us, and the reason He’ll never cast us away, and the reason He’ll do a thousand other things He’s promised to do, is that He has bound himself by solemn oath to fulfill His promises to us. His own name is on the line. As a believer, 

65 “By dividing the animals and passing between the pieces, participants in a covenant pledged themselves to life and death. These actions established an oath of self-malediction. If they should break the commitment involved in the covenant, they were asking that their own bodies be torn in pieces just as the animals had been divided ceremonially.” (Robertson, p130).
66 As Alec Motyer explains: “To pass between the severed pieces was the taking of a very vivid and terrible oath: ‘So may it be done to me if this oath is broken.’ God alone passes between these severed pieces. Not only does Abraham not pass, but he is disallowed from passing. God takes upon himself the total obligation of the covenant.”
67 For more, see O Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, pp127-131, 145-146. In short, he says: “God the Creator binds himself to man the creature by a solemn blood-oath. The Almighty chooses to commit himself to the fulfillment of promises spoken to Abraham. By this divine commitment, Abraham’s doubts are to be expelled. God has solemnly promised, and has sealed that promised with a self-maledictory oath. The realization of the divine word is assured.” (p131).
68 We see this truth played out throughout Scripture. One example is 1 Samuel 12: “Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. . .*For the Lord will not abandon His people on account of His great name.* . .” (1 Samuel 12:19-22). Here Samuel tells God’s people that the Lord would
you will fall again and again. But God will never cast you away. You are secure in your Savior. The Lord has put His promises to you in writing, and He has sealed them with the blood of His own Son.

6. The MARK of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about how we can know our faith is real

Now, this doesn't mean that God never gave Abraham commands to obey. God requires Abraham's obedience. He tells him Genesis 17:1, “Walk before Me, and be blameless.” The call to Christ is the call to follow a new Lord and submit to His ways. So yes, there are commands in the Covenant of Grace. But as we've shown, the commands that God gave to Abraham were never conditions. The promises God made to him were never conditional on his obedience. So, does God call us to a life of obedience? Absolutely. But is God's blessing and favor contingent on our obedience? No way. We obey—not to obtain God's blessing—but because we've already obtained it in Christ. One question remains though: If all this is true, how are we to understand James 2:14-26? Here we read:

What do we make of this passage? At first glance, it seems to blatantly contradict everything else the Scriptures say about the gospel and salvation. It's baffling to us. What in the world is James saying?

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14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.' 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God. 23 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 24 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 25 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:14-26).

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For other examples of Abraham being bound to God's commands, see Genesis 12:1-3; 18:19; 22:1-2; 26:5.

Some make passages such as Genesis 17:1-2 into a condition; but commands are not the same as conditions. If a father tells his son, "If you are diligent to make your bed every morning and tidy up your room every evening, then I will continue to be your father," that is a condition. But if the father tells his son, "Son, I am your father. I love you and I'll always be your father. Now then, be diligent to make your bed every morning and tidy up your room every evening," that is a command, not a condition. The language of Genesis 17 is the language of command, not condition. The literal Hebrew wording is not, "Do this so that I", but rather, "Do this, and I..." Genesis 26:3 contains the same Hebrew construction (a command followed by a promise and linked with the Hebrew "and I will"). Here God tells Isaac, "Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for you to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham..." God gives Isaac here a definite command: "Sojourn in the land." But God isn't saying, "Isaac, if you sojourn in this land, then (and only then) will I fulfill the promises I have made to you;" rather, God is saying, "Isaac, sojourn in this land, and I will bless you, because that's what I've promised on oath to do." And this is how we must interpret passages such as Genesis 17:1-2 (cf. 17:19; 24:44,46; 48:9 with the same Hebrew construction, "and I will") and Genesis 35:11-12 with the same structure of 1) declaration of God's character; 2) command; 3) promises to Jacob, with no conditions). Not, "If, then" but "Do, and." A command, but not a condition (Genesis 26:5 is another matter, where Abraham's active obedience typifies the active obedience of Christ—the basis through which blessing would come to the nations). This is how Bavinck interprets Genesis 17:1-2: "The bilateral dimensions of God's covenant—the obligations on those with whom it is made—are never conditions for entering the covenant, but understood as the rules of conduct for those who by grace had been incorporated into it (Gen. 17:1-2; Exod.19:5-6,8; 24:3,7; Lev.20:14ff; Deut.5:29; 27:10ff; 28:1ff; 30:1ff; etc)." (Reformed Dogmatics, p395).

Joel Beeke likewise notes: "true saving faith necessarily yields willing and continual obedience. Good works [however]... do not constitute the ground of justification, nor are they instruments by which sinners are justified. . . because Abraham had true faith, he was commanded to walk before God and be perfect, and all true believers from Abraham onward would reflect 'their father Abraham,' both in their faith and in the obedience of faith." (A Puritan Theology, ch.16). Alec Motyer warns us at this point: "Genesis 17:1-2 needs to be guarded from misunderstanding as it might be taken to mean, 'If you walk before me and be blameless, then I will make my covenant with you.' This would make the covenant appear as a divine response to Abram's commitment, even a reward for the perfection of his 'walk.' This cannot be so because the covenant between God and Abraham had already been formally inaugurated many years before (Gen. 15:18). Also, the wording in Genesis 17:2 does not express the idea of inauguration but rather confirmation. A literal translation would be, 'and I will place my covenant,' an expression which signifies the covenant coming into active operation as the stated relationship between its maker and its recipient. Abraham's life of fellowship with the Lord was not the pre-condition of the covenant but rather the response. . . From beginning to end, God's covenant relationship with his people is based on his grace and not their merits." (Exodus, p19).
Well, in this passage, James is talking about the marks of true saving faith. His purpose here isn't to tell us how to be saved—but to tell us how we can know if we really have been saved. The Scriptures warn us that not all who profess to know and love Christ have truly embraced Him by faith. James himself used to be one of them! He was the brother of Jesus; yet Scripture tells us that James wasn't a true believer until Jesus appeared to him after His resurrection (John 7:3–5; 1 Corinthians 15:7). So, James has a special place in his heart for professing Christians who have never truly been born again. And his message is this: Don't think you're really a believer just because you claim to be.

One thing that helps us see this is recognizing the difference in the language between James and Paul. Paul often says the same things, but he uses different words. For example, when Paul talks about the evidence of true saving faith, he tends to use the word fruit rather than works. James is here using the word works where Paul uses the word fruit. They're using different words—but they're talking about the same thing: If your life hasn't been radically changed by the gospel, then you better check the reality of your profession. Because when God saves a man, He changes him completely.

This is why, at the beginning of the passage, in VERSE 14, James doesn't ask what use it is if a man has faith but has no works—but rather—what use is it if a man says he has faith but has no works. It's a profession of faith that James is talking about. James is speaking of a person who professes faith in Christ, but whose life is left completely unchanged. And he's saying that that kind of faith will never save anyone. Then in VERSE 18, James is saying that true faith shows itself through works: "I will show you my faith by my works." He's telling us that true saving faith demonstrates itself through works. The fruit reveals the root; real apple trees always bear apples. Then, in VERSES 22 and 24, James says that Abraham's faith was something you could outwardly see. In these verses he uses the Greek word blepo, “you see,” which, out of the 108 times it is used in the New Testament, always refers to physical sight (rather than our colloquial English expression). He's talking about something you can physically see. Faith is something you should be able to see as you look at someone's life.

So when James says that Abraham was justified by works, he's not saying our works justify us before God—he's saying our works justify the reality of our faith. He's using it the same way that Jesus did in Luke 7:35: “wisdom is vindicated by all her children.” The word here is the same word used in James. What's Jesus saying? He's saying that true wisdom is proven to be wisdom through the fruit it bears. And this is exactly what James is saying. A profession of true saving faith is proven by a life that has been changed. Fruit proves the reality of your profession. As one put it “The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ.”

They also, at times, use the same words, but use them in different ways. This is especially true “justify”, as we'll see below.

“Abraham was not justified by a vain show of faith, by a worldless faith, which James so much condemns; but by a true faith that justifies itself by works. . .[his] intent in this chapter is, not to show how or wherewith we are justified, or whether faith, or works, or both, justify us; but rather to show what manner of faith that is whereby we must be justified; viz, a lively working fruit-bearing faith. . .the plain scope of James is, to prove, that this faith which brings not forth true fruits, true good works, is a vain dead useless faith, as to the point of justifying or saving anyone” (Roberts, pp623-24). “James does not say 'though a man has faith but has no works—but rather—what use is it if a man says he has faith but has no works. It's as to the point of justifying or saving anyone” (Roberts, pp623-24). “James does not say 'though a man has faith but has no works—but rather—what use is it if a man says he has faith but has no works. It's as to the point of justifying or saving anyone” (Roberts, pp623-24).

So when James says that Abraham was justified by works, he's not saying our works justify us before God—he's saying our works justify the reality of our faith. He's using it the same way that Jesus did in Luke 7:35: “wisdom is vindicated by all her children.” The word here is the same word used in James. What's Jesus saying? He's saying that true wisdom is proven to be wisdom through the fruit it bears. And this is exactly what James is saying. A profession of true saving faith is proven by a life that has been changed. Fruit proves the reality of your profession. As one put it “The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ.”

James challenged anyone who claimed to have faith to demonstrate it, to make it visible. The only visible evidence available to human eyes is that of the deeds of obedience. Although God can read the hearts of individuals, humanity's only view of the heart condition is the sight of outward fruit. “Wisdom is proved right by all her children” (IE, wisdom is shown to be genuine wisdom by its results). Just as true wisdom is demonstrated by its fruit, Abraham’s claim to faith was justified (IE, demonstrated by his outward observance). Roberts says: “And ‘by works was faith perfected; that is, not essentially or causally, as any cause or concourse (sic) cooperating with his faith in the point of his justification; for Abraham’s faith was perfect, and had done many excellent exploits long before, yea had justified Abraham perfectly before God many years before his offering up of Isaac; but evidentially or declaratively, this act perfectly evidenced before the Lord the truth of his faith.” So that when James said, ‘Abraham was justified by works when he had offered up Isaac’, his meaning was, that he was justified by works only a posteriori, as effects and fruits of faith and justification; but by faith, a priori, causally, which produced such works, and was evidentially and experimentally perfected of them.” (p625-26). And again: “By his faith, his person was justified, and he was accounted a righteous person; by his works, his faith was justified, to be a true sincere living and saving faith.” (p470).

Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship. And Motyer quotes A. Barnes: “There is as much necessity that faith and works...
To summarize: Paul tells us how we're justified; James shows us what kind of faith it is that justifies. Paul says faith alone justifies; James tells us that justifying faith is never alone but always will produce fruit. Paul's focus is that our faith justifies us; James' focus is that our works justify our faith. 76

### Comparing the Different Emphasis of Paul and James

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In short, James is warning us that intellectual orthodoxy with no life-change is not true saving faith. Having good theology can't save you. Demons actually have great theology (verse 19), but they will perish forever. True saving faith proves itself through our works. When someone professes faith in Christ, how do you know if he's really saved? You watch his life over the next 5, 10, 25 years, and you ask, has this person been changed? Does his life back up his profession? We're not talking about perfection. But does his life show forth the reality of a true and living faith in Christ? How about you? Can those who know you best say: that guy is far from perfect—but I see Jesus in him. 77

7. The SIGN of the Covenant of Grace: We learn about the badge God has given to His people

Let's turn now to Genesis 17. This is our last section, and we're going to spend a lot of time here, because there's so much in this chapter that's important for us to understand. So let's jump right in.

A) The CONTEXT of the Passage: We're told in the first verse of Genesis 17 that Abram is now 99 years old, which means that it had been nearly a full 25 years since he left Haran for the land of Canaan. We're also told in the last verse of Genesis 16 that 13 years had passed between Chapter 16 and Chapter 17. What happened in Genesis 16? Abram had listened to his wife Sarah to take her maid Hagar as another wife. God had promised to make Abram into a great nation, but over 10 years later, he still had no children, and he wasn't getting any younger. So at the suggestion of his wife, Abram tries to force God's timing by taking things into his own hands. He takes Hagar as another wife and she bears Ishmael to him. And from that point on, there's nothing but trouble. When Hagar conceives, she looks down on Sarah; then Sarah retaliates by getting violent with Hagar. Scripture doesn't tell us anything else about those 13 years, but judging from Sarah's words later in 21:9-10, it seems that the family unrest continues. What does this teach us? Unbelief only leaves us empty. Abram had given into unbelief; he had failed to trust in the Lord; and his sin had brought real consequences not just to himself, but to his whole family. But that wasn't the end of the story. . .

In Genesis 17, God comes once again to Abram to comfort and revive him. And the way God does this is by reminding him of two things: His character and His covenant. God reminds Abram both of who He is and of what He has promised. So, God says, “I am God Almighty. . .” (v1). This is His character; this is who God is. He is God Almighty; the Living God who does the impossible (like cause a 100 year old man and his 90 year old wife to bear children). He is the Sovereign King who rules the earth. God also reminds Abram of His covenant: “. . .My covenant is with you” (v4). God is confirming the covenant He had made with Abram so long ago. In fact, God is here basically should be united to constitute true religion, as there is that body and soul should be united to constitute a living man.” (p110).

76 Roberts says: “Paul speaks of a true lively faith as justifying; James excludes the false dead workless faith from justifying; Paul shows whereby we are justified, viz, by faith; James shows what manner of faith it must be, viz, a lively working faith, whereby we are justified; Paul proves that we are justified by faith, without works as causes of justification; James proves that we are justified by works also as effects and consequents upon justification, and not by faith only; Paul maintains that faith alone justifies; James maintains that justifying faith is not alone in the justified person, but produces good works; Paul intends our justification a priori, casually, and instrumentally, by faith without works; James intends our justification a posteriori, declaratively and demonstratively by works the fruits of faith; Paul evinces that faith alone justifies our persons, but James evidences that works are requisite to justify our faith. So that the doctrine of Paul and James is [unified] most harmoniously agreeing one with the other, even wherein they seem most of all to disagree.” (pp626-27). Vos says: “[James'] argument is aimed against libertines who used the teaching of grace of the gospel as a cloak for their licentiousness. . . In his Letters to the Romans and to the Galatians, Paul naturally had to do with entirely different opponents—namely, with Pharisaic proponents of salvation by works, who replaced faith with works. That is why his polemic turned out differently. His watchword. . . [is] sola fide, by faith only.' The watchword of James is sed non fide solitario, 'but not by a faith that is solitary, standing alone.' The one watchword does not exclude the other.” (Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 4, p168). See also Calvin, Institutes, 3.17.11-12.

77 Most of this section was based on and gratefully gleaned from a sermon on James 2:14-26 by Phil Smucland.
reiterating the same covenant promises He had made to Abram back in Genesis 12. Now, why would God do that? Why would God tell Abraham in Genesis 17 the same stuff He already told him back in Genesis 12? Because 25 years had passed since Genesis 12. And if you've been a believer for 25 years, you have a much more realistic view of yourself than when God first saved you. If you've been a believer for 25 years, you've been confronted with the depths of your weaknesses, your failures, your sin. And so, God coming to Abram in Genesis 17 to reiterate the same promises He had made 25 years earlier is really the sweetest thing in the world. Because it means that 25 years of Abram's worst sin and failure couldn't mess up the promises God had made to him. Abram had failed God, but God would never fail him. God's promises after 25 years were just as true as ever.

B) The NATURE, IMPORTANCE and PURPOSE of Covenant Signs: After the promises of verses 1-8, the Lord gives to Abraham circumcision as the sign of His covenant with him. We've talked about covenant signs before: The rainbow was the covenant sign given to Noah; circumcision is the covenant sign given here to Abraham; the Sabbath would be the covenant sign given to Israel later through Moses. And, as we mentioned before, “covenant signs declare covenant promises to covenant people.” A covenant sign was a tangible picture of God’s eternal promises to His people.

We've seen that covenant signs are the foundation for our understanding of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper). What this means is that we need to have a right understanding of covenant signs if we want to have a right understanding of the sacraments. And this is so important, because so much false teaching has resulted from a lack of understanding of covenant signs and how they relate to the covenant. This is why, for instance, there are denominations that teach that you can't be saved unless you're baptized. It's because they have failed to understand the nature of covenant signs.

In particular, covenant signs are given for the purpose of assuring God's people of His promises. That's what they're for. Covenant signs were never given as some kind of ritual to save unbelievers. Covenant signs aren't given to unbelievers at all—they're given to those who already do believe. God was already in a relationship with Abraham long before Genesis 17. God didn't give Abraham circumcision to save him—Abraham had been walking with God for 25 years! No, it was in order to encourage and strengthen him in God's promises. And to do that, God gives Abraham a very tangible reminder of what He had promised. God marks Abraham's body with the covenant sign of circumcision, so that he would never forget the reality of the promises that God had made to him.

A question might arise here: Why did Abraham need this kind of tangible sign, and why is it that we need tangible pictures like baptism and the Lord's Supper to strengthen our faith? Shouldn't God's Word be enough? Why can't we just preach? The short answer is that if God has given us covenant signs (or sacraments) and commanded us to take part in them, then we need them—whether we think we do or not. The truth is, we are a weak people who need to be reminded of God's promises. And so, we are strengthened when we hold the bread with our hands, and smell the wine, and taste them both; to remember that just as real as this bread and wine, are the promises God has made to us.

C) The MEANING of Circumcision: So, how are we to understand the covenant sign of circumcision? 1) Circumcision was NOT an ETHNIC sign: it was not a sign to mark Jewish ethnicity (the physical offspring of Abraham). We know this, first of all, because Abraham is commanded not only to circumcise his children, but to circumcise all the household servants that lived with him, who were not of his offspring, but foreigners (vv12-13). If Abraham is here commanded to circumcise those who are ethnically non-Jewish, then circumcision cannot be an ethnic sign. 2) Circumcision

78 There are minor differences: For instance, in 12:2, God promises to make him a great nation, whereas in 17:4-5 the Lord expands on this, promising to make Abram a multitude of nations. And, Chapter 12 focuses on blessing whereas Chapter 17 focuses on multiplication and fruitfulness. But though there are minor differences, the main thrust of the content is the same.
79 Alec Motyer, *Covenant and Promise*.
80 IE, the Church of Christ.
81 Alec Motyer puts it this way: “Every time Abraham therefore observed the mark of circumcision in his own body, he would declare, 'I am the man to whom God has made promises.'” (Covenant and Promise). In light of God's command to Abram in verse 1, Motyer also notes: “Abraham cannot look at the mark of circumcision and glory in the promises without at the same time being reminded over and over again in his commitment to God—Walk before me and be thou perfect.”
82 Much of this section was gleaned from Ligon Duncan's *Covenant Theology* course.
83 We could also think of Genesis 34, where Jacob's sons tell the Hivites that they must be circumcised in order to marry into
was also NOT a NATIONAL sign: Some people argue that circumcision in the Old Testament was merely a mark to identify the members of the nation of Israel. They would grant that Gentiles were indeed, at times, circumcised just as the Jews were (as in the case of Abraham’s servants), but they maintain it was a badge of national allegiance, not spiritual allegiance. According to them, it was given, not to mark the people of God, but the members of the nation of Israel. In other words, they say that circumcision had no spiritual significance—it was merely a sign of national identity. Scripture teaches us, however, that circumcision was never given as a national sign; but as a spiritual one.

1) Circumcision was a spiritual SIGN because the covenant was a spiritual COVENANT. The best way to properly understand the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham is to understand the nature of God’s covenant with Abraham. After all, the whole point of a sign is to point us to the reality that it represents. The whole purpose of a wedding ring—the sign of the marriage covenant—is to point us back to the marriage covenant that it represents. In the same way, the best way to understand the covenant sign of circumcision is to understand the actual covenant that God is making with Abraham. And Genesis 17:7 tells us one thing in particular that’s absolutely vital in understanding this covenant. Here in verse 7, God says to Abraham: “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.” What does this tell us? The covenant God is making with Abraham is about salvation.

We’ve seen this over and over and we see it again here. God says to Abraham: “I will . . . be God to you and to your descendants after you.” This is the very heart of God’s covenant with Abraham. It’s about God owning a people for himself in the fullest sense—it’s about salvation; it’s a thoroughly spiritual covenant. And circumcision is given as the sign of that covenant. As God tells Abraham in Genesis 17:11: “And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.” If God’s covenant with Abraham is about salvation, then the sign of that covenant has to be about salvation. Again, that’s the whole point of covenant signs: the sign is given as a picture of what’s being promised; the whole purpose of the sign is point to what’s being signified. So, if God’s covenant with Abraham is about salvation, then the sign of that covenant must also be about salvation (rather than national identity).

84 Many Baptists make this argument. “Baptists are intent on making this dispensation [the Old Testament] terminate in what is external. What God established with Israel was a national covenant, nothing more. This national covenant had national covenantal seals, a national continuation in the line of natural propagation. . . The significance of circumcision accords with all that. But in the New Testament, it has become completely different. Now, what is external and national has ceased to be valid. Something spiritual and universal has come in its place. . . This is the Baptist position.” (Vos, Volume 5, pp161-62).

85 I should warn you that we’re about to launch into controversial waters. This section gives the Scriptural foundation for the historical Presbyterian understanding of covenant children and how they relate to the church, and specifically the practice of infant baptism. I’ve done my best to be neither too laborious on the one hand nor too brief on the other as I explain these things from the Scriptures, but my best is very imperfect. I deeply respect my Reformed Baptist brothers and want to affirm that though we have different convictions from the Scriptures on this particular issue—and though those Scriptural convictions are important still, at the end of the day, the far more important issue at stake is not what we believe about this particular issue—but whether or not we are enthralled with Christ, and whether or not that is affecting everything about how we live.

86 See especially Section 3 above, “The Promises of the Covenant of Grace,” which deals with this at length.

87 This is all the more so in light of the fact that the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham is so intimately bound together with the covenant, that God actually calls circumcision the covenant itself (rather than the sign of the covenant) in Genesis 17:9-10. This need not alarm us, as if the sacraments have saving power. Ball explains, “Sacramental phrases, wherein the name of the thing signified is given to the sign, are ancient and familiar; as circumcision is called the covenant, and the rock Christ.” (p91).

88 We learned this with Noah in Genesis 9. God’s covenant promise to Noah and all those who came out of the ark with him, was that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. That was the essence of the covenant. And the rainbow was given as a sign (a picture) and a seal (a pledge) of that promise to never again cut off all flesh with the waters of the flood.

89 We could add further from this same passage that the covenant God made with Abraham is “an everlasting covenant” (v7). So then: it’s not a temporary (national) arrangement that’s going to be replaced later in the New Testament. The covenant with Abraham won’t be replaced at all. That’s why in Romans 11:17-24, Paul refers to New Testament Gentile believers as being branches that have been ingrafted into the olive tree of Abraham. There’s not two trees—an Old Testament “national” tree and a New Testament “spiritual” tree—there’s just one tree. And New Testament believers have been ingrafted into that same tree. Both these truths—that God’s covenant with Abraham is about salvation and that it is everlasting—are confirmed in Acts 2:39: “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” Now, Acts 2:39 is not a proof-text for infant baptism in and of itself. But at the very least, it shows us exactly the two truths mentioned above: 1) God’s covenant with Abraham is about salvation; in that the forgiveness of sins and the receiving of the Holy Spirit is inseparably linked to God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17:7. And, 2) God’s covenant
2) Circumcision was a spiritual sign because Scripture explicitly tells us so. Scripture actually tells us quite plainly that circumcision was a sign—not of national identity—but of spiritual identity; in two ways: FIRST, Scripture tells us that circumcision signified justification by faith. Outward circumcision was given as a sign of inward saving faith. We see this in Romans 4:11, where we read: “... [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised...” This passage is incredibly significant. Paul is here explicitly telling us what circumcision was all about: Circumcision was given as the sign, or mark, or badge of Abraham’s faith. This passage of Scripture couldn’t be more clear: Abraham’s circumcision was not a sign of national identity; rather, it was one of spiritual identity. It was given to Abraham as a sign and seal of his justification by faith.

SECONDLY, Scripture teaches us that circumcision was given to signify regeneration by the Spirit. Outward circumcision was given in order to point to the inward regeneration—the new birth—that takes place when God circumcises a man’s heart. God would later warn His people through the prophet Jeremiah: “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskins of your heart” (Jeremiah 4:4). Outwardly God’s people were circumcised, but many of them in Jeremiah’s day lacked the reality of what the sign pointed to—the circumcision of the heart.

So, according to Scripture, circumcision wasn’t a sign of ethnic identity or a sign of national identity—it was a sign of spiritual identity. It was a sign of salvation. And it was given to Abraham to mark him as one who belonged wholly to God. In circumcision, God’s covenant sign is given to mark God’s covenant man as an heir of God’s covenant promises. That’s what circumcision is all about. Further, the sign of circumcision wasn’t just given to mark Abraham as a believer. From this point onward, it would be the outward sign that would mark all the Old Testament people of God.

Now, what is the sign that marks God’s people now? It’s baptism. Baptism functions now for us in exactly the same way that circumcision functioned for God’s people in the Old Testament: Circumcision was the outward sign of justification by faith in the Old Testament; baptism is the outward sign of justification by faith now. Circumcision symbolized the new birth (regeneration) in the Old Testament; baptism symbolizes the new birth now. Circumcision was the sign given to mark God’s people in the Old Testament; baptism is the sign given to mark God’s people now. This is why Paul links circumcision and baptism together in Colossians 2:11-12, when he says, “in Christ... you [New Testament believers] were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism...” Paul is telling us that baptism functions now in exactly the same way that circumcision functioned then: Baptism has replaced circumcision as the outward sign of God’s covenant people.

with Abraham is everlasting; the promise God had made to Abraham was the same promise now being declared at Pentecost.

“Paul tells us expressly that circumcision was a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith” (Rom.4:11). (Vos, V5, p114).

See also Jeremiah 9:26; Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Colossians 1:11 and Romans 2:25-29.

Another reason that circumcision can’t be a national sign is the fact that the nation of Israel didn’t actually even begin to exist until the time of Moses. Vos draws this out when he says: “[Circumcision] was instituted when God formally founded His covenant of grace with Abraham. That was a long time before the covenant people were organized as a theocratic state at Sinai. According to the Baptist view being contested here, circumcision should have come at Sinai, and not already with Abraham. But now, it does not come from Moses but from the patriarchs, as the Lord says (John 7:22).” (Volume 5, p169).


Calvin makes this comment on Colossians 2:11-12: “What do these words mean, except that the fulfillment and truth of baptism are also the truth and fulfillment of circumcision, since they signify one and the same thing? For [Paul] is striving to demonstrate that baptism is for the Christians what circumcision previously was for the Jews.” (Calvin, Institutes, 4.16.11). As Bavinck says: “According to Colossians 2:11-12 this circumcision was replaced by baptism... [Through the death of Christ, which was a complete putting off of sin and victory over sin and hence fully realized the idea of circumcision, that circumcision has been rendered obsolete and came to its antitypical fulfillment in baptism. Baptism, therefore, is more than circumcision, not in essence but in degree. Circumcision pointed forward to the death of Christ; baptism points back to it.” (V4, pp526-27). We could also note here that baptism and circumcision don’t just function as covenant signs, but as pictures of the truths contained in the covenant. And, in fact, baptism and circumcision picture the same truths. The water of baptism pictures 1) our need for cleansing; 2) God’s provision of that cleansing in the atoning blood that washes away all our sins; 3) and the new heart that is given in the washing of regeneration by the Spirit. And circumcision pictures the same three truths: 1) ruin by the fall; 2) redemption in Christ; and 3) regeneration by the Spirit. FIRST, ruin by the fall: the corrupt and depraved condition into which we were born is often likened in Scripture to the foreskin of the heart—something we’re born with and yet something that must be cut off if we are to live eternally (Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; 9:26). SECOND, redemption in Christ: the Messiah, who would accomplish redemption for His people (Genesis 3:15), would come forth through Abraham’s
THE INWARD REALITY THAT HAPPENED TO YOU | THE OUTWARD SIGN THAT MARKED YOU
---|---
Justification by Faith | CIRCUMCISION
Regeneration by the Spirit | BAPTISM
Becoming a member of God's People |

**D) The RECIPIENTS of Circumcision:** So, again, **circumcision** was given in order to mark the community of believers in the Old Testament in the same way that **baptism** has been given to mark the community of believers now in the New Testament. The two signs point to the same reality.

Now, in the Old Testament, circumcision was to be given to two groups of people in particular: **First,** to **ADULT CONVERTS:** non-Jewish, Gentile outsiders who forsake their pagan heritage to embrace the Living God and join themselves to His people. This is how it was for Abraham; God called him **as an adult.** And we see this happen throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. We read of Gentiles forsaking their pagan heritage to take refuge in the Lord and join themselves to the people of God. 96  
Now, if this foreigner was a male, he was to be circumcised to signify his faith in the Lord and his entrance into the covenant community. 97  
So, for **adult converts** like Abraham, circumcision marked spiritual realities that had already **taken place.** Romans 4:11 tells us that circumcision was given to Abraham as a sign (**a picture**) and a seal (**a pledge**) of the faith **he already had** while uncircumcised.

This is why we baptize adult converts only **after** they profess faith in Christ. We baptize them to signify what God has done—that God has called this person to himself—that God has washed away all their sins in the blood of Jesus and has given them a **new heart** that loves Him and wants to follow Him.

But this sign was also to be applied to **COVENANT CHILDREN:** And this is what Genesis 17:9-14 focuses on. God is telling Abraham to apply that same sign—the sign that was only given to him **after** he had believed—he was to apply that same sign to every **male in his household.** In Genesis 17:10, the Lord says to Abraham, “This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. . .”  This included both **sons** and **servants**—everyone who belonged to Abraham's household and lived under his authority (v10-

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96 **We see this with** Rahab, **who confesses before** the Israelite spies that, “the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath” (Joshua 2:11). We see it with Ruth, who tells her mother-in-law Naomi, “Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God” (Ruth 1:16; cf. 2:12). We see it with Naaman, who testifies to Elisha, “Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel. . . your servant will no longer offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord” (2 Kings 5:13,17). There were several Gentiles who joined themselves to David (such as Itai the Gittite, the Cherethites and Pelethites, and some of David's mighty men, including Uriah the Hittite). Just a few examples among many.

97 **We can see this in** Exodus 12:42-49, **in the context of** the Lord describing for Moses and Aaron the **rightful partakers of the Passover Meal,** from which we glean the following truths: 1) Passover was a spiritual feast celebrating God's work of redemption for His people (v42); 2) Partaking of the Passover was thus to be limited to the community of God's people—outsiders were forbidden from partaking (v43,45,47); 3) However, outsiders who were circumcised could then partake of the Passover and were considered from then on to be equal members of God's people (v48-49); 4) Thus, circumcision was the badge of membership in the covenant community—it bestowed free access to all the privileges enjoyed by members of the covenant community. Once you received the covenant **mark,** you were free to enjoy the covenant **meal.** Circumcision was necessary to celebrate the Passover in the Old Testament in the same way that baptism is necessary to celebrate the Lord's Supper now in the New Testament. If anyone objects that there is nothing in this passage that explicitly requires the faith of these Gentiles wanting to celebrate the Passover, we would refer to Ezekiel 44:7-9, wherein the Lord, speaking in particular of Gentiles, rebukes Israelite leaders for allowing foreigners both uncircumcised in flesh and uncircumcised in heart into the sanctuary. Thus, we see that the Gentiles who were to be given access to the Lord's sanctuary were not only to be circumcised in flesh—but **in heart.** Besides, Exodus 12:49 tells us that it was to be the same rule for Gentiles who joined God's people as it was for the Jews. So, if the Lord was so disturbed over the fact that many in Israel were outwardly circumcised but they lacked the true circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4, 9:25-26, etc), how could that be okay for Gentiles?
13). And not only was Abraham to circumcise every male in his household, he was to do so from this point onward when they were just 8 days old: “And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations.” (17:12). So, in verses 23-27 we read of Abraham circumcising all of his servants, as well as his son Ishmael (who is 13 years old at this point). Later, after Isaac is born, we read in Genesis 21:4, “Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.” So, this is what is vital for us to understand: the same sign of salvation that was given to Abraham only after he had already believed in the Lord, God then commands that same sign to be applied to his 8-day old children far before belief in the Lord is ever possible. It was adult-circumcision for Abraham. But it was infant-circumcision for his children.99

E) The IMPLICATIONS for Household Baptism: And this is exactly why we baptize the children of believers as well as adult converts:100 the covenant sign isn't just for believers—it's for their children. Just like circumcision—baptism isn't just for ingrafted foreigners—it's also for our covenant children:100

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So, Abraham was to mark his infant children with the same covenant sign that he had received only after believing. But why? Well, first of all, he was to do so simply because God had commanded him to. Maybe Abraham would have had objections: “But Lord, this is the sign you gave to me only

98 Why didn't the daughters also receive the covenant sign? “God could have instituted a sacrament which might have agreed to both sexes, but of his infinite wisdom, he made choice of that which could have being in the males only; but the female was accounted as circumcised in the male; and therefore faithful women were the daughters of Abraham (Luke 13:16), and the common promise, that God would be the God of Abraham and his seed, did pertain to each sex of his posterity.” (Ball, p90).

99 It's important to note here that this same command—to circumcise the entire household—is not only given to Abraham or ethnic Jews, but also to adult Gentile converts. Goodwin notes: “And let me add this further observation, that in Abraham's family his servants that were Gentiles, if they had children, those children were circumcised [Genesis 17:12-13], as fore-running pledges and types that both we and our children, who are Gentiles and strangers, were engrafted into this covenant, it held forth this our privilege to come, that in Abraham the Gentiles' seed (as well as Abraham's own) should be blessed in him.” (Works, V9, p439). We see this same principle in the passage we noted in the above footnote (Exodus 12:42-49), where the Lord says in Exodus 12:48: “But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land.” He alone believed—but it was his whole household that was to be circumcised. When a Gentile outsider was converted, he was just as bound as the ethnic Jew to pass on the covenant sign of circumcision to all the males in his household. Incidentally, another thing we learn here is that even though all his males were circumcised, it was he alone who partook of the Passover; for it doesn't say, “then let them come.” but: “let him come.” It seems that even in the Old Testament, not everyone who was circumcised was given access to the Passover. There must be a personal profession of faith prior to partaking of the covenant meal.

100 Not primarily because of Abraham's example—but because of God's command. God commanded Abraham to mark not only himself—but his infant sons—with the covenant sign. Further, the Lord told Abraham in Genesis 17:12, “And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations.” In other words, the application of the covenant sign wasn't just a temporary arrangement—it was to be administered both to believers and their children as long as God's covenant itself was in effect (compare with 17:7). So, we ask: If the sign of salvation in the Old Testament was to be applied both to believers and to their children, then why should the sign of salvation in the New Testament be applied to believers but not to their children? If infants in the Old Testament could only be saved the same way we are now (IE through faith in Christ)—and yet God still commanded that they receive the sign of the covenant well before that faith was ever possible—then why should it be that our infants are denied the sign of the covenant (on the basis that faith isn't possible for them)?

101 Calvin writes: “Why, in Abraham's case, does the sacrament follow faith, but in Isaac, his son, precede all understanding? Because it is fair that he who is a grown man is received into the fellowship of the covenant to which he had been till then a stranger should learn its conditions beforehand, but it is not the same with his infant son. The whole matter, unless I am mistaken, can be clearly disclosed in this brief statement. Those who embrace faith in Christ as grown men, since they were previously strangers to the covenant, are not to be given the badge of baptism unless they first have faith and repentance, which alone can give access to the society of the covenant. But those infants who derive their origin from Christians, as they have been born directly into the inheritance of the covenant, and are expected by God, are thus to be received into baptism.” (Institutes 4.16.24). Roberts says: “So great account God made of Abraham and his seed; that both he and his seed must be installed and initiated by circumcision. Yea every male child of theirs of eight days old must be circumcised. The infant babes must have this covenant badge, they being in covenant with their parents. This honor and favor God put upon Abraham's seed. And both his Jewish, and Christian seed, and with them their infants share therein. As Abraham's Jewish seed and their infants were to be circumcised, so Abraham's Christian seed and their infants are to be baptized.” (Roberts, p317).
after I had believed. Are you sure I should give this same sign to my infant sons? Shouldn't I wait for my sons to believe, just as I did, before I circumcise them?” Maybe Abraham didn't understand why God was commanding this; still, God had spoken; God had given the command; and Abraham's duty was simply to obey the voice of the Lord. But there was also another reason why Abraham was to mark his sons with the covenant sign. In Genesis 17:7, the Lord said to Abraham: “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.” What is God telling Abraham? He's telling Abraham that the promises of the covenant weren't just for him—they were for his children. And therefore, the sign of the covenant wasn't just for him, but also for his children. Scripture is teaching us that the Covenant of Grace extends not only to believers, but also to their children. Abraham was to mark his offspring with the covenant sign because God was extending to them His covenant promises. Now, this doesn't mean that all of Abraham's children (or ours) will be saved—we'll get to that. But God is pledging here just not to redeem an individual—but an entire household—and not only an entire household, but an entire covenant line for generations to come.

This is God's way; it's how He's commanded us to apply the sign of the covenant: For adult converts like Abraham, the covenant reality—faith in the Lord—must come first; and only then is the covenant sign to be applied. But for the children of believers, the Lord has commanded that the covenant sign be given first, far before the covenant reality of faith in the Lord is ever possible. For adult converts, then, the reality is to precede the sign; but for covenant children, the sign is to precede the reality.

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102 See Sections F (A Vital Clarification) and G (The Mystery in the Covenant) below. 103 The promise wasn't just made to Abraham's children but to his descendants “throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant.” Psalm 105:8 says: “He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations.” It is confirmed to Isaac, then Jacob, then generations later to Israel (vv9-10). Romans 11:1-5 tells us that God's covenant with Abraham is still being upheld even today to a remnant among his physical descendants. Further, that this promise isn't limited only to ethnic Jews but extends also to believing Gentiles—those of the faith of Abraham—is evident from Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 7:9, “Know therefore that the Lord you God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” Calvin says: “And in very deed it behoved the people always to come back to this saying: 'I am thy God and the God of the fathers of thy house.' And against unto this, 'I am the Lord which shows mercy to a thousand generations' as we shall see hereafter. Now, this was not said for that one time only, it must be accomplished nowadays also. Then let us consider that God having once platted [?] that warrant of our salvation, will have it go forward daily, so as we should know that he calls us to the possessing of His kingdom, and in us He calls them that are to come after us; in so much that those children which come of Christians, are already chosen of God to be His stock and of His household, and God has taken them to himself already, even before they come out of their mothers womb.” (Sermons on Deuteronomy, p9). And again: “When God has once planted his word, He continues that grace, not only till the decease of those to whom He speaks, but also to their children and their offspring.” (Calvin, Ibid, p517). Ball writes: “God will be as good a God to Abraham's seed, as he is to Abraham himself, and that whatsoever right by the covenant was invested upon Abraham, should descend as from a parent under this covenant, to all his seed by virtue of this covenant made with him.” (p50). Roberts also affirms: “God's covenant is very comprehensive. It comprises both root, and branches; takes in, both parents, and children. God's lovingkindness, and fatherly care is exceeding extensive and diffusive, not only to Abraham's person, but to his posterity also.” (p409). Vos says: “God maintains His covenant of grace with the believer. But when He gives the promises of the covenant to that believer who is brought into the covenant as an adult, these promises are not only for you! but they are also for your seed after you.” Involved here is a link between the natural relationship between parents and children, on the one hand, and the benefits of the covenant of grace, on the other. This link is not such that it works as a natural law. Grace is not an inheritance that one receives without exception because one has been born of parents who are members of the covenant. In His election God always remains free. But nevertheless the rule remains that He has His covenant continue in history, builds the church from the seed of the church. Thus there is not a founding of a new covenant again and again, but the one covenant is administered throughout the ages and generations. . God does not reckon solely with individual persons in an atomistic manner. His covenant is established with the children and their children into distant generations.” (Volume 3, p169). And in summarizing the grounds for infant baptism, Bavinck likewise attests: “The Reformed, . . . returned to Scripture and in defending infant baptism uniformly took their position in the covenant of grace, which, according to God's promise, embraces not only believers but also their descendants. Not regeneration, faith, or repentance, much less our assumptions pertaining to them, but only the covenant of grace gave people, both adults and children, the right to baptism. This covenant was the sure, scriptural, objective ground upon which all the Reformed, together and without distinction, based the right to infant baptism.” (Volume 4, p525). 104 “One enters into [God's] covenant in two ways: [1] by freely acceding to and accepting its condition, or by being born into it. In the former case, the inclination to live in the covenant is of course to be assumed. Applied to the covenant of grace, this leads us to the conclusion that an adult hitherto standing outside the covenant relationship can only enter it by faith. By his entering into the covenant, he shows that he will live in and according to the covenant, and this he cannot rightly do without faith. It is thus to be assumed that here entrance into covenant relationship and entrance into covenant fellowship coincide. The first exercise of faith leads, of itself, to both. . . [2] In the second case, where one is born into the covenant, the covenant relationship precedes, in the expectation that covenant fellowship will follow later, so far as conscious life is concerned. . . Only in this way do we obtain an organic connection between being under-the-covenant and being in-the-covenant, between bond
We see this clearly in Genesis. And here is what is so important: God nowhere nullifies or reverses or changes this principle when we get to the New Testament. God never says, “We’re going to do it differently from now on. The covenant promise isn’t going to include covenant children anymore, so stop marking them with the covenant sign.” God never says that. Rather, the New Testament re-emphasizes everything God had told Abraham in Genesis 17: that His promises still extend to our covenant children, and that we are to continue to mark them with the New Testament covenant sign.

So at Pentecost, Peter referred back to Genesis 17:7 when he said, “For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself” (Acts 2:39). Now, if Peter was wanting to emphasize that covenant children were no longer going to be included in the Covenant of Grace, the worst thing he could have said was that “the promise is for you and your children.” Here in Acts 2, at the very inauguration of the New Covenant, Peter is hardening back to Genesis 17 and telling his Jewish audience that in the New Covenant, the promise still extends to covenant children in the same way that it did in the covenant with Abraham.

And then we have the household baptisms in Acts and Corinthians. Someone believes in Christ and then you see his whole household being baptized. The argument isn’t that mathematically there was probably infants in some of those households. The argument is that this sounds exactly like what was happening in Genesis 17, where Abraham believed, and his whole household was baptized. God is using the same pattern of dealing with families in the New Testament as He did in the Old.

and fellowship. The former is, as it were, the shadow that the latter casts. The covenant relationship into which a child enters already at birth is the image of the covenant fellowship in which it is expected to live later. And on the basis of that expectation or, more accurately, on the basis of the promise of God that entitles us to that expectation, such a child receives baptism as a seal of the covenant. The child is regarded as being in the covenant. As it matures, it is again and again pointed out how it lives under the promises and how the reasonable expectation is that it will live in the covenant. The attestations of the covenant precede the substance of the covenant. These promises and this requirement as they apply to the child are precisely the means appointed by God as the way to be traveled, along which the communion of the covenant, the being ‘in’ in a spiritual sense, is reached: Being under-the-covenant not only precedes, but it is also instrumental.” (Vos, V2, pp106-110).

In particular, Peter’s saying that the promise extends to both covenant children and Gentile foreigners in the same way it did with Abraham. The promise of Genesis 17 was made: 1) to Abraham; 2) to his descendants; and 3) to the foreign Gentile slaves from distant nations who became part of his household. Peter was addressing a Jewish audience—the descendants of Abraham—to whom promise #2 (above) was made—and declaring to them that the promise God had made 1) to Abraham was 2) also to them (as being his descendants), and their children (remember—it is an everlasting covenant—it didn’t stop with one generation—see Psalm 105:8-10); as well as 3) to all who are far off—that is—foreign Gentiles in distant nations, as many as the Lord would call to himself. And what we see here from Peter’s words is that the promise of the new covenant extends to both Gentile foreigners and to covenant children in the same way as did the promises to Abraham. This is what’s important for us to see. It may be objected: How does this passage prove infant baptism? Ultimately, Acts 2:38-39 doesn’t tell us very much about baptism. It’s not about the covenant sign—it’s about the covenant promise. But, the whole reason Abraham was to give his sons the covenant sign was that God had extended to them the covenant promise. And what Peter is affirming at Pentecost is that God’s covenant promise still extended to children of believers now in the same way that it did for Abraham. So, we would simply ask this: If God hasn’t changed who the covenant is for, why would we change who the sign is for? If the sign was for adults who believe as well as their covenant children in the Old Testament, why would we say the sign is no longer for the covenant children in the New Testament? If the recipients of the covenant are still the same, why would we change the recipients of the sign? If God in Genesis 17 (together with Exodus 12) had said the covenant was for believers and their seed—then why would we say (and what gives us the grounds to say) that though the promise is still for the covenant children, we no longer mark them with the sign? That though the covenant is still for them we now withhold from them the sign of that covenant? In the Old Testament you would mark your infants with the covenant sign. Why? Because God was extending to them the covenant promise. So if God in the New Testament is still extending to the children of believers the covenant promise, why would you no longer mark them with the covenant sign?

See Acts 16:14-15, 33-34; 18:8 (also 10:47-48 with 11:14) and 1 Corinthians 1:16. We could say a lot about these accounts of household baptisms. But one question is, why even use the word “household”? If baptism in the New Testament is only for individuals and not for entire families, why even use the word? Why not say something like: “So Lydia believed, and so did her sister Mary-Sue and her big brother Rex; so they were all baptized”? For those who would be steeped in the language
Then Paul says in *1 Corinthians* 7:14 that God considers the children of even one believing parent to be holy: “for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.” This word “holy” is the same word used in the New Testament for professing adult believers (“saints”). Now, this doesn’t mean that every covenant child is inwardly or actually holy. But it does mean that covenant children are *externally* and *covenantally* holy: God sees covenant children differently than pagan children. Children of believers are set apart from other children as being part of the covenant community.  

Even the Old Testament prophecies of the new covenant—which foretell the days of New Testament church—speak of God extending His promises to covenant children. For instance, speaking in the context of Israel’s restoration from exile and the ensuing glory of the new covenant church, Moses declared: “Moreover, the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live” (Deuteronomy 30:6). Another example is Isaiah 59:21, where the Lord declares, “As for Me, this is My covenant with them,’ says the Lord: ‘My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring’s offspring,’ says the Lord, ‘from now and forever.” Not only does the New Testament clearly not revoke the promises made to the children of believers, but the Old Testament clearly prophecies that those promises will continue to be upheld in the new covenant.  

We saw earlier that Abraham was to mark his children with the covenant sign *because* God was also extending to them His covenant promises. The whole reason he was to mark them with the *sign* was of the Old Testament, the mere usage of the word would call to mind the language and imagery of Genesis 17. Further, we also find this household principle not only in Acts and Corinthians, but, as many point out, in the gospels as well. It is the account of Zaccheus, in Luke 19:9. Following the notable change that had taken place in him, the Lord said to him: “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.” (Luke 19:9). The older writers noted the precise nature of the Lord’s words here. Christ doesn’t say: “salvation has come to *this man*, because he...is a son of Abraham”; nor: “salvation has come to this household, because *they* are sons of Abraham”, but rather: “salvation has come to *this house*, because he...is a son of Abraham.” The Greek word here for house (oikos), though commonly used for a literal house, was also commonly used for posterity and lineage, as in Luke 1:69, “the house of David”; but even more noteworthy, this word was often used in the New Testament (and in Luke’s two-volume account in particular) for “household” (Luke 12:52; 16:27; Acts 7:10; 10:2; 11:14; 16:15, 31; 18:8-9). The context determines the meaning. But surely, no one in their right mind would claim that the Savior is referring to Zaccheus’ physical house in this statement; to claim that a house can be saved! Jesus is speaking of Zaccheus’ family; He’s referring to his household: “Today salvation has come to this household...” Now again: it is Zaccheus alone who the Lord credits as being a “son of Abraham”; and yet the benefits of salvation are imputed to his entire household: “Today salvation has come to this house(hold), because he, too, is a son of Abraham.” How can we understand this but as an outworking of the principle of Genesis 17:7-8, that God’s promise to Abraham to be God to him and his seed is not limited to him, but also extended to us? That, just like Abraham, God also promises salvation to our seed? Goodwyn writes: “When Zaccheus was thus converted, Christ enlarges his covenant to Zaccheus’ family also, ‘This day is salvation come to this house, inasmuch as he is also the son of Abraham,’ (verse 9). Now if Christ’s intent had been in this answer given, to show that he...though a great sinner, yet was converted as being a son of Abraham (as some expound it), he would have made it the reason but of this only, why Zaccheus was saved himself personally; but he makes it the reason why his house should be saved also, and so the covenant stuck with them of his family likewise, because he the father of the family was now a believer...so now being converted, [he] is therefore called a ‘son of Abraham’ and withal had this privilege of Abraham, as being his son...to have his house brought into the covenant, even of that of salvation, in conformity to his father Abraham...Thus in like manner, when the apostles came to preach the gospel to a Gentile householder, master or father of a family, they carried the offer of it in this tenor, and in the way of this privilege, as a motive to conversion. So when Paul preached to the jailor, Acts 16, he asking, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’ (verse 30), Paul answers, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved;’ and then adds, ‘thou and thine house.’ (Works, V9, pp430-31). And Vos says: “When Zacchaeus is called, then the Savior says: ‘Today salvation has come to this house, since he too is a son of Abraham’ (Luke 19:9). This call is based on the promise given for Abraham’s seed, and from it flow further blessings for Zaccheus’ seed too.” (V5, p165). It’s argued by some that there isn’t one express account of an infant being baptized in the entire New Testament. But it’s also true that there isn’t one express account of a child being raised in a Christian home, who is *not baptized* until making a public profession of faith at a later age. As Blake writes: “They cannot give us any instance of anyone trained up by believing parents for baptism, and as soon as he could give an account, baptized; not one child of a believer brought up for covenant, and not in covenant.” (p414). Calvin remarks: “the children of the Jews also, because they had been made heirs of his covenant and distinguished from the children of the impious, were called a holy seed (Ezra 9:2; Isaiah 6:13). For this same reason, the children of Christians are considered holy; and even though born with only one believing parent, by the apostle’s testimony they differ from the unclean seed of idolators (1Cor.7:14).” (*Institutes* 4.16.6). Thomas Vincent writes, “As the Jews are called in Scripture a holy nation, because by circumcision they were made visible Church members; so the infants of Christians, as well as themselves, are called holy; that is, federally holy, as they by baptism made visible Church members.” (*Shorter Catechism*, p.252). And Ball says: “Your children are holy, says the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 7:14. Holy by covenant, though by nature sinful.” (p52).

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that they were heirs of the promises. So, we ask: If the children of believers are still the heirs of the covenant promises, why should we stop marking them with covenant sign? Further, if God gave us a clear command to mark our infants with the covenant sign, why would we stop? Baptists ask: Where did God command us to mark our children with the covenant sign? We reply: Genesis 17. Our question to them is: Where did God command us to stop marking them with the covenant sign?110

F) A Vital CLARIFICATION about Baptism: Now, having said all that, there's something really important that we need to clarify. We baptize our covenant children because God commands us to—but that baptism doesn't save them. Water baptism never saved anyone.111 The baptism that saves is the baptism of the heart—the new birth—that only comes about through faith in Christ. Our covenant children must repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ if they would be saved. Baptism is the outward sign that God has given to signify membership in the external covenant community. But—and this is so vital—the outward sign isn't the same thing as the inward reality. In other words, there's a difference between being in the covenant and being of the covenant. All professing believers and their children are considered to be in the covenant—but that's not the same thing as saying that they

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110 G.I. Williamson, in responding to why there is no explicit command to baptize infants in the New Testament, writes: "The reason is that there was no need to give a new command for something that God had already made clear. From the beginning God had included children with their believing parents. It was, from the beginning, God's will that children receive the sign and seal of the covenant along with their parents. Since there was no change in this fact (but only in the form of the sign and seal), there was no need for any specific commandment concerning the children being recipients. To the Baptists who say: 'Show us where God ever put children in the Church,' we say—it is recorded in Genesis 17. 'To the Baptists we therefore say: 'Now please show us where God ever put the children of believers out!'" (Shorter Catechism, p300-01). In another place, he expands on this further: "we agree, of course, that the New Testament does not contain a specific command to baptize infants. Neither does the New Testament contain a specific command that women are to receive the Lord's Supper. But this is not the same as saying that the Bible contains no such command. The New Testament does not always repeat specific commands which are already recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. . .God, at the beginning of patriarchal history, commanded that the sign and seal of the covenant of grace be given to the children of believers (Gen. 17:1-14). Furthermore, it was explicitly stated that this was an everlasting requirement. It is not true, then, that God has given no commandment with respect to the baptism of children. The Baptist contention is that children may not be baptized without a New Testament commandment. But the need is rather for the Baptists to produce the 'New Testament command' that excludes what God previously commanded. . .Our argument is this: 1) God commanded believers to give the sign and seal of the covenant to their children; 2) baptism is now the sign and seal of that covenant concerning which God gave this command (Gal. 3:16-17); 3) God changed the form of the sign and seal but not the everlasting covenant; he did not revoke his command to give the sign and seal to the children of believers; and 4) the New Testament evidence confirms this position." (Westminster Confession, p274).

111 Baptism never automatically imparts saving grace. This is absolutely vital. As Calvin notes: "The schools of the Sophists have taught with remarkable agreement that the sacraments of the new law (those now used in the Christian church) justify and confer grace, provided we do not set up a barrier of mortal sin. . .How deadly and pestilential this notion is cannot be expressed. . .Of a certainty it is diabolical. For in promising a righteousness apart from faith, it hurts souls heading to destruction. . .But what is a sacrament received apart from faith but the most certain ruin of the church? For nothing ought to be expected from it apart from the promise but the promise no less threatens wrath to unbelievers than offers grace to believers. Hence, any man is deceived who thinks anything more is conferred upon him through the sacraments than what is offered by God's Word and received by him in true faith. . .the Lord's morsel was poison to Judas. . ." (Institutes, 4.16.14-15). Bavinck writes: "The Council of Trent decreed that the New Testament sacraments contain grace in themselves and impart it to all who place no obstacle in its path, so that in baptism also the children receive grace and the virtues ex opere operato (by the act performed) and though they are not believers beforehand, they become believers by baptism. . .Also a number of Reformed theologians (Pareus, Baronius, Forbes a' Corse, Davenant, Ward, de Brais in Saumur, et al.) taught that in baptism all children received a certain grace of forgiveness and regeneration that, if they died young, was sufficient for salvation. . .And corresponding to this is the doctrine of the High Churchmen (in the Anglican Church) who believe in baptismal regeneration. This doctrine too is open to many objections. . .Baptism is robbed of its scriptural character when it is detached from faith and the Word, ceases to be a sign and seal of God's promises, becomes an independent self-operative means of grace, and even takes first place among the means of grace. . .The Reformed therefore returned to Scripture and in defending infant baptism unity took their position in the covenant of grace, which, according to God's promise, embraces not only believers but also their descendants. . .Not regeneration, faith, or repentance, much less our assumptions pertaining to them, but only the covenant of grace gave people, both adults and children, the right to baptism. . .The basis for baptism is not the assumption that someone is regenerate, nor even that (there is) regeneration itself, but only the covenant of God. . .Although baptism, like the external calling, still produces many a blessing even for unbelievers, its true fruit and full power can only be enjoyed by believers. . .God remains true to himself and bestows salvation on everyone who believes. . .But faith is not everyone's possession. Ultimately the fruit of baptism is only enjoyed by those who are elect and therefore come to faith in God's time." (V4, pp524-25, 531-32). And Vos says: "Here and there in some Reformed theologians a conception intrudes that appears to function at the boundary of the orthodox system, so that one may doubt that it may still be called Reformed. There have been those who posit a kind of justification and regeneration at baptism, signified and conveyed to all the children of covenant members, without exception, but then not necessarily connected to salvation, since it can be lost through the fault of the children in growing up. . .We can clearly discover in this outlook the endeavor to give a real, tangible content to baptism. But it is, as Witsius observes, a failed endeavor. . .the view mentioned is not tenable for one who is Reformed." (V3, pp171-73).
are all of the covenant. The fact is, there are some covenant children who never truly embrace the covenant from the heart. We might think of it this way: All the children of believers are born into the realm of the covenant, and for this reason we are to mark them all with the rite (or sign) of the covenant, but this by no means guarantees that they are all possessors of the reality of the covenant.

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This is exactly what we see in the Old Testament with circumcision. Abraham was commanded to circumcise both Ishmael and Isaac; but Romans tells us that it was only Isaac who was the true child of promise. Likewise Isaac was commanded to circumcise both his sons, Jacob and Esau; but Scripture tells us that Esau was never saved: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” (Romans 9:13). Esau was circumcised outwardly, but he was never circumcised inwardly. Esau was a covenant child; but he rejected the God of the covenant. This is why Paul warns us in Romans 2:28-29, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit.” Circumcision never saved anybody. There were great privileges that came along with circumcision and being part of the covenant community (Romans 3:1-2). But it never guaranteed your salvation. For, while it was true that Gentile outsiders could be grafted into the covenant promises by faith, it was also true that circumcised covenant children who refused to embrace the God of the covenant would be cut off from the covenant promises. Old Testament covenant children could be either covenant keepers or covenant breakers—those who embraced the covenant from the heart by faith, or those who didn’t.


\[112\] We could also put it this way: All children of believers are in the covenant, but we cannot say with certainty that the covenant is in all of them: covenant children are not all children of promise. This distinction between being in and of the covenant is the language of Bavinck. He says: “Certainly, there are bad branches on the vine, and there is chaff among the wheat; and in a large house, there are vessels of gold as well as vessels of earthenware. But we do not have the right and the power to separate the two: in the day of the harvest, God himself will do this. Though not of the covenant, they are in the covenant and will someday be judged accordingly.” (Reformed Dogmatics, V3, p292). Vos at times points to the same truth by using slightly different language. Posing the question, “Who is in the covenant?”, Vos at first gives a two-fold answer: “on the one side: All the members of the visible church are in; on the other side: Only they who have saving faith are in. Both of these are true, but in a different sense.” (Volume 2, p106). He goes on to explain what he means, and distinguishes between being “under” the covenant (outwardly and formally) versus being “in” the covenant (inwardly and truly) (V2, pp105-111).

\[113\] We say covenant children here in particular because we’re talking about infant baptism. But this truth isn’t limited to those who are baptized as infants. There are adults too, who profess faith and are baptized, who later walk away from the faith. Not only was Esau never saved, but God declares specifically of him that he was never elect. This means that even before Esau was born, though God had specifically testified that He hadn’t chosen him (Romans 9:13), yet still, according to God’s command (cf. Genesis 17), Esau was still to be circumcised. G.I. Williamson draws out the significance of this truth in his commentary on the Westminster Confession: “[Esau] was circumcised by divine command. Yet it was certain (even before he was born) that he would never have union with Christ (Rom. 9:11-13). In this instance it cannot be argued that Esau was improperly circumcised. Neither can it be argued that Esau was circumcised because it was presumed that he was, or would be, in union with Christ. It can be argued only that God commanded believers to give the sign and seal of the covenant to their children even though it could not be presumed that they were, or would be, in union with Christ.” (Williamson, p278).

\[114\] This is described for us most vividly, not only in the New Testament, but in the Genesis narrative as well. Genesis 36:1-8 recounts the tragic day that Esau walked away from the faith, bringing his household with him (and not only his immediate household, but his offspring for generations to come, v9-43). Here, we’re told: “Then Esau took his wives and his sons and their daughters and all his household, and his livestock and all his cattle and all his goods which he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to another land away from his brother Jacob.” (v6). We’ve seen that the land of Canaan represented so much more than a physical place; it was the Church. So this was not simply a neutral move to a different location. When Esau left the land, it wasn’t just a geographical move, it was a spiritual one; Esau was making the decision to leave the Church.

\[115\] Alec Motyer draws out three practical inferences from Genesis 2:25-29: 1) The outward sign conveys no [eternal] benefit which cannot be had without it (verse 26): IE, circumcision and baptism were never necessary for salvation (cf. Paul’s argument about Abraham in Romans 4:9-12 and the dying thief in Luke 23:33,43); and 3) The enjoyment [or appropriation] of the spiritual reality which God has associated with the outward sign depends on the relation of the heart towards God (verse 29): IE, Circumcision and baptism signify salvation—but that salvation is itself only obtained through faith in Christ. (Taken from The Anglican Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism, pp37-40).

\[116\] David repeats over and over in Psalm 37 the warning that the wicked would be cut off (v9,22,28,34,38). The allusion to
And the same is true of baptism in the New Testament church. *In Matthew 13,* Jesus tells a parable about a dragnet. The net represents the kingdom of heaven. It's cast into the sea and is filled with fish. It doesn't capture all the fish in the sea—just a small portion. But when the net is filled, they drag it up to the beach, and they begin to sort out the good fish from the bad fish. There's both good and bad fish in the net; and it's sorted out at the judgment. And that's the way it is in the church. There's good fish and bad fish, and Jesus is going to sort it out at the judgment. Or, think about *John 15:2,* where Jesus says, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” Who are the branches that are in *Jesus* but not bearing any fruit, that are later (in verse 6) cast into the fire? They're members of the visible church—but they've never been born again. They're members of the covenant community, but they've never truly embraced the covenant from the heart by faith. They've got a baptismal certificate up on the wall, but they've never experienced the baptism of the heart. Don't let that happen to you.

You see, being a part of the covenant community is a *wonderful* thing—but it's also a *dangerous* thing. It was a wonderful thing to be a part of the Old Testament covenant community—but once you were part of that community—if you turned your back on the Lord—do you know what happened? You were put to death for covenantal treason. Because circumcision was a sign of salvation, but it was also a sign of judgment. And so is baptism. *Baptism* is a sign of salvation—the waters of regeneration. But it's also a sign of judgment—the waters of Noah. It's a wonderful thing to be a part of the New Testament covenant community; but it's also a dangerous thing, because covenant breakers will be judged even more severely than unbelievers. And so we teach these things to our children. We admonish them, we warn them, we plead with them to embrace the God of the covenant by faith.

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118 See Deuteronomy 17:2-7 for just one example. This truth as well as its application for us is exactly the point of the author of Hebrews when he writes: “Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (10:28-29).

119 As Vos says: “If one is under the covenant relationship[,] and covenant fellowship[,] the essence of the covenant, is missing, one is nevertheless treated as a covenant member in the sense that nonobservance of the covenant incurs guilt and causes covenant-breaking. This explains how there is covenant-breaking and yet no apostasy of the saints. Note carefully, not merely temporary covenant-breaking is in view—for in believers that is compatible with perseverance—but final covenant-breaking. Everyone who is under the covenant is treated as though he lived in the covenant. It is so with the covenant of works, and is so with the covenant of grace. And therefore, one does not have the right to say that the nonelect are in no way in the covenant. For them there is no true covenant fellowship, but their accountability is determined according to the covenant relationship. *This accountability is greater than that which an ordinary person outside the covenant has in relation to the gospel.* Being in-the-covenant may never be diminished to a life under the offer of the gospel. It is more than that.” (V2, p107).

120 Calvin made use of the example of the Jews to warn his hearers: “But the chief point is, that we must learn to be the true children of Abraham. Seeing we be grafted into his stock through faith let us take heed that we be not cut off from this body.
G) A Brief SUMMARY: Let's try to summarize briefly what we've learned so far:

1) The covenant promises to Abraham were about salvation in the fullest sense.
2) The covenant promises were made not only to Abraham but also to his offspring.
3) The covenant sign of circumcision was given to Abraham as a sign of that salvation:
   a) Abraham was marked with circumcision to signify his faith only after he believed.
   b) Yet he was then to apply that same sign to his infant sons before belief was possible.
4) New Testament believers have entered into the same covenant promises made to Abraham.
5) The Scriptures teach that those covenant promises still extend to our children.
6) Thus, our infant children should continue to be marked with the covenant sign.
7) This doesn't mean that all Abraham's children (or ours) will be saved; this is by faith alone.
8) But it does mean that our children are included in the covenant and should receive the sign.  

H) The MYSTERY in the Covenant: There's one question that still remains. We've seen that the essence of God's covenant with Abraham was about salvation in the fullest sense: The Lord was promising to be Abraham's God. And further, in Genesis 17, we find that God promised not only to be the God of Abraham, but to be the God of his descendants after him (vv7-8). We've seen that this is the whole reason Abraham was to circumcise his children: God commanded Abraham to give his children the sign of the promise (in Genesis 17:9-14) because God had declared them also to be the heirs of the promise (in Genesis 17:7-8). But, there is a significant question we have to answer at this point: If God was actually promising salvation to Abraham's descendants, how could it ever be that there were any of his descendants (like Esau) who were never saved? And, in the same way, if God is making the same promises to us and our children that He did to Abraham and his children, how is it by our unbelief. For the prophets who were the true expounders of the law, do well declare what the thing is which God aims at in this place, when they say: 'Come you of the stock of Abraham? No you are the children of a harlot every one of you. Get you hence you harlot brats, appear here in your likeness, come forth and let men know you, you children of a strumpet (says the prophet Isaiah; 57:3). And the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak in like sort: 'What have you like unto Abraham whose name you bear? Was not your father an Amorite and your mother a whore?' To whom spoke they thus? Spoke they to children of harlots and unto bastards concerning the flesh? No. But unto lawful born children. And why then calls he them strumpets children, as if they were begotten in some brothel-house? Because they were corrupted and followed not the faith of Abraham. For the true parentage is spiritual (as St. Paul says). They which descended from the stock of Abraham concerning the flesh, are not therefore accounting the lineage of Abraham. . .So then let us note that when Moses forbade that bastards should enter into the temple, it was not only for this shameful note which is in respect of the world, when children are not begotten in lawful wedlock; it was rather to show that the Jews were not worthy to have any access unto God, to call upon his name, or to company with His congregation, except they held fast this spiritual kindred of Abraham, that is to say, except they followed his faith, and except they continued in that pure covenant of God. (Sermons on Deuteronomy, pp796-97).

We could also summarize this in four points as G.L. Williamson has (quoted earlier): 1) God commanded believers to give the sign and seal of the covenant to their children; 2) baptism is now the sign and seal of that covenant concerning which God gave this command; 3) God changed the form of the sign and seal but not the everlasting covenant; he did not revoke his command to give the sign and seal to the children of believers; and 4) the New Testament evidence confirms this position (The Westminster Confession of Faith For Study Classes; p274). Ligon Duncan asks three questions: 1) Is baptism a covenant sign? 2) Are children of believing parents part of the covenant now (in the New Covenant) in the same way that they were under the Old Covenant? 3) If God gave promises and a sign of His promises to believers and their children in the Old Testament (and He did), should we give the sign of the promises that He makes to believers and their children in the New Testament to both believers and their children? (from his Covenant Theology course). Hodge argues for infant baptism in this way: “1) The Visible Church is a divine institution; 2) The Visible Church does not consist exclusively of the regenerate; 3) The commonwealth of Israel was the Church; 4) The Church under the new dispensation is identical with that under the old; 5) The terms of admission into the Church before the Advent were the same that are required for admission into the Christian Church; 6) Children were members of the Church under the Old Testament economy; 7) There is nothing in the New Testament which justifies the exclusion of the children of believers from membership in the Church; 8) Children need, and are capable of receiving the benefits of redemption.” (V3, pp346-38). And Roberts argues thus: “1) The new covenant under which Abraham's Christian seed are, is for substance one and the same with this covenant under, which Abraham's Jewish seed were. . . 2) The infants of Abraham's Christian seed are in covenant with their parents now; as well as the infants of Abraham's Jewish seed were in covenant with their parents then. . . 3) This sacramental inauguration of the infants of Abraham's seed God established and commanded under the Old Testament, and hath never forbidden it under the New Testament. . . 4) Baptism has succeeded in the room and stead of circumcision, as the Apostle clearly testifies [in Colossians 2:10-12]. . . 5) The federal grace and privileges of Abraham's Christian seed under the New Testament are as large and larger then those of Abraham's Jewish seed under the Old Testament; therefore if the infants of his Jewish seed were circumcised then, much more the infants of his Christian seed should be baptized now. . . 6) The infants of Abraham's Christian seed now, are every way as capable of baptism, as the infants of Abraham's Jewish seed then, could be capable of circumcision. . . 7) No objection can be made against the baptizing of the infants of Abraham's Christian seed; but the same objections will militate and may be urged as strongly every way against the circumcising of the infants of Abraham's Jewish seed.” (pp317-18).
that any of our children come short of salvation? Do you see the tension? If God's promise was of salvation, and that promise extends to our children, then what do we make of the countless instances (both in the Old and New Testament church) of covenant children who walk away from the Lord? This is an extremely important question, which traditionally, has been answered in two different ways:

1) Some view God's promise in Genesis 17:7 to be more of a CONDITIONAL OFFER. God isn't actually promising salvation to our children—He's offering it to them. Those who hold this view say that God is not making an absolute promise to the children of believers to be their God; He's merely making them a conditional offer. What is the offer? God will be their God if they indeed put their faith in Him. God will be their God as long as the covenant child indeed takes Him to be his God. In other words, God isn't truly making an absolute promise; He's only extending to covenant children a conditional offer. He's putting an offer on the table. But at the end of the day, it's all contingent on the response of the covenant child. Salvation is offered. But it can be either accepted or rejected.\textsuperscript{123}

The first problem with this view is that an offer is something very different than a promise. When we read Genesis 17:7, we don't find the Lord offering to be the God of Abraham's descendants—rather, we find the Lord promising Abraham that He will be their God. He tells him: “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to you descendants after you.” This is more than just an offer—this is a promise God is making to Abraham. And when God makes promises, He keeps His promises. Further, if we believe what Scripture says about our inherent depravity—that naturally, every single one of us is not only not able to come to Christ, but not willing to come to Him—then it doesn't make any sense for God to give this kind of offer to our children. Truth is, if God offers us salvation—and that's all He does—none of us would ever be saved. The whole reason God's covenant grace is so awesome is that He does so much more than just offer these things to us. He doesn't just call us—He chooses us. He doesn't just invite us to come—He draws us. He doesn't just offer us life—He raises us from the dead. He doesn't just point out the way—He actually picks us up, puts us on His shoulders, and carries us back home (Ephesians 2:1-5). This is our God. Praise be to Him.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{123} Hoeskema describes this “conditional offer” view in this way: “According to this view, the promise is for all who are born under the covenant, for all the children of believing parents, for all who are baptized. In the promise God bequeaths all the blessings of the covenant upon all who are baptized. He gives all the right to those blessings. . . However, this promise must necessarily be presented as conditional. It is contingent for its fulfillment upon the faith of those who are baptized. They are obliged to believe the promise, to fulfill their covenant obligation, their part of the covenant of God. If they fail in this, the blessings of the covenant do not actually come into their possession.” (Hoeskema, Reformed Dogmatics, V2, p377). It seems that there are several distinguishable sub-views under this larger category of the “conditional offer” view. James Beeke categorizes two of them. The first he describes as technically offered to all covenant children but truly guaranteed to the elect among them. The second he describes as offered to all covenant children equally but not actually guaranteed to any of them (Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults, pp357-60). The second of these is far more dangerous, as we will see.

\textsuperscript{124} Of the first “conditional offer” view (see above footnote), James Beeke says: “This covenant division denies the eternalness and unbreakableness of the Covenant of Grace, for God's offer of salvation is neither eternal nor unbreakable. The Covenant of Grace is reduced to only a breakable offer and conditional promise.” Of the second “conditional offer” view, he says: “The essence of the Covenant promises can be confirmed by faith, or broken by rejection, in the lives of the baptized seed. This presentation of the covenants, . . . denies the unbreakableness of the Covenant of Grace. . . Man can break all the promises of the Covenant through his unbelief.” (Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults, James Beeke, pp359-360). Vos simply notes in his Reformed Dogmatics: “there is more in that sealing of baptism than a conditional offer of the covenant; there are positive promises of God.” (Volume 3, p185). And in another place he writes: “in a very special sense, the covenant of grace is presented in Scripture as an indissoluble covenant, in which God always keeps His promise. Mountains may depart and hills be removed; the covenant of His peace does not depart and is not removed (Isaiah 54:10). Now, one could suppose this is intended conditionally, namely, that God keeps His promise if we meet our obligation. But that would not be a specific mark of the covenant of grace; that could apply just as well to the covenant of works. And the covenant of grace is distinguished from the covenant of works precisely by the fact that it no longer depends on human willing or running but on the faithfulness of God.” (Volume 2, p99). A little later he continues: “We here face the difficulty that the covenant relationship appears powerless to bring covenant fellowship in its wake. We get a covenant that remains unfruitful. A barren, judicial relationship, an ‘ought to be,’ appears to take the place of the glorious realities that mention of the covenant brings to our minds. This is in fact the point where, by means of the covenant idea, the Pelagian error could gain access to Reformed doctrine. If the covenant idea is in fact the all-encompassing expression of life under and in grace, how then can it be that in this form it comes to us first of all as something that ‘ought to be,’ a relationship that still lacks realization? . . . It makes no sense that God enters into a covenant with man unable to help himself, yet in terms of which faith and repentance are expected of him, if absolutely no provision is made to cause the covenant to become reality. But the Lord does not establish a covenant of grace with believers and their seed only in order to oblige them from the heart and increase their responsibility toward the gospel. The covenant relationship must be more than a bond of obligation. . . in this covenant of grace, God in fact
2) The traditional way to view Genesis 17:7 has always been as an ABSOLUTE PROMISE. God is not just offering to draw our children to himself; He's actually promising to do so. But the question remains: How do we reconcile this promise with what we know both from Scripture and from our own experience—that not all covenant children do indeed embrace the God of the covenant from the heart, by faith? How do we resolve this tension that on the one hand, God is actually promising to effectually draw our covenant children to himself, and yet we know that there are some among them that He actually doesn't draw in this way? There is a single answer that has been given in response to this question among those in the Reformed tradition: God is truly promising to effectually draw our covenant children to himself, but this doesn't mean that He's necessarily promising to draw each and every one of them. What do we mean by this? The promise is real. But it's not necessarily made to every covenant child without exception. It's made, rather, to the elect among our covenant children.

Think about what we see with the patriarchs. God promised Abraham that He would be the God of His descendants. But we come to learn as we continue to read Genesis that God was not actually promising to be God to every single one of them: He fulfilled this promise in Isaac, but He passed over Ishmael. It was the same with Isaac's children: the Lord was pleased to choose Jacob and draw him to himself, but He passed over Esau. The Lord was faithful to keep the promise He made to Abraham, to be not only His God, but the God of His children and grandchildren after him. But what we see is that God wasn't actually promising to be God to each and every child. He was promising to be God to the elect among them. This is the very thing Paul draws out for us in Romans 9. He tells us that God chose Isaac, but not Ishmael. He chose Jacob, but not Esau. Paul isn't just teaching us here about the doctrine of election in general—he's actually teaching us about election as it relates to covenant families. So, if we ask: How can God's promise be true that He will effectually draw our children to himself, when experience shows us that there are some among them that never believe? Paul gives the answer in Romans 9:6-8: "it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: through Isaac your descendants will be named. That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants." 125

makes promises that enable the members of His covenant to really live in the covenant, to receive its essence, to make it a reality. And therefore, that seed is not merely under a conditional bond, but also under an absolute promise. For those who do not venture to accept this, the covenant concept must more and more lose its spiritual and gracious character. They make it an arid system of obligations, in which all comforting and enlivening power is lacking." (Vos, Volume 2, pp107-08).

125 As Calvin explains from Genesis 17:7: "the promise by which the Lord had adopted them all as children, was common to all; and in that promise, it cannot be denied, that eternal salvation was offered to all. What, therefore, can be the meaning of Paul, when he denies that certain persons have any right to be reckoned among children, except that he is no longer reasoning about the externally offered grace, but about that of which only the elect effectually partake? Here, then, a twofold class of sons presents itself to us, in the Church; for since the whole body of the people is gathered together into the fold of God, by one and the same voice, all without exception, are in this respects accounted children; the name of the Church is applicable in common to them all; but in the innermost sanctity of God, none others are reckoned the sons of God, than they in whom the promise is ratified by faith. And although this difference flows from the fountain of gratuitous election, whence also faith itself springs; yet, since the counsel of God is in itself hidden from us, we therefore distinguish the true from the spurious children, by the respective marks of faith and of unbelief." And again, Calvin writes: "For in calling Abraham, God extended the promise of salvation unto his whole lineage. He said unto Abraham, 'I will be the God of thy lineage after thee.' Here then is a general election (as they term it) of the whole people. And in very deed, the sign of circumcision was as a seal, to ratify the promise is ratified by faith. And although this difference flows from the fountain of gratuitous election, whence also faith itself springs; yet, since the counsel of God is in itself hidden from us, we therefore distinguish the true from the spurious children, by the respective marks of faith and of unbelief." And Goodwin notes: "As election was free in choosing the Jews, and is free in the choice of those Jews who are to come, and yet God took in this respect too their fathers in it notwithstanding, so it is in ours, and so it goes not by birth as the moving cause, but as the subserving instrument or means to manifest that his love the more, both to the father and the child. And therefore...God oftentimes, if not usually, to show his grace takes not all the seed: Do you say wherein have I loved you; was not Esau Jacob's brother, yet I loved Jacob, and hated Esau? (Malachi 1:2). (Works, V9, p474). G.H. Kersten: "Those who teach a Covenant of Grace that only consists of an offer of God that He will give salvation on condition of faith and repentance, actually return to Rome. For Rome teaches that the Covenant of Grace does not give salvation, but only the possibility of being saved. Calvin opposed this doctrine with all his might, and with him and right-minded Reformed
1) Final REFLECTIONS: Scripture teaches us that the Lord chose Jacob, not Esau. This passage is hard enough already. A lot of people struggle to think that God would choose some people and not others. But the passage becomes even harder when we think about who these brothers were. Jacob and Esau weren't just any children. They were covenant children. As Christian parents, the thing we long for most in this world is for our children to come to know Christ. And the thing that terrifies us more than anything is the thought of that not happening. So these are hard truths for us as parents.

But this passage in Romans 9 isn't here in Scripture to make us think that God probably won't draw all our children to himself. That's not its purpose. This passage isn't here to discourage us. It's here, rather, to remind us of a truth we desperately need to hear; which is this: God is the One who must save our children. This is something that is exceedingly beyond us—this is something God must do.

And so, God invites us to PRAYER. If the salvation of our children truly depends wholly upon God, then this should take us to our knees. God wants us to plead with him for the souls of our precious children. And He hears and answers those prayers. In Mark 10:13-16, we read of parents bringing their little children to Jesus, and of Him taking them in His arms and blessing them. These parents were helpless in and of themselves, but they could bring their children to Jesus—and Jesus didn't turn them away. Nor did He just bless some of them. The children that were brought to Him were the children that He blessed. Some argue infant baptism from this passage. But whether it proves infant baptism or not, there's no doubt about one thing: When we bring our children to Jesus for a blessing, He never turns us away. So pray for your children (and with them). Bring them to Jesus in prayer.

theologians. Not one of them separated the Covenant of Grace from election. . .this organic unity of the elect as the body of Christ and the spiritual offspring of Abraham, is fully revealed in the Covenant of Grace. Scripture refers to this when it speaks of the covenant established with Abraham and his seed. That was the great promise of the covenant: 'I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee,' not as if grace were transplanted from father to a son, but rather that God would bring forth a spiritual seed out of Abraham, that is the children of promise as Isaac was. They form a spiritual offspring, one body, one church, chosen by the Father, purchased by the blood of Christ. Thus election and the covenant are not to be separated. . .The Lord excluded Ishmael, although he was circumcised and many temporal blessings were promised to him. . .Ishmael is sent away, and shall not be heir with the son of the free woman, although he also belonged to the natural seed of Abraham. The Lord established the covenant with Abraham and his spiritual seed, in other words, with the elect. They, and only they, are incorporated in the covenant. . .Peter indeed said, 'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off,' but then he emphatically limits it by adding, 'even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' And those called by God are the elect." (Reformed Dogmatics, V1, pp246-47). Hoeksema: "it has pleased God to have His covenant upon earth run in the line of fleshy generations, while there are nevertheless those among the children of believers who were not elected. . .God, according to His own purpose, takes up into His covenant according to its outward form all the fleshy children, while nevertheless only a remnant is saved." (Believers and their Seed, p126). And Vos writes: "in this covenant of grace, God in fact makes promises that enable the members of His covenant to really live in the covenant, to receive its essence, to make it a reality. God, when He establishes the covenant of grace with a believer, appears as a giving, a gracious, and promising God, for He witnesses in the gospel that it is He Himself who has generated faith in the soul, whereby the covenant is sealed and received. He further assures such believers that He is not only their God, but also the God of their seed. And that if they raise up their seed for Him, He will grant the grace of regeneration, whereby the covenant will be perpetuated, and that not only as a bond but also as a real, spiritual covenant fellowship. God has pledged to the members of His covenant His promises of regenerating grace for their seed as well. From their seed, He will call believers to Himself. And therefore, that seed is not merely under a conditional bond, but also under an absolute promise. For those who do not venture to accept this, the covenant concept must more and more lose its spiritual and gracious character. They make it an arid system of obligations, in which all comforting and enlivening power is lacking. Because God has thus established in the parents the covenant with the children, He has also given the promise that He will bestow the operations of His grace in the line of the covenant. He can also work outside that line and does so frequently. But then it is a free action, not to be explained further for us. It is an establishing of the covenant anew. In accordance with His sovereignty, He can also make exceptions within the sphere of the covenant. However, if experience later shows such exceptions, we may not seize on them to say, 'God's covenant was powerless; His word has failed.' In such a case, we must always follow the rule of Paul in Romans 9:6-8: 'But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: “through Isaac your descendants will be named.” That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.' The presumption is always that the children of the covenant, who are under the covenant bond, will also be led into covenant fellowship. Election is free, but it is not on that account arbitrary. Therefore, we say: Of those born under the covenant, not only is it required with double force that they believe and repent, but it is likewise expected and prayed for with a double confidence that they will be regenerated in order to be able to believe and repent." (Reformed Dogmatics, V2, pp108-09).

126 I absolutely love what Alec Motyer says about this passage: "Either the Lord Jesus was perpetrating a spiritual hoax for the sentimental satisfaction of doting mothers, or else he saw babies as proper recipients of divine blessing, and proceeded to bestow such a blessing upon them." (From his book, The Anglican Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism, p46).
God also calls us to NURTURE. It's true that God must save our children. But it's also true that He does so as we make use of the particular means that He's given to us. One of those means is prayer. Another means that He's given us is nurturing our children. Part of this is teaching them. In Genesis 18:19, the Lord declares this about Abraham: “For I have chosen him, so 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 upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.” We learn several things here, but maybe the most important is that God uses appointed means to bring about His promised ends. The Lord would fulfill His promises to Abraham about his children as Abraham taught them to keep the way of the Lord. This was the means that God would use. And so, God draws our children to himself as we open up His Word to them and instruct them in His ways; as we admonish them, and charge them—even command them to follow the Lord. So, part of nurturing is teaching. But it also involves other things: loving our children, cherishing them, being patient with them, being compassionate towards them—setting before them an example of gospel-living every day. Now, this doesn't mean being perfect. Actually, it means acknowledging to them just how imperfect you are. It means modeling repentance, which includes asking even their forgiveness when you sin against them.

So, we plead for our children—we bring them to Jesus asking for a blessing. We call upon Him to do in and for our children what we cannot. We wrestle for them like Jacob wrestled with God: “I will not let you go unless you bless them.” We pray for them and we pray with them. We claim God's covenant promises for them. And we affectionately teach them and admonish them to keep the ways of the Lord. We teach them about sin and why it is we so badly need a Savior; and that Mommy and Daddy are sinners who need a Savior too, just as much as they do. We show them how precious and wonderful and sufficient Jesus is to wash away all of our sin and give us new hearts. And with God's help, we give them a living example of what it means to walk with God. And we do all these things with expectation, knowing that God has chosen us for the purpose of confirming His promises to our children (Genesis 18:19), and that God fulfills those promises as we lovingly nurture and admonish them; and as we bring them to Jesus in prayer, asking Him alone to do for them what we cannot.

Matthew Henry draws out several truths here, such as: 1) WHO he was to teach: Not just his wife, but his children, and all those under the authority of his household; and his instruction was not only for the benefit of those presently in his household, but for his household “after him”; that is, he taught with a view to unborn generations yet to come; 2) WHAT he was to teach: Not just instruction about the Lord (though never less than that), but how “to keep the way of the Lord”; that is, not just merely head knowledge about God but a wholly practical religion; as well as, 3) HOW he was to teach: Not just suggesting but actually commanding his children to follow the Lord: making them understand who they are as covenant children and their duty to embrace the covenant from the heart—to prove themselves covenant keepers by faith, rather than covenant breakers.

The language here is intentional: God would fulfill His promises as Abraham did these things not if Abraham did these things. John Gill rightly draws out here that the final clause “so that” signifies consequence rather than cause. Abraham's instruction is not the condition which determined whether or not God would fulfill His promises; it's rather simply the means through which God would fulfill His promises. God is not saying: Abraham, if you do this right, then I will cause your children to walk in My ways. Rather, God is saying: Abraham, teach your children to walk in My ways—for it is in this way that I will bring about all that I have promised to them. Abraham commanding his children to follow the Lord is not the condition of God fulfilling His promises to his children, but rather simply the way through which God would fulfill those promises. Notice the language in Genesis 18:19. This is echoed later in Joshua 24:15: “If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Another question that may arise here is: How should we view our covenant children? Vos answers this question in his Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 5, pp173-188. In short, he says: “On this there are two views that have both had defenders, though not both equally. We first give, in some propositions, the most common view that on good grounds can be called the historic-Calvinistic view.” (p177). He goes on to describe the view as: “c) Communion in this grace can only be made known to us from certain fruits and marks; f) No one, and so also the church, can judge with certainty who are those who share in this grace...; h) This judgment of charity concerns all the members of the church and is not a condition for their admission; n) This judgment of charity could nevertheless be mistaken according to the judgment of charity without concerning itself further with the question; j) This judgment of charity concerns all the members of the visible church, and only them. To these members belong not only the adults who profess Christ, and do not contradict this profession by their conduct, but also young children born of believing parents belong by virtue of the promise made to Abraham and his descendants and by which they, like their parents, are included in the covenant of God; i) Consequently, with regard to the judgment of the church, birth from believing parents (at least one) is the equivalent of what for the parents their profession of faith is; g) Therefore, according to the judgment of charity, salvation is ascribed to these children and they are regarded as elect, as their parents are regarded when they make profession of faith, and continue to be as long as they in fact do not give evidence to the contrary. With adults, too, the same thing appears repeatedly. There are those who upon profession of faith
In Genesis 17:7-8, God is promising to draw to himself a people from among our children. This isn't just: “I will save whoever chooses me from among your offspring.” Rather, God is promising: “I will take it upon Myself to choose and save a people for Myself from among your offspring.” The Lord is promising to call, and effectually draw, and save a people for himself from among our descendants. He will not only be our God; He has promised to be the God of our children also, and our children's children. And for how long does the covenant promise extend? Psalm 105:8-10 says, “to a thousand generations.” The Lord is promising to preserve our covenant line—not only to our grand-children or great-grand-children, but even to a thousand generations. Now if we tried to literally calculate this, and estimated a generation at a low twenty years, this would come out to 20,000 years! But of course this isn't a literal number of years being expressed here—it's a figure of speech implying an eternal covenant. We know this from Scriptures such as Isaiah 39:21, where we're told that God's covenant is confirmed not just to a thousand generations, but to your offspring's offspring, ...from now and forever. The covenant is an eternal covenant. And it's not just eternal in the sense that it's never ending. The eternalness of the covenant isn't just speaking to the duration of the covenant, but to the succession of the covenant. It's not saying merely that God's covenant will continue in the world to thousands of generations—but that it will continue to thousands of generations of those with whom He enters into covenant. God's covenant won't just extend to a thousand generations in general—but to the untold generations still to come of those with whom He has entered into covenant—with their children, and their children's children, forever: “Never will the line of the faithful be cut off completely.”

are received into the congregation, whom one thus has to regard as fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God, ...who nevertheless later fall away” (pp.173-75). Vos calls this view the main historical Calvinistic Reformed view. Having said that, Vos goes on to say: “there is a large objection to the first view if it teaches that all children are to be held to be regenerated and to possess the principle of faith until the opposite is apparent...one then cannot, with reason, pray for their regeneration as a thing that they must still receive or still need. The children themselves, in growing up, will be under the illusion that they possess regeneration, and the truth that without regeneration no one can see the kingdom of God will lose its force. It will gradually be seen in the congregation as something self-evident that whoever lives and dies within its circle is saved, since he has come into the world virtually as a regenerate person, is renewed and sanctified from his mother's womb. This is extremely dangerous.” (caps mine, p.181). Then concluding on p.187: “What is needed is more urging of the truth day by day, in the official cultivation of the children of the covenant as they grow up, and less pressing for a profession at a particular moment. But not only the requirement; the promise of God must also be pointed to...One can stress the obligations toward the covenant too much and overlook the giving side of the covenant too much. The one needs the other. Only presenting the obligations is deadening; only pointing to the promises causes indifference.” (p.187). So: 1) On the whole, we regard our children as elect until/if/when they prove otherwise; just as we do with adult members; we view with a judgment of charity; 2) But this in no way means that every single baptized infant covenant child is actually definitely regenerated; 3) Our obligations toward the covenant too much and overlook the giving side of the covenant too much. The one needs the other. Only presenting the obligations is deadening; only pointing to the promises causes indifference.” (p.187). So: 1) On the whole, we regard our children as elect until/if/when they prove otherwise; just as we do with adult members; we view with a judgment of charity; 2) But this in no way means that every single baptized infant covenant child is actually definitely regenerated; 3) Our obligations toward the covenant too much and overlook the giving side of the covenant too much. The one needs the other. Only presenting the obligations is deadening; only pointing to the promises causes indifference. Thus, I believe Scripture teaches that the Lord will fulfill this promise mystically where He doesn't physically. Let's think back upon the Old Testament Scriptures. Barrenness, for instance was a common occurrence for them at that time, as it is today. And for the Old Testament believer, this was an absolutely terrible plight. Why was it so bad? I believe the primary reason had to do more with the implications of God's covenant promises failing to be brought to fulfillment than a cultural stigma or economic concerns. Well, it was for this very reason, it seems, that the Lord instituted the provision of the husband's brother. Deuteronomy 25:5-10 tells us that if a husband died who yet had no sons, his brother (or closest relative) was to marry his widow, and that the first-born whom she would bear would take on the name of his dead brother, “so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.” The concern wasn't the physical name. The concern was rather the covenant line of the covenant to continue. What about for singles? Well, we could think of Scriptures like Isaiah 56:3-5, “Let not the . . .eunuch say, ‘Behold, I am a dry tree.’ For thus says the Lord, ‘To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, to them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.’” God will keep His promise, though it may at times be different than the norm, or how we might naturally think. He is able to raise up children of Abraham from these stones. He is able to keep this His promise—to be God not only to us but also to our children after us. Whether it be through normal or exceptional and mystical means, He will keep His promise; and for that we can praise Him.
The Covenant at Sinai

(Part 1)
# The Mosaic Covenant (Part 1)

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The Mosaic Covenant (Part 1)

Understanding the Law of Sinai

I. The BACKGROUND to the Mosaic Covenant

1. The Story of JOSEPH: Genesis 37-50

A) Joseph the SON: The narrative of Joseph is one of the most beloved stories in all of Scripture. Most of us know it well. Joseph was one of twelve sons, but he was the favorite. This was mostly because he was one of only two sons that were born to Jacob's wife, Rachel. All the other sons were born to his other wife, Leah; and Rachel and Leah's maids. So Joseph was the favorite. And this was wrong. None of us should ever have any favorite children. Scripture tells us that this was actually the biggest reason Joseph's brothers were so jealous of him: “His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him. . .” (37:4). Jacob's favoritism nearly destroyed his family. And as we read through the narrative, we discover that Joseph wasn't only Jacob's favorite child, Jacob had actually made him into an idol. Jacob loved his son Joseph so much that when he is taken away from him, his whole world falls apart. What do we learn from all this? We learn that even mature believers like Jacob continue to need the sanctifying work of the Spirit in their lives. And so, to heal Jacob of his idolatry, God takes Joseph away for a season—but only for a season. In due time, the Lord restores Joseph once again to his father.¹

As we meditate on these things, the Lord would ask us: What are the things in our life that we've come to love a little too much? What are the ways we've become like Jacob? What are our idols? What are the things—even the really good, God-given things—in our life that we've begun to love in unhealthy ways?

B) Joseph the MAN: It wouldn't have been a hard thing for Joseph to believe that God loved him and had a wonderful plan for his life. After all, he was from the line of Abraham. And not only that, he traced his lineage through Abraham's son Isaac, and then again through Isaac's son, Jacob. Which meant that Joseph was part of the chosen family—an heir of God's promises. He didn't come from Ishmael or Esau; he was the chosen stock of the Lord. Further, he wasn't just any son of Jacob; he was the son of Jacob's wife Rachel—the special and beloved wife. What's more, Joseph knew that his father saw him as special and set apart from his brothers, since it was he alone who was given that special, varicolored robe. To add to it all, God even started giving Joseph dreams, where all his brothers were coming and bowing down to him! There's no question Joseph believed God loved him and had a wonderful plan for his life.²

But the plan that God had for Joseph's life must have been very, very different than what he imagined it would be. The plan that God had for Joseph's life would involve being exiled from his home-land, the land of Canaan; it would involve his own brothers selling him away to foreigners; it would involve being bought off the slave-block at the market; being wrongly accused of horrible things; and being banished to a dark prison cell for years on end. I wonder what Joseph was thinking during those years of slavery and prison. The Lord had spoken to him; He had given him these dreams, telling him what was in store for him. But Joseph's outward circumstances seemed to run totally contrary to what God had said He would do. It's like his life was spinning out of control. The Lord had made some pretty amazing promises, but as he looked at his life, he would have had to wonder: Is it really true? Is God going to do what He said?

And yet, even in the midst of everything he's going through, isn't it amazing how Joseph responds? What does he do? He continues to trust in the Lord; he continues to cling to what God had said; he continues to believe that the Lord would prove faithful. One reason we know this is from what we read in Genesis

¹ And what a beautiful passage this is, in Genesis 45:25ff. Here we see the Lord reviving the heart of Jacob in his old age.
² The insights of these sections are gratefully gleaned from Rev. Sujoy Roy, in his sermon expositions on Genesis (in Bangla).
This is the account of the two other men that are thrown into prison with Joseph. These men served Pharaoh as his cupbearer and baker; and Joseph is put in charge of looking after them. In verses 6-7, we read, “When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected. He asked Pharaoh’s officials who were with him in confinement in his master’s house, ‘Why are your faces so sad today?’” In itself, this is actually quite an amazing thing. Why? Because if I were in Joseph’s shoes, and I was suffering and in prison, and two other men in prison with me happened to look dejected in the morning, do you know how I would have probably responded? “Who cares? I’m pretty sad myself; this is a pretty miserable place.” Isn’t it true that it’s so hard for us to enter in to the sufferings of others when we’re going through sufferings of our own? We tend to just focus on ourselves; feel sorry for ourselves. But that’s not what Joseph does. Though he has plenty of suffering himself, he enters in to their sorrows.

Then look at the next verse. When Joseph asks them what’s wrong, how do they respond? We read in verse 8, “Then they said to him, ‘We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it.’” Think about Joseph’s own story. Think about his own dreams God had given him in his youth. Really, those dreams were the biggest reason he was sitting in that prison. It was his dreams that started this whole thing. And what’s more, it seemed that God had completely failed to do what He had said that He would. So again, if I were Joseph, do you know how I would have responded? “I don’t do dreams anymore, sorry.” If I’m honest, I probably would have responded with a good bit of cynicism and bitterness. “God, what about my dreams?” But again, that’s not how Joseph reacts. He says, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, please.” Joseph is faithful in the moment God gives him with these two men over breakfast. We might think: “Yeah, but God ended up doing some pretty amazing things for Joseph.” But here’s the thing: Joseph didn’t know that. We know the end of his story—but he didn’t. He didn’t know what was going to happen in Genesis 41 while he was living in Genesis 40. He didn’t have that luxury. Joseph had to trust in the Lord for what he couldn’t see with his eyes (just like we do). How was he able to do this? Because Joseph knew that God’s job was to do what He had promised; and his job was to trust in Him.

There was once a sports-radio talk-show host who was expressing frustration at the fans who had voiced disagreement over a decision the coaches had made. This is what he said: “You be fans, let [the coaches] be [coaches]. You’re all for [coaches] making decisions until their decisions don’t mesh with your own. . . Let the [coaches] be [coaches], when they do well, you scream really loud. That’s your job. . . ” Joseph knew what his job was. He knew that God’s job was to do what He said; and his job was simply to trust in Him. It’s the same thing for us, friends. I don’t know what you’re going through right now, but here’s what we all need to remember: God knows what He’s doing. So, you let God do his job; and you do yours.

It must have seemed to Joseph like his life was completely spinning out of control. And it must have all seemed so meaningless: “Lord, what is going on? Lord, what in the world are You doing?” But the fact is, God did have a purpose behind all of it (a pretty amazing one). Think about it: If Joseph’s brothers had never sold him into slavery, he would never have ended up in Egypt. Had Joseph never ended up in Egypt, he would never have gone to Potiphar’s house. Had he never gone to Potiphar’s house, he would never have ended up in prison. Had he never ended up in prison, he would never have been there to interpret those dreams. Had he never been there to interpret those dreams, he would never have stood before Pharaoh. Had he never stood before Pharaoh, there would have been no one to announce the warning about the famine. Had no one been there to warn them about the famine, Joseph’s family and all of Egypt would have been swept away. So, it all seemed so meaningless. But it actually wasn’t, was it?

At times we go through seasons of confusion in the Christian life. The way God is dealing with us doesn’t make any sense; it doesn’t seem to fit together with the promises He’s made to us. Sometimes we don’t understand what He’s doing or why He’s letting something happen. Sometimes it feels like our world is spinning out of control. What we need to remember in those times is that our job is to trust in the Lord.

Joseph the TYPE: Scripture sets forth Joseph as a Hebrew youth who proves faithful to the Lord. But Scripture also sets forth Joseph as a type of Christ. Think of it: He was the unique, beloved son of his father. Joseph was special, he was set apart; but his own kinsmen hated him for it, so much so that they sold him into the hands of Gentiles. He was falsely accused; and even though he was innocent, he suffered punishment. For Joseph, there was suffering before glory—there was a cross before a crown. But after his sufferings, he was highly exalted and given all authority by the King himself over all the land.
Indeed, behind it all, the Lord had a plan; He was weaving it all together for a greater purpose: It was through Joseph's sufferings and exaltation that the whole land would be preserved alive from death. Does it sound familiar? This is the story of the Savior. We see the life, death, and resurrection of Christ in the narrative of Joseph: Set apart by the Father, but betrayed by His own kinsmen. Falsely accused, but He uttered no threats in return. He suffered, though He was innocent. But after His sufferings, He was highly exalted, and given the name that is above every name; indeed, all authority has now been given to Him. And it was all for a single purpose: In order to preserve us, His people, alive from death.

Often, when we read through the story of Joseph, we tend to put ourselves in his shoes. This isn't a bad thing in itself. It helps us make sense of our own story as we go through seasons of confusion in our life as Christians. But really, in a lot of ways, we're actually much more like Joseph's brothers in this story than we are like Joseph. Jesus is like Joseph. We're the ones who rejected Him; we're the ones who caused Him to suffer. We're the ones who sinned against Him; and so we're the ones who come into His presence, bowing at His feet, pleading for His mercy. And the most wonderful part is, when we do this, we receive His forgiveness, just like Joseph's brothers did. Our Savior speaks to us now in the very same way that Joseph spoke to his brothers, when he said to them: “Do not be afraid...you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” (Genesis 50:19-21).

2. The Calling of MOSES: Exodus 1-3

A) Moses the MAN: There's a lot that we could think about when it comes to Moses' life. But I think some of the most important lessons for us come from meditating on Moses' time of preparation in the wilderness. We're familiar, most of us, with the story: Moses was an Israelite child, but he grew up in Pharaoh's palace. And so, as we're told in the book of Acts: “Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians.” (7:22); and, not only that, but living in the palace, Moses also would have had at his disposal all the luxuries and pleasures of the Egyptians. But even in this kind of environment, Moses never forgot who he was or where he came from. As Hebrews tells us: “Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin...” (11:24-25). Well, when he was about forty years old, he went out to visit his people; and he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite; so he stood up for him and killed the Egyptian. That's when everything changed. Someone saw him do it, and word starts spreading. Pharaoh hears about it and tries to kill Moses. He has to flee; and he ends up fleeing to the

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3 Henry Law puts it this way in The Gospel in Genesis: “The Scripture before us is precious, because every view of Joseph exhibits Jesus! Who is the envied, and hated, and rejected of his brethren? Who is the sold for pieces of silver; the cast out into Egypt; the numbered with the transgressors; the apparent culprit between two offenders, of whom one is exalted, the other perishes? Who is raised from the prison to the right hand of Majesty? In all these outlines, is not Jesus seen? He is on whose shoulder the government is laid. He it is, who rescues his kindred from perishing. He it is, whose heart yearned over them, when they knew Him not. He it is, to whom the perishing must flee. He it is, who has the key of all supplies. The name is Joseph. The true image is Jesus.” (The Storehouses Opened). Focusing on the two men with Joseph in prison and their two distinct outcomes, Law also says this: “But in the Egyptian dungeon we see more than a resemblance of the blameless Jesus bearing blame. Transactions are transacted there, which help to unclasp the records of the empire of grace. There are two offenders of no common note by Joseph's side. Human judgment looks in vain for difference between them. They are similar in outward calling—involved in like displeasure and degradation—expecting like ignominious end. But soon they are parted. One mounts the path of favor, and is crowned with honors—the other is left in bonds to die. Such is the relation...Behold the fulfillment. He is uplifted between two malefactors...We take our station at Calvary. The accursed trees are upraised...The three are transfixed thereon. Jesus hangs in the midst. (Numbered with the Transgressors). And Jonathan Edwards says: “This salvation of the house of Israel, by the hand of Joseph, was upon some accounts very much a resemblance of the salvation of Christ. The children of Israel were saved by Joseph their kinsman and brother, from perishing by famine; as he that saves the souls of the spiritual Israel from spiritual famine is their near kinsman, and one that is not ashamed to call them brethren. Joseph was a brother they had hated, sold, and as it were killed; for they had designed to kill him. So Christ is one that we naturally hate, and by our wicked lives, have sold for the vain things of the world, and by our sins have slain. Joseph was first in a state of humiliation; he was a servant, as Christ appeared in the form of a servant; and then was cast into a dungeon, as Christ descended into the grave. When he rose out of the dungeon, he was in a state of great exaltation, at the king's right hand as his deputy, to reign over all his kingdom, to provide food, to preserve life; and being in this state of exaltation, he dispenses food to his brethren, and so gives them life. So Christ was exalted at God's right hand to be a Prince and Savior to his brethren, received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, them that had hated and sold him.” (The History of Redemption, Works, V1, p545. For more see also Edwards' Types of the Messiah, in his Works, pp651-53).
land of Midian, where he meets a man who has seven daughters. Well, Moses ends up marrying one of them, and for the next forty years, his vocation is to shepherd the sheep of his father-in-law (Exodus 3:1).

Just like with Joseph, this must have been incredibly confusing for Moses. The Lord had put him in this amazing position of power and authority; he had been properly trained; he felt God's inward call to this great task before him. Now, the stage was set. This was the perfect moment. But God lets the “perfect moment” pass. Instead of delivering God's people, he's completely driven away; he loses everything and ends up living in some random place shepherding sheep for the next forty years. We can almost hear him crying out in the wilderness: “Lord, why?? This doesn't make any sense!” And not only would this have been confusing for Moses—it was incredibly humbling. He went from living in a palace to living in the wilderness; from leading an entire nation to leading a small flock of sheep (and remember, the sheep weren't even his—they belonged to his father-in-law). Years later, David would go from being a shepherd to reigning as king. But for Moses, it's like he's going backwards. He left behind a life of significance and he entered into a life of obscurity; he went from being known and respected to being a nobody. And it's also noteworthy that in Genesis 46:34, we're told that, “every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians.” In other words: Moses is now doing the very thing that all his Egyptian colleagues used to despise; Moses is now engaged in the one line of work that even the common people looked down upon. We might think of Moses as going from being in Congress to working at McDonalds. This was truly a humbling thing.

There are searching questions for all of us here: Most of us dream of serving Jesus in the context of a large and fruitful ministry. That's not bad, necessarily, but here's the question: Are you willing to die to your dreams of Christian ministry? It would feel great to be the pastor of a large church where everything is flourishing; or a successful church-planter where you're baptizing new believers almost every week. But what if that's not what the Lord wants? Could you die to a life of “greatness for Jesus”? Is Christ plus nothing really, truly enough for you? Are you willing to serve the Savior in the midst of the wilderness?

The story of Moses is similar to the story of Joseph in that both men were wronged. Joseph was wronged by his brothers. But it seems that Moses was wronged too. When he went out among the people, one of them accused him, saying: “Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” (2:14). It was because of this comment that Moses had to flee. And when Acts 7:25 summarizes for us what happened back in Egypt, it tells us that Moses “supposed that his brethren under God were granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.” So, it seems he was wronged. But Moses also had plenty of wrong of his own. It was wrong of him to kill the Egyptian. And so, as Moses spent those forty long years in the wilderness, I wonder how often he turned these events over in his mind. Maybe he struggled with anger against those who made known what he had done. Maybe he was tempted to think these people had messed up God's plan and ruined his life. Or, on the other hand, maybe Moses was angry at himself for taking vengeance on that Egyptian. Maybe he thought he was the one who had messed everything up and ruined God's plan. Maybe he started thinking that this time in the wilderness was God punishing him for his past sins. Or maybe, at the least, he started thinking that though God had forgiven him, he had basically lost out on his chance to be used by God in mighty ways: Had God forgiven his sin? Sure. But now the glory days were dead and gone.

Friends, can you relate to any of this? Moses' story is here to encourage us! Others had wronged Moses, but they could never mess up God's plan. Nothing could ruin God's plan. Actually, every single thing that happened to Moses was part of God's plan from the beginning. None of this happened by accident. Nor was God punishing Moses for his sin. Sometimes when we go through seasons of wilderness, this is what we start thinking. But God was not punishing Moses for past sin—He was actually preparing him for future work. Moses didn't end up in the wilderness because he had somehow missed God's plan; his time in the wilderness was actually just the next stage of God's plan. And it was an important stage: God had already gifted Moses; and He had trained and equipped him; but now, here in the wilderness, the Lord was going to purify him; He was going to refine him; He was going to empty him and humble him. See, it was because the Lord was going to use Moses in extraordinary ways, that He had to first humble him in extraordinary ways. Moses had to be broken; this is why God brought him to the desert. But the desert was never the final destination. God wasn't taking him to the wilderness, but through it. The final goal was to bring him out humbled, refined, fit for use. I don't know what lies Moses was tempted to believe. But despite what he may have thought, the glory days weren't over—they were still yet to come.
B) Moses the TYPE: Just like with Joseph, Moses is set forth as a believing man we can deeply relate to—but he's also set forth as a type, or picture, of Christ. Just like the Savior, Moses was preserved from slaughter at the time of his birth. He was born into a poor family, yet he was the heir of a king; he was born the child of a slave, yet he was free from the slavery of his brothers. But though he came from a palace, he was willing to leave it all in order to come and deliver his people from their bondage. And yet, when he came to his brothers, he was scorned and rejected by them. Even so, he would yet lead God's people to freedom from their captivity. What's more, Moses' ministry was marked by miraculous signs and wonders in order to prove the truth of his message. And he acted as a mediator between God and the people. He also interceded for them when they committed sin. At one point after the people had sinned, Moses even asked God to condemn him instead of them—he offers up his own life in exchange for theirs, when he says: “But now...forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!” (Exodus 32:32). In light of all this, it's no wonder that when Moses prophesied about the coming Savior, he described him in this way: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him...” (Deuteronomy 18:15ff).

3. The Redemption of ISRAEL: Exodus 1-14; 20; Leviticus 1-6

And not only is Moses a type of Christ—but the whole deliverance with which God saves His people from their slavery in Egypt sets forth glorious truths about the redemption we have in and through the Savior:

A) Our NEED for Redemption: God's people were enslaved in Egypt. They had a master, which meant they couldn't just leave. Scripture says it's the same for us before we come to Christ: We are slaves to our sin. Jesus said: “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” (John 8:34).

B) The POWER of Redemption: When Pharaoh wouldn't let the people go, the Lord began to send the plagues, and Scripture describes these plagues as the very power of God. The Lord told Pharaoh: “for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.” (Exodus 9:16). It was only in and through the power of God that Pharaoh was ultimately compelled to let the people go. In the same way, Paul refers to the message of the gospel as the very power of God that releases us from the dominion of sin. He declares: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” (Romans 1:16).

C) The MOTIVE of Redemption: Why did God save Israel? Was it because they were so wonderful; because they were such an obedient and submissive people? No. In fact, right before God told Moses to stretch out his staff over the Red Sea in order to divide it—and the Egyptians were pursuing them—what was Israel doing? They were saying this to Moses: “Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?...Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’?” (Exodus 14:10-12). Israel was a stubborn people. Why did God save them? Psalm 106:8 says: “Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name...” It's the same with us. God saved us in Christ for “the praise of the glory of His grace” (Ephesians 1:6). Just like with Israel, God didn't save us because we were beautiful—but in order to make us beautiful.

D) The BASIS of Redemption: God's judgment was coming down upon Egypt. And, in order for Israel to escape that judgment, a lamb had to be slain. If there was no blood on their door-posts, the Israelites would have experienced the same judgement that came upon the Egyptians. God made it clear that He would only “pass over” their houses if He saw the blood on the door. This blood not only saved Israel from God’s judgment—but it was in and through the blood of the passover lamb that God set them free.

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4 As Jonathan Edwards notes: “The remarkable agreement between many things in the history of Moses, and the prophecies of the Messiah, argue the former to be a type of the latter.” (Types of the Messiah, Works, p653). Arthur Pink in his book, Gleanings from Exodus, lists no less than 75 ways in which Moses was a type of Christ. We will look at some specifics below.

5 Jonathan Edwards, referencing this prophecy in Deuteronomy 18, writes: “This is a plainer prophecy of Christ than any before. All the preceding prophecies were in figurative, mystical language. The first prophecy was so, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that in their seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, were also mystical. . .The prophecy of Jacob in blessing Judah (Genesis 49:8) is in mystical language; and so is that of Balaam, which speaks of Christ under the figurative expression of a star. . .But this is a plain prophecy, without being veiled at all in any mystical language.” (A History of the Word of Redemption, Works, p549).
from their slavery in Egypt. It's the same with us: It's only in and through Christ, our Passover lamb, that we are both saved from the wrath of God (justification) and set free from our slavery to sin (regeneration).

E) The PURPOSE of Redemption: Exodus also helps us understand that there was a particular purpose for which God saved His people Israel. The Lord told Moses to announce this message to Pharaoh: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” (Exodus 8:1; 6:1-5; 7:16; 8:20; 9:1,13; 10:3). This was the purpose for which God saved Israel—He set them free that they might serve Him. It's the same for us in Christ. Paul tells us in Romans 7:6 that the reason God set us free from the condemning power of the Law was “so that we might serve Him” in newness of the Spirit. . . . We've been redeemed—but not to live however we please. We've been set free, so that, “being rescued from the hand of our enemies, we might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.” (Luke 1:74-75).

F) God's PRECEPTS for the Redeemed: What did it look like to serve the Lord? How did God want Israel to serve Him? What was His will for them? What were the commands He wanted them to obey? These are the questions the Lord answered when He gave Israel the Ten Commandments. This was the expression of His will for them. This was the way that the Lord wanted His people, Israel, to serve Him. He redeemed them; and then after He had redeemed them, He gave them His Law in order to show them how He wanted them to live as His people. And it's the same for us. God's Law, as revealed in the Ten Commandments, is a summary of how God wants His redeemed people to live (Matthew 5:17).

G) God's PROVISION for the Redeemed: The Passover lamb had been sacrificed. And God's people had been redeemed. But what they quickly realized as they entered into the wilderness was that they still continued to struggle with sin. God had redeemed them, and had given them His Law. But every day they found themselves breaking the commands God had given them. So, what now? The Lord made provision for their sins through the Levitical sacrifices. Now, the purpose of these sacrifices wasn't for unbelievers to have their sins forgiven. Rather, these were sacrifices offered by God's people to receive forgiveness for the sins they continued to commit every day. So actually, these sacrifices weren't about obtaining favor with God—but maintaining favor with God. The blood of a lamb had saved them at the beginning, at the Passover; but the blood of a lamb was also what kept them saved as they continued to struggle with sin every day. In the same way: Jesus' blood doesn't just save us—it's what keeps us saved. The cross isn't just what obtains favor with God—it's what maintains our favor with God. Christ's blood doesn't just make us right with God—it's what continues to keep us right with God (Hebrews 10:14).

One writer summarized all the things we've been speaking of in this way: “The central doctrine of the book of Exodus is redemption, but this is not formally expounded, rather is it strikingly illustrated. . . He instructed them, mainly, through His providential dealings and by means of types and symbols. . . The deliverance of Israel from Egypt furnishes a remarkably full and accurate typification of our redemption by Christ. . . Israel in Egypt illustrates the place we were in before Divine grace saved us. . . Pharaoh, who
knew not the Lord, who defied Him, who was the inveterate enemy of God’s people, but who at the end was overthrown by God, shadows forth the great adversary, the Devil. The cruel bondage of the enslaved Hebrews pictures the tyrannical dominion of sin over its captives. The groaning of the Israelites under their burdens speaks of the painful exercises of conscience and heart when convicted of our lost condition. The deliverer raised up by God in the person of Moses, points to the greater Deliverer, even our Lord Jesus Christ. The Passover night tells of the security of the believer beneath the sheltering blood of God’s Lamb. The Exodus from Egypt announces our deliverance from the yoke of bondage and our judicial separation from the world. The crossing of the Red Sea depicts our union with Christ in His death and resurrection. The journey through the wilderness—its trials and testings, with God’s provision to meet every need—represent the experiences of our pilgrim course. The giving of the law to Israel teaches us the obedient submission which we owe to our new Master. [And] The tabernacle with its beautiful fittings and furnishings, shows us the varied excellencies and glories of Christ.

II. An OVERVIEW of the Mosaic Covenant

*The covenant with Israel at Sinai (the Mosaic Covenant) is the next stage in the Covenant of Grace:

I. The Covenant of Works with Adam

II. The Genesis 3:15 promise of a Redeemer:
   A) The Noahic Covenant
   B) The Abrahamic Covenant
   C) The Mosaic Covenant
   D) The Davidic Covenant
   E) The New Covenant

*Among all the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace, the Mosaic Covenant is by far the most difficult to understand. There is a ton of controversy and debate surrounding this covenant at Sinai. And this debate doesn't have to do with smaller points—it has to do with the very essence of the covenant: How do we understand the covenant at Sinai? The debate especially revolves around the question of how God's grace fits together with the Law in the Mosaic Covenant. How do you reconcile grace and Law?

This is an incredibly important question; and we need to be extremely careful here, because there are two different ways we can fall into error. One the one side are Dispensationalists, who tell us that though the covenant with Abraham was one of grace, the covenant at Sinai was something completely different. They say that when the Israelites accepted the terms of this covenant, they gave up grace and went back to works righteousness. They take grace out of the Mosaic Covenant. But on the other side is what has been called the “Lordship controversy”; a debate that started when a few men started teaching that since salvation is by grace alone, we don't need to obey God's Law. Basically, these men were saying that you can accept Christ as Savior without accepting Him as Lord. They took Law out of the Mosaic Covenant. In both cases, what's happened? There's been a misunderstanding about how grace and Law fit together.

*Basically, what we're going to see is that the Mosaic Covenant isn't against the Covenant of Grace; nor is it something that's even different from the Covenant of Grace. It's simply part of the Covenant of Grace, just like God's covenants with Noah and Abraham. Sinai is no different; and we're going to see how. But we're also going to see that in the Covenant of Grace, God calls His people to a live a life of obedience.

III. An INTRODUCTION to the Mosaic Covenant

1. The COVENANT of the Law:

The Mosaic Covenant has often been called the Covenant of Law. This isn't just because the Law is what tends to characterize the covenant at Sinai, but because in Scripture, God himself associates the covenant that He made at Sinai with the Law. For example, Exodus 34:27-28 says: “Then the Lord said to Moses,
'Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.' So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.” And then again, in Deuteronomy 4:12-13, Moses recounts what had happened at Mount Sinai in this way: “Then the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form—only a voice. So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.” And later in Deuteronomy, Moses says: “When I went up to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the Lord had made with you, then I remained on the mountain forty days and nights . . . It came about at the end of forty days and nights that the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant.” (9:9,11). What do we see in these passages? Primarily two things: 1) God's covenant at Sinai is intimately connected with God's Law; and, 2) God's Law is especially marked by the Ten Commandments.8

2. The NATURE of the Law:

So, the covenant at Sinai is the covenant of Law. But having said that, it's vital for us to not confuse the phrase “covenant of Law” with the phrase “covenant of works.” These are two very different things. The Covenant of Works was the arrangement God made with Adam in the garden before the fall, when He commanded him to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Covenant of Law that God made with Israel at Sinai was something very different; indeed, we're going to see that the Covenant of Law is actually one of the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. In the Covenant of Works, God entered into a covenant with sinless man, and that covenant was based entirely on perfect obedience to God's command. But in the Covenant at Sinai, God enters into a covenant with fallen man, and that covenant is actually rooted entirely in the Lord's mercies. We can see this even in the way that God gave Israel His Law. He doesn't come to them and say: “If you keep these commandments, I will redeem you from Egypt.” No, that's not what happened! God redeemed them by His sheer mercy and great power. It was only after He had redeemed them that He gave them commands to keep. This shows us that the Law was never given as a way to enter into a relationship with God. Rather, the Law is given to those who have already been redeemed; who have already entered into a relationship with the Lord by His grace.9

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<td>The Covenant of Works</td>
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3. The ESSENCE of the Law:

So again: The heart of the Law is the Ten Commandments. But how are we to understand them? In this way: Basically, they are an external summary of the will of God. Now, these Ten Commandments have, in a very real sense, been etched inwardly on the hearts of all men. This is what Paul is talking about in Romans 2:15, where he speaks of “the work of the Law written in [our] hearts”. It was for this reason that the patriarchs had a general sense of God's will, even before the giving of the Law at Sinai. And, at times, God would come to them and give them outward instruction as to what His will was for them. God came to Abraham in Genesis 17:1, and said to him: “Walk before Me, and be blameless.” But what exactly did this mean? What did this look like in particular? Again, though Abraham knew generally what this meant, since the Law had been written inwardly in his heart, still, God's will was never fully summarized in outward form until He wrote it in stone tablets at Sinai. So, with the giving of the Ten Commandments, God gives us not only a summary of His will, but a full and external summary.10

8 Much of this paragraph gleaned from O Palmer Robertson's audio lectures on the Mosaic Covenant.
9 Robertson says: “Not only did the covenant of law not disannul the covenant of promise; more specifically, it did not offer a temporary alternative to the covenant of promise. This particular perspective is often over-looked. It is sometimes assumed that the covenant of law temporarily replaced the covenant of promise, or somehow ran alongside it as an alternative method of man's salvation. The covenant of law often has been considered as a self-contained unit which served as another basis for determining the relation of Israel to God in the period between the Abrahamic covenant and the coming of Christ. In this scheme, the covenant of promise is treated as though it had been set aside or made secondary for a period, although not 'disannulled.” (Christ of the Covenants, p174). Later we'll further clarify the relationship of Sinai to the Covenant of Works.
10 O Palmer Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, p172.
4. The REVELATION of the Law:

A) The Covenant of Law is related ORGANICALLY to redemptive history: We mentioned earlier that some people see the covenant at Sinai as something different than the Covenant of Grace. They see the Abrahamic Covenant as being rooted in grace; and they see God's dealings with us now in the new covenant as being rooted in grace, but the Mosaic Covenant they see as something different. It's almost as though they view the Law of Sinai as a parenthesis in the plan of God: Before the Law, God dealt with His people in grace; and after the Law God dealt with His people in grace; but that time at Mount Sinai? That was different. You wouldn't want to live in those days. Those were the days of works-righteousness. The reality though, is that there was Law long before Moses; and there was also Law long after Moses.11

1) There was Law BEFORE Moses. We already mentioned God's words to Abraham in Genesis 17:1, where He tells him: “Walk before Me, and be blameless.” What do we see here? We see Law. The fact is, there wasn't just Law in the Mosaic Covenant; there was Law in the Abrahamic Covenant. Law wasn't just limited to Mount Sinai. There was Law well before Mount Sinai. Now again, the Law wasn't summarized extensively in outward form until God wrote it on tablets of stone under Moses. But God's people were no less bound to God's Law before Sinai. Abraham wasn't free to live any way he pleased. Long before Moses, God was calling Abraham to live a holy life. Long before Sinai, there was Law.12

2) There was Law AFTER Moses. God's Law also continued to function as the rule of obedience for God's covenant people long after Sinai. Even after the Mosaic Covenant had faded into the background, the Law that God had given Moses at Sinai continued to function as the standard for God's people, even during the Davidic Covenant. David himself, as he was on his death-bed, called for his son Solomon and charged him with these words: “Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn. . .” (2 Kings 2:3). Even in the final chapter of the last book of the Old Testament, Scripture calls us back to the Law. Malachi 4:4 tells us: “Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.” So, the Law continued to be the standard for God's people long after Sinai.

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Some people might object: Well, that's still the Old Testament. It's different now in the new covenant; everything changed in the New Testament. But did it? Didn't Jesus tell us: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. . .”? (Matthew 5:17). Actually, when we read the New Testament, what we see over and over again is the writers of the New Testament continuing to affirm the role of the Ten Commandments for new covenant believers. James 1:22 says: “But prove yourselves [to be] doers of the word, and not merely hearers. . .” (Ephesians 4:28). He writes, “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices. . .” (Colossians 3:9); and, “consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality. . .” (3:5). John admonishes us: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” (1 John 5:21, ESV). All of these New Testament commands are rooted in the Ten Commandments. In fact, we can find each and every one of the Ten Commandments repeated in the New Testament letters.

11 Most of the following material was gratefully gleaned from O Palmer Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, pp175-78.
12 See Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, pp176-77. We might also think of God's words to Adam in Genesis 3:19; God's words to Noah in Genesis 9:6; and the Lord's original call to Abraham to leave everything and follow Him in Genesis 12:1.
B) The Covenant of Law is related PROGRESSIVELY to redemptive history: In our very first lesson, we learned that each successive stage in the Covenant of Grace builds on the one before. We can think of it this way: The promise God first made to Adam in Genesis 3:15 was like the first seed planted in the ground. With Noah, that seed became a sprout; with Abraham, the sprout became a sapling; and with Moses, it grew into a young tree; and then finally, with David, it became a full, mature tree. Well, here's the point: The tree didn't stop growing under Moses. The Mosaic Covenant was just like all the other manifestations of the Covenant of Grace: At Sinai, there wasn't regression—rather, there was actually real progression. Sometimes the covenant at Sinai is almost presented as if it would have actually been better for God's people if they had stayed under the Abrahamic Covenant. But that's simply not true. Scripture teaches us that the Mosaic Covenant was truly an advancement beyond everything that had preceded it:

1) In its SCOPE. With Adam, Noah, and Abraham, we saw that in the Covenant of Grace, God is not only dealing with individuals but also with families. Well, here under Moses, God shows us that He is not only going to deal with families—He's going to form an entire nation. At Sinai, we see the scope of God's covenant grace extending from a family to a nation. Under Moses, we come to learn that God isn't just calling families to himself—but He's organizing all those families into a single nation, who would be, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession...” (1 Peter 2:9).

2) In its CONTENT. Before Sinai, God's people didn't have a full or clear knowledge of what God's will really was. They had to piece things together as best as they could. Just think about how much less you would know about God if all you had was the book of Genesis! But now, with this covenant God made at Sinai, we come to learn so much more about who God is and what it is He requires. We also learn so much more about our need of salvation and God's provision through the pictures and types that the Lord gave Israel at Sinai. Just think about how much the sacrifices of Leviticus 1-6 must have taught them.

3) In its EFFECT. Paul says in Romans 3:20, “through the Law comes the knowledge of sin”; and again, in Romans 7:7, he writes: “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law...” The Law teaches us so much more about what God requires, and as it does so, it also shows us just how far short that we really fall. And so, the Law humbles us. This is a hard thing; but it's also a very necessary thing.

5. The PURPOSES of the Law:

This brings us to the next point: What we just learned is that the Law serves to expose our sin. Well, what we can add here is that the Law has this effect because this was the way God intentionally designed it. In other words, the fact that the Law shows us just how sinful we really are—isn't just an accidental effect—this was actually one of the reasons God gave us the Law. Scripture teaches that there are three main purposes (or uses) for which God gave the Law, as it is summarized in the Ten Commandments:

A) The FIRST use of the Law: The first use or purpose of the Law is exposing sin. The Law shows us what God demands, and it shows us how far short of those demands we truly fall. It exposes our true condition as guilty sinners before God. This is what Paul was referring to in those Scriptures we quoted above, where he tells us that “through the Law comes the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20), and “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law...” (Romans 7:7). It's also what Paul was speaking of

13 For more on the following three sections, see Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, pp185-89.
14 An illustration here: I remember one time driving from southern California up to Washington State with my wife and two small daughters. It was early morning, before dawn; and we were now pretty far north; it was the winter and there was snow on the roads. All of a sudden the headlights on our car went out on us. What a scary moment. There was a truck in front of us, and so we followed close behind the truck. If it weren't for the truck we wouldn't have even been able to see the road. Well, it was a bit like that before the Mosaic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant was like the truck. It gave enough help; it afforded enough light and direction, but it wasn't much. The inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant was like the soothing light of dawn.
15 I love how O Palmer Robertson puts it here: “It may be admitted quite readily that the arrival of the full delineation of God's will brought with it problems which had not previously existed. Ask any distraught parent of a modern teenager if he regards the state of teenage as an advancement over infancy. The parent may hesitate to respond immediately as he recalls the multiplication of problems involved in the abrupt arrival of teenaged years. But in the end it cannot be denied that the gangly youth stands much closer to the full realization of manhood than does the infant.” (Christ of the Covenants, pp188-89).
16 The three uses of the Law were developed by Calvin in his Institutes (2.7.6ff), but Melancthon may have first taught them.
in Galatians 3:24, where he tells us that “the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.” We might think of the Law like a mirror. What does a mirror do? Well, it doesn't make us more aged or overweight than we really are. But it shows us just how aged or overweight we've truly become. In other words: It confronts us with reality; it confronts us with our true condition. That's exactly what the Law does. Or, we could think of the Law like an X-ray or CT scan for a patient with a chronic disease. It tells us there's something very wrong. Is it a good thing to get back bad results? It is if there's a cure. The Law exposes just how bad our condition is—but it does so to lead us to Christ.

B) The SECOND use of the Law: The second use or purpose of the Law is instilling fear. So, while the first use of the Law is to show men their true condition; the second use of the Law is to confront them with God's judgment. Often, this second use of the Law is spoken of in the context of civil restraint. In other words: The threat of the Law's punishment causes men to restrain their vices so they don't act out the sinful desires they would otherwise unleash against others in society. Now, this is part of what Calvin originally meant. He tells us that, “this constrained and forced righteousness is necessary for the public community of men”, and that without any threat of punishment, society would completely unravel. But along with this aspect of civil restraint, Calvin says that this second use of the Law also serves to lead men to Christ.

How so? The first use of the Law, he says, is for self-righteous Pharisees; it shows them their sin so as to drive them to Christ. But the second use of the Law is for unrighteous prodigals; it confronts them with God's punishment of sin. And so, this fear of God's judgment not only serves to restrain men from acting upon certain sins they would have otherwise committed, but it also serves to drive them to Christ for safety, in a similar way to how the avenger of blood served to drive a man-slayer to the city of refuge (see Deuteronomy 19). So then, while the first use of the Law drives men to Christ by exposing their sin; the second use of the Law serves to drive men to Christ by threatening God's judgement.

17 “The law is like a mirror. In it we contemplate our weakness, then the iniquity arising from this, and finally the curse coming from both—just as a mirror shows us the spots on our face. For when the capacity to follow righteousness fails him, man must be mired in sins. After the sin forsworn comes the curse. Accordingly, the greater the transgression of which the law holds us guilty, the graver the judgment to which it makes us answerable. The apostle's statement is relevant here: 'Through the law comes knowledge of sin' (Rom.3:20). Related to this are these statements: 'Law slipped in, to increase the trespass' (Rom.5:20), and thus it is 'the dispensation of death' (2Cor.3:7) that 'brings wrath' (Rom.4:15), and slays. It remains, then, to the law to arm God's wrath for the sinner's downfall, for of itself the law can only accuse, condemn, and destroy. But when we say that, we neither dishonor the law, nor detract at all from its excellence. . .[As Augustine] writes. . . 'The usefulness of the law lies in convicting man of his infirmity and moving him to call upon the remedy of grace which is in Christ.' . . .Again: 'The law was given for this purpose: to make you, being great, little; to show that you do not have in yourself the strength to attain righteousness, and for you, thus helpless, unworthy, and destitute, to flee to grace.' (Calvin, Institutes, 2.7.7-9).

18 We should clarify a few things here: The law Calvin was speaking of wasn't primarily civil law; it was God's Law. And the punishment that restrains sin wasn't primarily civil punishment (IE, jail or the death penalty), but divine punishment. This is clear in Calvin when he says that “by the dread of divine vengeance they are restrained at least from outward wantonness, . . ." (2.7.10). The vengeance these men fear is not primarily the vengeance of the state, but divine vengeance. Having said that, Paul does also say that the state is a minister of God for good and doesn't bear the sword for nothing. So I don't think it's wrong to draw secondary applications. But I do believe it's important to recognize that the primary application doesn't have to do with breaking civil laws and being subject to civil punishments—but breaking God's Law and being subject to His judgment.

19 Calvin writes: "What Paul says elsewhere, that 'the law was for the Jews a tutor unto Christ' (Gal. 3:24), may be applied to both functions of the law. There are two kinds of men whom the law leads by its tutelage to Christ." (Institutes, 2.7.11).

20 It's this aspect that the Westminster Larger Catechism seems to draw out most clearly. Question 96 asks, "What particular use is there of the moral law to unregenerate men?" The response reads, "The moral law is of use to unregenerate men, to awaken their consciences to flee from wrath to come, and to drive them to Christ; or, upon their continuance in the estate and way of sin, to leave them inexcusable, and under the curse thereof." Nicholas Batzig picks up on this truth in his article, The Third Use of the Law and the Finished Work of Christ. He says: “Calvin then proceeded to categorize the second use of the Law as that of restraint. . .Here, an interesting historical matter arises. It has been common for scholars to appeal to Calvin's delineation of the second use of the law as referring to civil restraint. However, it is not civil restraint that Calvin seems to be speaking about; rather, Calvin subsumed the second use of the Law under the schoolmaster category—as he had done with the first use. . .the first use of the law is to lead the self-righteous to come off of trusting in his own righteousness and to trust in Christ for righteousness, and the second use of the Law is for the lawless to fear the inevitable outcome of their rebellion and so to flee to Christ for safety. It is an important distinction that has seldom been observed in treatments on this subject. Calvin leaves no question that he believed that the first two uses of the law were 'schoolmaster' to bring legalist and lawless to salvation in faith in Christ. He introduced the second use by saying there are two classes of persons, whom by its training it leads to Christ. (www.feedingonchrist.com/the-third-use-of-the-law-and-finished-work-of-christ). We agree with Batzig that Calvin isn't speaking of civil restraint alone, but civil restraint does seem to be the first aspect he describes. Colquhoun references both aspects in describing how the Law restrains sin: “By its. . . awful threatenings, it serves in some measure to keep [men] in awe, and to fright them from committing many external acts of sin; in which, they otherwise would freely indulge themselves. It is of use, by its terrible denunciations, to curb those, who. . .would rush forward to all manner of sin; and to deter them, through fear of punishment, from many gross enormities. . .It awakens their consciences, to a conviction of their guilt, and to a dread
C) The THIRD use of the Law: The first two uses of the Law serve to draw unbelievers to Jesus. Again, they do this in different ways: The first use is given more for the self-righteous, and it draws men to Christ by showing them how sinful they really are. The second use of the Law is given more for prodigal sons, and it draws men to Christ by threatening God’s judgment against sin. The first use is for those who don’t see their sin; the second use is for those who don’t care about their sin. The first is for the legalist; the second is for the lawless. But in both cases, the Law serves to draw sinners to Christ. Well, the third use of the Law is for Christians. It serves as a rule of life; it tells us what God’s will is for us as believers; and it teaches us how to live in such a way that brings glory and honor to our heavenly Father. Psalm 119 is the epitome of the third use of the Law. And Psalm 119:4 tells us: “You have ordained Your precepts, that we should keep them diligently.” Notice what the Psalmist doesn’t say about the function of the Law here. He doesn’t say: “You have ordained your precepts, that we would see we can’t keep them.” No; he tells us God has given us His precepts “that we should keep them…” This is the third use of the Law.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, in describing this third use, tells us that the primary purpose of the Law for believers is: “to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good; and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.” In other words, when we read God’s Law as Christians, we don’t merely read it as a list of things God commands to do or not to do. When we read the Law, we let God truly search our hearts. We don’t just say, “Well, I haven’t committed murder or adultery; I guess I’m doing pretty good there.” We let God show us all the ways we’ve broken His Law with our actions, our words, and our thoughts; in the secret places of our lives and our hearts. We come to God honestly, as those who still struggle deeply with sin. And we let God expose our sin. But as He does, we remember the finished work of Jesus. So, we fully acknowledge the ways we’ve failed. But then we go back to the cross, and we remember all that Christ has done to redeem us from the curse of the Law. And what happens? We’re stirred once again, we’re renewed in the gospel. And we close our Bibles and go on our way, seeking to obey the Lord—not out of guilt; but with gladness and joy—seeking to obey Him because of all He has done for us in Jesus.

### The Three Different Purposes of the Moral Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Who it Helps</th>
<th>Why it’s Needed</th>
<th>How it Works</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 1st use of the Law</td>
<td>Exposes sin</td>
<td>Self-righteous Pharisees</td>
<td>They don’t see their sin</td>
<td>Humbles men &amp; drives them to Christ by exposing their sin</td>
<td>The Law acts like a Mirror or X-ray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2nd use of the Law</td>
<td>Instills fear</td>
<td>Unrighteous Pharisees</td>
<td>They don’t care about their sin</td>
<td>Restrains men &amp; drives them to Christ by threatening punishment</td>
<td>The Law acts like a Whip or Cane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 3rd use of the Law</td>
<td>Stirs hearts</td>
<td>Recovering Believers</td>
<td>They need to again behold the Savior</td>
<td>Instructs believers &amp; drives them again to Christ’s finished work</td>
<td>The Law acts like a Fire-iron/stoker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. The CATEGORIES of the Law:

Well, up until now, we’ve been talking about the Moral Law; that is, the Law of God as it is expressed in the Ten Commandments. But historically, the Law has actually been divided up into three distinct categories: 1) The Moral Law; but also, 2) The Ceremonial Law; and 3) The Judicial (or Civil) Law.

of everlasting punishment; and so, discovers to them their absolute need of Christ.…” (*Treatise of Law and Gospel*, pp137-40).

21 This is Question #97 of the Westminster Larger Catechism.

22 Nicholas Batzig has a wonderful article on this aspect of the third use of the Law. Referencing WLC #97 quoted above, he says: “Note that the Puritans were insistent that our justification by faith alone in Christ alone is the fundamental first step in understanding the role of the moral Law in the life of the believer. They do not lay aside the implications of that justification. Rather, they root the third use of the Law firmly in the justification we have in Christ...the Puritans noted that the moral Law is useful in the life of the regenerate to remind them of the ongoing need they have for the finished work of Christ. It is not only the unbeliever [that] needs to know that Christ has fulfilled the Law for us and has taken the curse of it in our place and for our good.” Believers continue to need this to be pressed into their minds and hearts. The moral law is useful to believers in that it ‘provoke[s] them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.’ here an exceedingly important nuance must be observed. The first thing introduced in the moral obligations of the Law in the life of the believer is not the sheer obligatory character, rather it is the heart motivation for obedience. The language of ‘thankfulness’ is employed. It is not out of ‘servile fear’ that the believer presses on in obedience. It is the ‘thankfulness’...that [is] the proper [motivation] for the believer to obey God. But when the Law is divested of the fulfillment it finds in the finished work of Christ it becomes an unbearable burden,” (see link noted above).
A) The MORAL Law: The Moral Law is what we have been talking about. It's the eternal summary of God's will for man as it is expressed in the Ten Commandments. One thing we could note here is that of those Ten Commandments, the first four deal with our love for God; while the last six deal with our love for our neighbor. So, when the Savior was asked what the greatest commandment was, and He replied by first saying that we are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, mind, soul, and strength; and then He also added that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves—He was actually giving us a summary of the Ten Commandments (see Matthew 22:34-40). So again, the Moral Law is summarized for us in the Ten Commandments; it is the eternal expression of God's will for mankind; and thus perpetually binding.

B) The CEREMONIAL Law: The Old Testament Ceremonial Laws had to do with Israel's worship in the Old Testament church. It included the instructions that God gave Israel about the tabernacle and its furnishings (Exodus 25-30; 36-40); instructions that related to the sacrifices the Lord had commanded (Leviticus 1-6; 16-17); instructions about the priesthood (Leviticus 7-9; 21-22); instructions that related to clean and unclean foods (Leviticus 11); instructions about purification rituals (Leviticus 12-15); and also instructions in the Law that related to the yearly feasts God had appointed (Leviticus 23,25). Now again, all these laws had to do with Israel's worship. They were almost like an appendix to the first table of the Law (the first four Commandments); they helped explain what it looked like for Israel to worship God.

C) The JUDICIAL Law: The Old Testament Judicial Laws, on the other hand, had to do with Israel's civil state. Israel was the people of God, but they had now also become a nation; and, as a nation, they needed laws by which society could properly function and be governed. These were the Judicial Laws. They dealt with perverting justice; domestic concerns; morality (murder, adultery, rape, and divorce); and other various kinds of disputes—even with what to do when you see your neighbor's ox wandering away. So again, these laws had to do with Israel's civil state. And as such, they were almost like an appendix to the second table of the Law (the last six Commandments); they helped to further explain and flesh-out what it really looked like to love your neighbor as yourself in that particular time and place and culture.

The following table summarizes how the Ceremonial and Judicial Laws related to the Moral Law:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Moral Law (10 Commandments)</th>
<th>The first 4 Commandments</th>
<th>Primarily Deals With</th>
<th>Its Appendix</th>
<th>Instructions For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The last 6 Commandments</td>
<td>Love for Neighbor</td>
<td>Judicial Laws</td>
<td>Israel's Civil State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now, the question that arises here is: Are Christians bound to keep the Ceremonial and Judicial Laws as well as the Moral Law? The short answer is “No.” It's only the Moral Law that is perpetually binding. The Ceremonial and Judicial Laws are not. These laws were given to a particular people (the Jews) for a particular time (before the coming of Christ), and thus, they served a temporary purpose. How do we know this? Because Jesus declared all foods to be clean in the gospels (Mark 7:17-19); and because the New Testament letters refer to these kinds of laws as actually being a form of bondage that we've been set free from in the new covenant; a bondage it would be foolish for us to go back to (Galatians 3:23-4:11).

So now, in the new covenant, we've been set free from the bondage of the Ceremonial and Judicial Laws. But does that mean we just throw them out? Cut them out of our Bibles? No, it doesn't mean that. The Ceremonial Laws served to point us to Christ in so many different ways: They pointed us to the person of Jesus (in the furnishings of the tabernacle); the atoning work of Jesus (in the sacrifices); the priesthood of Jesus (in the laws for the priests); the sanctifying work of Jesus (in the purification rituals); and the overall redemption of Jesus (in the feasts). So, we don't just cut out the Ceremonial Laws. But what we do is we read them with all the significance they were originally meant to have, because we now have the key that unlocks the depths of their true meaning. So, we read them; and as we do, we see Jesus in them.

What about the Judicial Laws? We don't cut them out either. How do we apply them? Well, if we can think of the Ceremonial Laws as being fulfilled by Christ, then we can think of the Judicial Laws as being transformed by Christ. We don't apply them literally; but at the same time, we recognize that these Laws still express permanent principles. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 5:13, Paul quotes from the Judicial Law of the Old Testament when he writes: “Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.” Now, in the original context, this phrase actually meant administering the death penalty for crimes such as disobeying
authority, idolatry, and immorality. What does Paul do? He doesn't apply it literally; but he also doesn't throw it out completely. Rather, he takes the abiding principle and gives it a new application. In the Old Testament, immorality meant the death penalty (Deuteronomy 22:21); but Paul takes that same principle (“Remove the wicked man from among yourselves”) and gives it a new application; namely, the man who committed immorality should come under appropriate church discipline. Paul does the same thing in 1 Corinthians 9:8-14. He quotes from Deuteronomy: “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing” (25:4); and he takes the abiding principle but gives it a new application; namely, “those who proclaim the gospel [should] get their living from the gospel.” (1 Corinthians 9:14). So, what we see is that in the New Testament, these laws aren’t just thrown out or done away with. Rather, they take on new application.\(^{23}\)

### Understanding and Applying the Old Testament Judicial Laws

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICULAR JUDICIAL LAW</th>
<th>PERMANENT PRINCIPLE</th>
<th>OT APPLICATION</th>
<th>NT APPLICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Remove the wicked man from among you” (Deut.22:21)</td>
<td>Immorality among God’s people is not to be tolerated</td>
<td>The Death Penalty</td>
<td>Appropriate church discipline for those living in sin (1 Cor. 5:13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Do not muzzle an ox while it is threshing” (Deut.25:4)</td>
<td>The thresher ought to thresh in hope of sharing the crops</td>
<td>Applied literally to Farming</td>
<td>Appropriate compensation for ministers of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The Three Different Kinds of Old Testament Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF LAW</th>
<th>OT FUNCTION</th>
<th>NT ROLE</th>
<th>JESUS AS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MORAL</td>
<td>A summary of God's will as revealed in the 10 Commandments</td>
<td>Summarizes God's will: A general summary of God's will for man</td>
<td>Upheld by Christ</td>
<td>Our Prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEREMONIAL</td>
<td>Laws for things like sacrifices, feasts, cleanliness, and tabernacle regulations</td>
<td>Guides Israel's worship: Provides guidelines for OT church worship</td>
<td>Fulfilled by Christ</td>
<td>Our Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUDICIAL</td>
<td>Laws for things like legal procedures, housing codes, and court sentences</td>
<td>Governs Israel's society: Applies principles of Moral Law to daily life</td>
<td>Transformed by Christ</td>
<td>Our King</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. The USAGE (or Etymology) of the Law:

We’ve mentioned that the heart of the Law is the Ten Commandments. And we’ve been talking about the differences between the Moral Law, the Ceremonial Law, and the Judicial Law. But it’s going to be important for us to also briefly recognize that this word “Law” can actually be used in a variety of ways.\(^{24}\)

**A) The Ten Commandments:** When Scripture uses the term, “Law”, sometimes it’s referring exclusively to the Ten Commandments. For example, in Romans 7:7, Paul writes: “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.” Paul is recalling here the 10th Commandment; so here, “Law” refers to the Decalogue.

**B) The Pentateuch:** Other times, when Scripture uses the term, “Law”, it’s referring to the entire first five books of Moses (Genesis to Deuteronomy). For example, in Luke 24:44, Jesus explains to His disciples: “all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” And in Romans 3:21, Paul tells us that the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus was previously “witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. . .” So then, here “Law” refers to the Pentateuch.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{23}\) This is also true of the Ceremonial Laws. As Poythress explains: “Consider the laws that prohibit Israelites from touching unclean things and eating unclean foods. Such laws are generally classified as ceremonial because Christians are not bound to observe them literally (see Col. 2:20-21; 1 Tim. 4:3-5; Mk. 7:19). Nevertheless, these laws still express permanent principles. ‘Touch no unclean thing’ is quoted by Paul as a backing for his injunction not to be yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14, 17), because it embodies the general principle of separation from moral disorder. The dietary laws also express the general truth that God has created all orders of living things, that this order is redemptively restored through the renewal of the word of God, and that God’s priests are to be radically separated from the corruptions of the fall. Hence, though the exact for of observance of the food laws has changed, they express a multitude of permanent principles. . .Thus it seems wisest to me not to draw a sharp distinction between ceremonial and moral law, but to study all of the law most carefully in the endeavor to appreciate its depth, the richness of its connections, and the unity of its purposes in foreshadowing Christ.” (see Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses, pp102-103).

\(^{24}\) Much of this section was gleaned from Robertson (Christ of the Covenants, pp179-80) and Colquhoun (Treatise, pp4-5).

\(^{21}\) In this passage in Romans 3:21, “Law” is actually used in two very different ways. What does Paul mean when he begins the verse by saying: “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested. . .”? We’ll get to that later.
C) The Old Testament: Still, at other times, when Scripture uses the term, “Law”, it’s actually referring to the entire Old Testament. This is how the Savior seems to be using it in John 8:34, where He asks the Jews: “Has it not been written in your Law, I said, you are gods?” What Jesus is actually teaching here is another matter, but He’s quoting the Psalms (82:6). So, “Law” here refers to the entire Old Testament.

D) A Works-Righteousness: Sometimes, the term “Law” is used as a short-hand version for “trusting in the works of the Law” to make you right with God. For instance, in Galatians 4:21, Paul asks his hearers: “Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?” Here, Paul isn’t speaking about the Ten Commandments in a general sense—but about trusting in the Law as a means of justification.

E) The Gospel: Finally, there are times in Scripture when the term, “Law” is actually used to refer to the gospel! For instance, in Isaiah 2:3, there is a beautiful prophecy of the last days: “And many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.’ For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” So here, “law” seems to actually refer to the gospel.

IV. An Introduction to the Four Views of Sinai

Now, one of the biggest areas of debate in the study of Covenant Theology revolves around the question of how we are to understand the Mosaic Covenant. In fact, there’s not only great debate relating to the Mosaic Covenant, there’s also a good amount of confusion. At least one early Reformed theologian, Edmund Calamy, in attempting to categorize the various positions on the Mosaic Covenant, seems to have himself actually misunderstood some of the views represented.26 This shows “that even a member of the Westminster Assembly could hear and read his contemporaries on the topic of the covenants, with particular reference to Sinai, and not necessarily provide an altogether accurate or clear taxonomy of their respective positions.”27 It’s no wonder that Anthony Burgess, another member of the Westminster Assembly, made the observation that he did “not find in any point of Divinity, learned men so confused and perplexed” as on the relationship between the Mosaic Covenant and the Covenant of Grace!28

The song goes, “How do you solve a problem like Maria?” Well, we could write another musical, “How do you solve a problem like Moses?” How are we to understand the Mosaic Covenant? Is this covenant that God makes with Israel under Moses part of the Covenant of Grace? Or is it more like another Covenant of Works? Or is it both? Or neither? How are we to understand the Mosaic Covenant?

Generally, we could say that there are four major views of the Mosaic Covenant.29 Francis Roberts

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26 Noted in Beeke, A Puritan Theology. See Edmund Calamy: Two Solemn Covenants Made Between God and Man.
27 Quoted from Beeke, A Puritan Theology. So it shouldn’t surprise us that there continues to be a great amount of confusion. If members of the Westminster Assembly found themselves baffled in categorizing the specific views of the Mosaic Covenant as they interacted with primary sources, how much more baffled are we bound to be now as we interact with secondary sources, many of whom in turn misunderstand the primary sources they are seeking to represent.
28 Quote is from Beeke. The full quote from Burgess has a bit more color to it: “I do not find in any point of divinity, learned men so confused and perplexed (being like Abraham’s ram, hung in a bush of briars and brambles by the head) as here.” (A Vindication of the Moral Law, p229). He wasn’t alone; other theologians had very similar things to say. Jonathan Edwards says, “There is perhaps no part of divinity attended with so much intricacy, and wherein orthodox divines do so much differ as stating the precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of Moses and Christ.” (Works, V1, p100). John Ball says, “here at first we meet with great difficulty, how, and whether at all the Covenant of Grace, was manifested by Moses.” (A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, p93). John Owen says, “this is a subject wrapped up in much obscurity, and attended with many difficulties.” (Hebrews, p60). Francis Roberts, in commencing the subject, begins with, “This particular is involved in much difficulty...One compares it to the land of Canaan...there are many giants, many great objections in the way. And as Abraham's ram was entangled in the thicket by the head: so very many and learned writers are much entangled and perplexed in their notions and expressions about this nature of this Sinai Covenant, wherein they not only dissent oft-times from one another, but sometimes from themselves so far, that it is hard to discover their sense and meaning.” (p738).
29 We say generally because most (perhaps all) of these views in turn also represent several distinct various sub-views (which we have also tried to describe to some degree). Some have condensed the different opinions on the Mosaic Covenant into just two categories: those who see the Mosaic Covenant as being part of the Covenant of Grace and those who see it as something totally separate. This basically entails singling out the Dichotomist View as the one view that sees a fundamental unity, and lumping all the other views together. But this creates confusion and isn’t precise enough to do justice to the various views represented. On the other extreme, others have expanded the differing views of the Mosaic Covenant (in the Reformed
summarizes them in this way: 1) “that the Law on Mount Sinai was given as a Covenant of Works, not of Grace; 2) That it was a mixed Covenant, partly of Works, partly of Grace; 3) That it was not purely and properly either a covenant of nature or of grace, but a covenant subservient to the Covenant of Grace, and preparing thereunto; [and,] 4) That it was a Covenant of Grace for substance, though propounded in an unusual way of terror and servile bondage, suitable to that people, time, and state of the Church under age.”

To chart these descriptions out a bit, we could think of these four views in the following way:

**SUMMARY OF THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MOSAIC COVENANT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Description of View</th>
<th>Taxonomy</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tr>
<td>Republication View</td>
<td>The Mosaic Covenant is a renewal (or republication) of the Covenant of Works</td>
<td>A Covenant of Works</td>
<td>Sinai is <em>contrary to</em> the Covenant of Grace</td>
<td>Water as it is <em>contrary to oil</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed View</td>
<td>The Mosaic Covenant is a mix of both the Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace</td>
<td>It was <em>Both/And</em></td>
<td>Sinai is <em>partly made of</em> the Covenant of Grace</td>
<td>One shirt woven with <em>two fabrics</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subservient View</td>
<td>The Mosaic Covenant is neither part of nor opposed to but serves the Covenant of Grace</td>
<td>It was <em>Neither/Nor</em></td>
<td>Sinai is <em>different than</em> the Covenant of Grace</td>
<td>The role of a wife to her husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority View</td>
<td>The Mosaic Covenant is simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace</td>
<td>A Covenant of Grace</td>
<td>Sinai is <em>part of the</em> Covenant of Grace</td>
<td>An instrument in a <em>symphony</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Let's take some time to look with a little more depth at these views one by one:

1. **The FIRST View: The Mosaic Covenant was given as a COVENANT OF WORKS**

   **A) Summary of View:** According to this view, the Mosaic Covenant was a dispensation of law—not grace. The covenant with Abraham was indeed a covenant of grace, but when Israel came to Sinai, they entered into a very different kind of covenant. Under the gospel of Abraham, the way to life was *simple faith in God's promise*; but now under Moses at Sinai, the way to life is *absolute obedience to God's law*. These two systems are irreconcilable. And since perfect obedience is the requirement of the Law, the Mosaic Covenant must be understood as a renewal (or republication) of the Covenant of Works. Most of those who hold this view affirm that no man was ever saved in any way other than by grace alone through faith alone in Christ. Indeed, the whole purpose of renewing the Covenant of Works was to drive men to

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**Note:**

30 Anthony Burgess employs the same four-fold classification in his *Vindiciae Legis*. He writes, “In expressing this Covenant there is difference among the Learned: some make the Law a Covenant of works, and upon that ground that it is abrogated; others call it a subservient covenant to the covenant of grace, and make it only occasionally, as it were, introduced, to put more lustre and splendor upon grace; others call it a mixed covenant of works and grace; but that is hardly to be understood as possible, much less as true. I therefore think that opinion true...that the Law given by Moses was a Covenant of grace.” (In *Defense of Moses*, p7).

31 IE, as water is contrary to oil, being a completely different substance, so too Sinai was contrary to the Covenant of Grace.

32 IE, as with one shirt woven with two fabrics, Sinai was like one shirt made up of both the Covenant of Works and Grace.

33 IE, as a wife is different than her husband yet also serves him, Sinai was different than but served the Covenant of Grace.

34 IE, as any instrument adds to the symphony, Sinai was just another instrument in the symphony of the Covenant of Grace.

35 Joel Beeke (following Mark Jones, *Drawn into Controversy*), cites John Owen, who helpfully reminds us that though there were indeed different views about Sinai, the Reformed orthodox agreed on at least the following: 1) “from the giving of the first promise none was ever justified or saved but by the new covenant, and Jesus Christ”; 2) “the Old Testament contains the doctrine of salvation in and through the person and work of Christ”; 3) the old covenant ‘separated from its figurative relation unto the covenant of grace’ could not save”; and 4) “all of the institutions in the old covenant typified Christ.” (ch.17).
Those who hold to this view argue that this interpretation is confirmed by all the things Paul says about the Law that stand against the essence of the covenant. They point to how Paul says that while, “the righteous man shall live [IE, be justified] by faith,” the Law operates on the principle, “He who practices them shall live [IE, be justified] by them.” (Galatians 3:12). And again in Romans 10:5, “Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live [IE, be justified] by that righteousness.” Those who adhere to this view ask what else could Paul possibly be saying, but that the Law is a completely different system than the gospel? Whereas the gospel operates on the principle of: 

Believe and live; the Law operates on the principle of: Obey/Work/Do and live.

Proponents of this view remind us that Paul even describes the Law as a letter that “kills,” (2 Corinthians 3:6), and as “a ministry of death,” (2 Corinthians 3:7). They conclude that the Mosaic Law could not have been part of the Covenant of Grace, but that it must have been given as a renewal of the original Covenant of Works.}

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36 William Pemble describes the view this way: “By the covenant of works, we understand what we call in one word, ‘the law,’ namely, that means of bringing man to salvation, which is by perfect obedience unto the will of God. Hereof there are also two several administrations: the first is with Adam before his fall. . . The second administration of this covenant was the renewing thereof with the Israelites at Mount Sinai; where, after the light of nature began to grow darker, and corruption had in time worn out the characters of religion and virtue first graven in man’s heart, God revived the law by a comphendious and full declaration of all duties required of man towards God or his neighbor, expressed in the decalogue; according to the tenor of which law God entered into covenant with the Israelites, promising to be their God in bestowing upon them all blessings of life and happiness, upon condition that they would be his people, obeying all things that he had commanded; which condition they accepted of, promising an absolute obedience, Ex 19:8, ‘All things which the Lord hath said we will do’ and also submitting themselves to all punishment in case they disobeyed, saying, ‘Amen’ to the curse of the law, Cursed be every one that confirmeth not all the words of the law. . . ’” (From The Marrow, pp.59-60). After quoting from Pemble, Fisher goes on to describe John Preston, a Mr. Polonus, and a Mr. Walker as adherents of this view. Ernest Kevan tentatively adds Vavasor Powell, Henry Burton (pp114-15) and Richard Sibbes (p127) as those who may have also held this view. Though this view was initially held by a few of the Puritans, it essentially came to characterize the views of Lutherans and Dispensationalists.

Anthony Burgess notes of the Lutheran view: “It is true, the Lutheran Divines, they do expressly oppose the Calvinists herein, maintaining the Covenant given by Moses, to be a Covenant of works, and so directly contrary to the Covenant of grace. Indeed, they acknowledge that the Fathers were justified by Christ, and had the same way of salvation with us; only they make that Covenant of Moses to be a superadded thing to the Promise, holding forth a condition of perfect righteousness unto the Jews, that they might be convinced of their own folly in their self-righteousness. But, I think, it is already cleared, that Moses his Covenant, was a Covenant of grace.” (Burgess, Vindiciae Legis, 251). Owen, though agreeing that most Reformed divines understood the old and new covenants to be varying administrations of one Covenant of Grace, still himself sided with the contrasting view of the Lutherans that affirms “not a twofold administration of the same covenant, but that two covenants substantially distinct.” (cf. Beeke, ch17). Bavink writes: “In Lutheranism the word ‘testament’ denotes the legalistic covenant established with Israel on Mount Sinai; and in this sense it essentially differs from, is opposed to, and is abolished by the New Testament.” (V3, p.209). Richard Muller notes: “This difference between the Lutherans and the Reformed arises out of the dialectical relationship of law and gospel in Lutheranism as opposed to the simple distinction of law and gospel within the one foedus gratiae [covenant of grace] held among the Reformed.” (cf. Beeke). Berkhoff likewise notes of the Dispensational view: “present day dispensationalists . . . insist on [Sinai] that it was a different covenant, not only in form but in essence. Scofield speaks of it as a legal covenant, a conditional Mosaic covenant of works, ‘under which the point of testing was legal obedience as the condition of salvation.” (Systematic Theology). Ligon Duncan similarly notes: “for Dispensationalists, the Mosaic Covenant is basically a repetition of the Covenant of Works.” And again, “Classical Dispensationalism puts forth a dichotomy between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant. For them the Abrahamic Covenant is a covenant of Grace, but the Mosaic Covenant is a conditional Covenant of Works. . . Dispensationalists view Israel accepting the Mosaic Covenant as a major mistake; they should have said, we don’t want law, we want grace.” See also Fairbairn, Revelation of Law, pp158-159.

37 Edward Fisher (The Marrow of Modern Divinity) in some places seems to hold this view; namely, that the Mosaic Covenant was a renewal of the original Covenant of Works: “Evan: [The 10 Commandments] were delivered to [Israel] as the covenant of works” (p.53; cf. 53-63). But if we read him carefully, we discover that he is actually a proponent of the Mixed View (dealt with below). His assertion is not that the Mosaic Covenant was given as a covenant of Works—but rather that the Decalogue, or 10 Commandments, were given as a covenant of works. Fisher later clearly differentiates his position from the Republican View, writing that after the giving of the Decalogue, “when the Lord had, by means of the covenant of works made with Adam, humbled them, and made them sigh for Christ the promised Seed, be renewed the promise with them, yes, and the covenant of grace made with Abraham.” (pp6710). In other words, according to Fisher, the 10 Commandments were given as a covenant of works, but after the Israelites were laid low for their sin as exposed by the Decalogue; beginning with the book of the covenant (Exodus 20:22-23;33) and the ceremonial laws, God renews with them the Covenant of Grace. This is confirmed by what Fisher says later in The Marrow: “the old covenant, in respect of the outward form and manner of sealing, was temporary and changeable; and therefore the types ceased, and only the substance remains firm. . . And their covenant did at first and chiefly promise earthly blessings, and in and under these it did signify and promise all spiritual blessings and salvation; but our covenant promises Christ and his blessings in the first place, and after them earthly blessings. These, and some other circumstantial differences in regard to administration, there were betwixt their way of salvation, or covenant of grace, and ours; which moved the author to the Hebrews, Hebrews 8:8, to call theirs old, and ours new; but, in regard to
B) Synopsis of View: Each of the first three views we are going to examine have this in common: they do not take the Mosaic Covenant to be part of the Covenant of Grace. So, the Scriptures alluded to that seem to represent the Law in a negative way, or in a way that opposes the gospel, these same Scriptures are used in various ways to defend each of the first three views we'll be looking at. For that reason, we'll wait until later to look at these Scriptures in detail. But for now, we can say the following about this view:

1) First of all, bibliically speaking, the Covenant of Works isn't something that can be repeated: This is something that we talked about a little earlier in the lesson (we also dealt with this in more detail back in Lesson 2). Once Adam violated the Covenant of Works, it was shattered in such a way that there’s no putting it back together again. So again, the Covenant of Works isn't something that can be repeated.

And even if it was, it would be a very strange thing for God to do: “how absurd is it to imagine, that at the fall of Adam God should lay aside the Covenant of Works, and set up the Covenant of Faith [IE, of Grace] from Adam, till Moses; and at Sinai should again lay aside the Covenant of Faith, and erect the Covenant of Works from Moses, till Christ; and last of all at Christ's coming lay aside once more the Covenant of Works, and take up again the Covenant of Faith, till the end of the world?” It's confusing. And it's backwards; it regresses from the plan of redemption God has been carrying out since Genesis 3.

2) Secondly, this view can't account for the elements of grace in the Mosaic Covenant. There's no grace in the Covenant of Works. There's no atonement; there's no forgiveness. Perfect obedience is required; and there's no tender mercies to appeal to if and when you disobey. But that's not what it was like in the Mosaic Covenant. There was grace at Sinai. Just one example is in Leviticus 4:35, where we read of the outcome of the sin offering: “Thus the priest shall make atonement for him in regard to his sin which he has committed, and he will be forgiven.” What do we see? There was atonement and forgiveness of sins at Sinai. And there are passages like this throughout the Mosaic Covenant. Why do we see grace in the Mosaic Covenant? We would say it’s because the Mosaic Covenant is part of the Covenant of Grace.

3) Further, this view can't make sense of several other passages of Scripture in the New Testament. Later we'll deal more extensively with the passages quoted above that seem to make the Law contrary to the gospel. But there are other passages that proponents of this view are hard-pressed to interpret according to their paradigm of Sinai. For instance, how do they explain what Jesus meant when He told the Jews, “if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me” (John 5:46)? Or how would they interpret what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:1-5, that Israel under Moses “all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ”? Or how can they explain Hebrews 4, where we’re told twice that new covenant believers have the same good news [IE, gospel] preached to us that Israel did under Moses (vv2,6)?

What the New Testament says about the Ministry of Moses at Sinai

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<td>The Content of Moses' Writings</td>
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substance, they were all one and the very same. in these covenants Jesus Christ is the subject matter of both, salvation the fruit of both, and faith the condition of both; therefore, I say, though they be called two, yet they are but one. . .” (pp71-72).

38 Scriptures such as quoted above: Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:10-12; 4:21-27; and 2 Corinthians 3:6-7.

39 Lesson 2; III.5.

40 One reason for this is that when Adam violated the Covenant of Works, all of his posterity (including the Israelites under Moses) violated it in and through him. So, all Israel under Moses were already violators of the Covenant of Works. Roberts further explains: “For in the nature and tenor of it, it requires perfect and perpetual personal obedience; which cannot be after obedience is once interrupted by the least failure. Now in Adam's fall all his mere posterity in and with him brake the Covenant of Works; and therefore are forever rendered incapable of any Covenant of Works more.” (p744).

41 Francis Roberts puts it this way: “After the Covenant of Works was broken by Adam's fall, it cannot be proved that God did at any time after set on foot a covenant of works in the Church of God.” (Roberts, p739). And again: “As virginity once lost, can never be recovered; so the Covenant of works once violated, can never be repaired.” (Francis Roberts, p57).

42 Roberts, p744.

43 Jack Collins insightfully comments on Hebrews 4:2: “The author of Hebrews did not doubt whether the OT people had received the gospel; he says in [Hebrews] 4:2 that it came to us just as it did to them. (How different from what we have to say! We usually have to clarify that it came to them just as it did to us!)” (cf. Recurring Biblical-Theological Issues in OT studies).
2. The SECOND View: The Mosaic Covenant was given as a MIXED COVENANT

A) Summary of View: This view seeks to do justice to the fact that there seems to be both law and grace in the Mosaic Covenant. The proponents of this view try to reconcile the strict requirements of the Mosaic Covenant with God's gracious dealings towards His people in the Mosaic Covenant by saying that the Mosaic Covenant was actually a mixture of both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace.

1) There are actually at least three sub-positions of the Mixed View. The first distinguishes the Covenant of Works from the Covenant of Grace in the Mosaic Covenant by the type of Law that was given. According to this position, the Moral Law (beginning in Exodus 20) contained the Covenant of Works; whereas the Ceremonial Law (beginning in Exodus 24), contained the Covenant of Grace. Edward Fisher seems to advocate this view in his book, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. He writes: “the moral law being delivered unto them with great terror, and under most dreadful penalties, they did find in themselves an impossibility of keeping it; and so were driven to seek help of a Mediator, even Jesus Christ, of whom Moses was to them a typical mediator; so that the moral law did drive them to the ceremonial law, which was their gospel, and their Christ in a figure; for that the ceremonies did prefigure Christ, direct unto him, and require faith in him, is a thing acknowledged and confessed by all men.”

Some holding to this view see the Covenant of Grace as beginning earlier, with Exodus 20:22. See following note.

Quote from The Marrow, p73. This is Fisher's view and Vos' description of the Mixed View (V2, pp133-34). Fisher writes: “the moral law did teach and show them what they should do, and so what they did not; and this made them go to the Mosaic Covenant was actually a mixture of both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace.

Edward Fisher seems to advocate this view in his book, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. He writes: “the moral law being delivered unto them with great terror, and under most dreadful penalties, they did find in themselves an impossibility of keeping it; and so were driven to seek help of a Mediator, even Jesus Christ, of whom Moses was to them a typical mediator; so that the moral law did drive them to the ceremonial law, which was their gospel, and their Christ in a figure; for that the ceremonies did prefigure Christ, direct unto him, and require faith in him, is a thing acknowledged and confessed by all men.”

44 Some holding to this view see the Covenant of Grace as beginning earlier, with Exodus 20:22. See following note.

45 Vos (though not adhering to it) describes the Mixed View in this way: “[The Ten Commandments] are regarded as a form of a new covenant of works that God established with Israel. God did not establish it with the intent that by it Israel could earn life, for through sin that had become completely impossible. The aim was to allow them to attempt it in their own strength. In the ceremonial laws that were added later, the gospel element was resident.” (Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, V2, pp133-34).

Thus, in this view, whereas the Moral Law is given as a covenant of works, the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 20:22-23:33) as well as the subsequent Ceremonial Laws outlined in Exodus 24ff are to be understood as the renewing of the Covenant of Grace. It thus seems that proponents of this view may either see the Covenant of Grace as beginning with the book of the law (Exodus 20:22) or with Exodus 24:1. For though Fisher himself (whom Vos may be quoting in his description, on p64 of *The Marrow*), at one point speaks of the Covenant of Grace beginning in Exodus 24 (see below), he also affirms in another place that it was precisely after the giving of the Law in Exodus 20 that the Lord renewed with them the Covenant of Grace: “Thus you see, when the Lord had, by means of the covenant of works made with Adam, humbled them, and made them sigh for Christ the promised Seed, he renewed the promise with them, yea, and the covenant of grace made with Abraham.” (p67).

Interestingly, this is the opposite view of Cocceius and his followers, who subscribed to a three-fold understanding of the Covenant of Grace (1. Before the law: Adam to Moses; 2. Under the law: Moses to Christ; and 3. After the law: Christ), and viewed the Moral Law as gracious and the Ceremonial Law as what was burdensome: “Cocceius taught that the Decalogue was a summary of the covenant of grace, made especially applicable to Israel. However, after the establishment of this gracious covenant upon the ten words, when Israel became unfaithful and fell into worship of the golden calf and broke the covenant, then as punishment the legal covenant of ceremonial institutions was established, that is, the covenant of grace as a much more rigorous and harsher administration. The servitude of the law first appears after the worship of the golden calf. And the element of servitude is found in the ceremonial law; that of grace, on the other hand, in the law of the Ten Commandments. . .[Fisher's view] is thus an opposite view from Cocceius and his school.” (Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*).

46 Quote from *The Marrow*, p73. This is Fisher's view and Vos' description of the Mixed View (V2, pp133-34). Fisher writes: “the moral law did teach and show them what they should do, and so what they did not; and this made them go to the ceremonial law; and by that they were taught that Christ had done it for them; the which they believing, were made righteous by faith in him.” (pp75-75). The quotes in *of themselves* are rich, beautiful and true; we would only disagree with where Fisher takes his conclusions. Fisher in fact does go on to declare that the old covenant at Sinai and the new covenant were indeed “in regard to substance. . .all one and the very same. . .[for] in these covenants Jesus Christ is the subject matter of both, salvation the fruit of both, and faith the condition of both.” (pp71-72). This immediately makes us think of Fisher as indeed a Dichotomist, viewing the Mosaic Covenant as in substance nothing different than the Covenant of Grace. But when Fisher declares that “in regard to substance, they were all one and the very same” (p71), it seems he is not speaking of the Mosaic Covenant as a whole (including also the Decalogue), but only of “their way of salvation, or covenant of grace, and ours;” that is, the portion of the mixed dispensation of the Mosaic Covenant that revealed the Covenant of Grace—not, it seems, the entire dispensation as a whole. This is so because it's quite clear reading pp53-65 of *The Marrow* that Fisher views the Decalogue to be given as a renewal of the Covenant of Works: “Ant: But whether were the ten commandments, as they were delivered to them on Mount Sinai, the covenant of works, or no? *Evan: They were delivered to them as the covenant of works.*” (p53). And again: “And in Deut. 4:13, Moses, in express terms, calls it a covenant, saying, *And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even the ten commandments,* and he wrote them upon tables of stone.'
Thus the law was a Covenant of Grace, or subordinate to the Covenant of Grace.

By Moses, describing the righteousness of the law and sanction thereof, repeated and promulgate to the Israelites there, down, his face shined so gloriously, that he put a veil upon it to hide the curse of the law from the people.

The Covenant of Works contained in the same ten commands, delivered with thunderings and lightnings, the measure of which was afterwards cleared.

Christ, the head of the covenant, as a rule of life to his covenant people. Secondly, the covenant of works made with Adam, the covenant of grace made with Abraham, contained in the preface, repeated and promulgate there unto Israel, to be believed.

Ball. Thomas Boston clearly propounds the next sub-position of the Mixed View (the distinction being mainly not in the giving of the Law but in the function of the Law), but does also seem to commend this sub-position to some degree in The Marrow, pp36-37. For more on this view, see Roberts, pp715-48; who follows Ball, A Treatise of the Covenant, pp96-102.

Now, this was not the covenant of grace. . .” (p58). Further, when it is asked of Evangelist whether any godly and modern writers agree with him on this point, Fisher cites Mr. Pemble and Mr. Walker, both of whom, as we have referenced under the Republication View, clearly see Sinai as a Covenant of Works. Fisher quotes Walker as saying: “the first part of the covenant, which God made with Israel at Horeb, was nothing else but a renewing of the old covenant of works.” (p60). It was only then, after God had renewed the Covenant of Works with Israel through the Decalogue, and had humbled them, that the Lord “renewed the promises with them, yea, and the covenant of grace made with Abraham.” (p67). When it is asked, “I pray, sir, how doth it appear that the Lord renewed that covenant with them?” Evangelist answers: “It plainly appears in this, that the Lord gave them by Moses the Leviticus laws, and ordained the tabernacle, the ark, and the mercy-seat, which were all types of Christ. . .” (p67). This is also how Fairbairn understands Fisher (see Revelation, p156). Thus, it seems Fisher viewed the Mosaic Covenant as mixed—the Moral Law given as a Covenant of Works, the Ceremonial as the Covenant of Grace.

3) Still others who have held to a Mixed View explain things differently than the first two sub-positions articulated above. Instead of seeing the distinction between the Covenants of Works and Grace in the two separate types of the Law (Moral versus Ceremonial), or the two separate givings of the Law (Exodus 20 versus Exodus 34), they see the distinction as relating to the two separate functions of the Law. In

Now the Mediator Moses must prepare the tables, and bring them up to God, who would write therein the same words which were in the former. . .Now the Lord proclaims all his goodness before Moses, Exodus 34 for the support and encouragement of penitent sinners. Now Moses coming down, his face shined so gloriously, that he put a veil upon it to hide the curse of the law from the people . . .Thus [this time] the law was a Covenant of Grace, or subordinate to the Covenant of Grace.48

### UNDERSTANDING MIXED VIEW “A” (TYPE OF LAW)

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<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>What it Included</th>
<th>What it was</th>
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<tr>
<td>Revelation, p156.</td>
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other words, they claim that the Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace ran side by side in the Mosaic Covenant, much like a rail-road track. The difference didn't have to do with what kind of Law was commanded, or with when the Law was delivered—but rather with how the Law functioned. For believers, the Law functioned as a Covenant of Grace: it was given as the Law of Christ, to instruct God's redeemed people. In short, it said: obey because you now live (obey from life). But for unbelievers, the Law functioned as a Covenant of Works: it was given as a law of works, to convict those yet unrepentant of their sin and to drive them to Christ. In short, it said: obey in order to live (obey for life).

Understanding Mixed View “C” (Function of the Law)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Whom</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>What It Included</th>
<th>What It was</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believers</td>
<td>Both the 1st and the 2nd Givings of the Law</td>
<td>Both the Moral and the Ceremonial Laws</td>
<td>The Covenant of Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbelievers</td>
<td>The Covenant of Works</td>
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B) Synopsis of View: There's a lot that's commendable about this view. Those who hold this view are believers who are honestly grappling with what the Scriptures teach about Moses and the Law: how is it that Paul can tell the Corinthians that the Law is a ministry of condemnation and death that kills (2 Corinthians 3) on the one hand, and yet write to the same church, teaching that all those who were in the wilderness with Moses “ate the same spiritual food; and drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:3-4)? How is it that Scripture tells us in Galatians 3 that “the Law is not of faith” because it operates on a principle contrary to the gospel; namely, the one who obeys will live; and yet we read in Hebrews that those with Moses in the wilderness had the gospel preached to them? This isn't an easy thing to figure out. So, it's commendable that those holding this view are grappling with Scripture in an honest way.

And again, our purpose here is not to give an exhaustive critique. We'll interact with more of the particulars later under View 4. But for now, we could respond to this view by noting the following:

1) First, Scripture always uses the singular tense to refer to the covenant that God made at Mount Sinai. When Scripture speaks of the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai, it always refers to it as covenant (not covenants); it's always in the singular tense, not the plural: “The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb.” (Deuteronomy 5:2). So, the Mosaic Covenant can't be two separate covenants.

50 Boston doesn't explicitly say that the Covenant of Grace aspect was for believers and the Covenant of Works aspect was for unbelievers, but this is implied. He does say that the Covenant of Grace was indeed given “as a rule of life to his covenant people” (p56), which one can only assume means believers. And he says in the same place that the Covenant of Works was given “to the Israelites there,” likening the function of this aspect of the Law to Christ's dealings with the rich young ruler, explaining, “yet were they no more bound hereby to seek righteousness by the law than [that young man], whom we deem yet unbelieving, for which reason our Savior sought to first show him his sin to bring him to repentance. Boston also states on the next page that God "repeated, or gave a new edition of the law, and that, as a Covenant of Works, for their humbling and conviction; and so do his ministers preach the law to unconverted sinners still, that they who 'desire to be under the law may hear what the law says,' Galatians 4:21 " (p57). And John Ball, in describing the Mixed View, says that those who hold this view assert that: “the first [Covenant of Works] is propounded to all mankind, this [Covenant of Grace] to the Church.” (p96).

51 Though we have, in accordance with the great majority of early taxonomies, separated the Mixed View from the Majority view, it is quite noteworthy that John Ball—so influential in formulating what the Westminster standards articulate about the relation of the old covenant to the new—actually classifies the Mixed View side by side with (or perhaps under) the Majority View, declaring both views to be acceptable ways of understanding Sinai as being “one in substance and kind, to differ only in degrees” from the Covenant of Grace (pp95-96f). So, according to Ball, the divines who see the Mosaic Covenant as being one in substance with the Covenant of Grace, solve the evident differences between the old and new covenants in two distinct ways: the first way he propounds is the Majority view—but the second is the Mixed view (Version B; see Ball, pp95-96f).

52 Indeed, to not grapple with this biblical tension is to not give due weight to everything the Scriptures teach about the Law.

53 See also Exodus 19:5; 24:7-8; Leviticus 26:9, 13; 25, 44, 45; Deuteronomy 4:13, 23; 5:2-3; 17:2; 29:1, 21, 25; 31:16, 20; Jeremiah 11:3-5; 31:31-32; Hebrews 8:9. See Roberts, p746. Vos also notes this in his Reformed Dogmatics.
2) Secondly, the two-fold timetable (articulated in the first two sub-views) doesn't quite work. First of all, it's not true to say that there was no grace until Exodus 34 (with the second giving of the Law), because: a) the people were sprinkled with blood in Exodus 24, a type of Christ's sacrifice; and b) the Ceremonial Laws of Exodus 24-31 all foreshadowed gospel mercies that would be fulfilled in Christ. These were all given before Moses came down from the mountain and shattered the two tablets.34 Secondly, it's not true to say that there was no grace until Exodus 24 (with the giving of the Ceremonial Laws), because the Ceremonial Laws actually began before Exodus 24.35 Third, even if it's claimed that the Covenant of Grace began right after the Israelites pled for mercy in Exodus 20:18, it doesn't work to say that the 10 Commandments were given as a Covenant of Works, because: a) in the preface to the 10 Commandments, God both tells Israel that He is “the Lord their God,” (20:2); and recounts how He had redeemed them from Egypt, a picture of our redemption in Christ; and b) even within the 10 Commandments themselves, gospel mercies are promised: the 2nd commandment tells us that God is a God who shows “lovingkindness to thousands” (20:6);36 and in Ephesians 6:2, Paul refers back to the promise of the 5th commandment (20:12) as a promise for Christians; that is, a gospel promise.37

34 In Exodus 32:19. Further, in addressing the Mixed View that distinguishes the Covenant of Works from the Covenant of Grace by the two separate occasions in which the Law was given (Exodus 20 versus Exodus 34), we might also point out that it's not true that Moses' veil served to hide the curse of the Law. This is how some have understood Moses' veil who take the Covenant of Grace as beginning in Exodus 34. But if we study Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 3, we find that the purpose of Moses' veil was actually not to hide the curse of the Law. The purpose of his veil was either, 1) to hide the true intent of the Law on the one hand, or, 2) to hide the transient nature of the Law on the other (v13). The FIRST way to interpret this verse takes “what was fading away” as Moses' ministry of Law and “the end” of what was fading away as Christ, who is the true end of the Law (Romans 10:4); making the verse read that Moses' veil served to hide the true intent or scope of his ministry, namely, Christ, the end of the Law. So in this case, Paul says nothing about “veiling the curse of the Law from them, which would have been a mercy; but of veiling the end and scope of the Law from them, which was a great judgment upon them.” (Roberts, p748). Burgess says: “the carnal Israelites did not behold Christ in the ministry of Moses. . .as the veil upon Moses covered the glory of his face, so the veil of blindness and stupidity, upon the heart of the Jews does hinder them from the glory of the Law, which was Christ.” (Vindication of the Law, pp268-69). Pink explains, “Israel was unable to discern the deep significance of the ministry of Moses, the purpose of God behind it, that which all the types and shadows pointed forward to. The end of 2 Corinthians 3:13: is parallel with Romans 10:4. ‘For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.’” The SECOND way to interpret this verse is to likewise take “what was fading away” as Moses' ministry of Law but “the end” of what was fading away as the transient nature of that ministry; making the verse read that Moses' veil served to hide the transitory nature of his ministry. In this case, “the Jews misunderstood the nature of their own economy, regarding as ultimate and permanent what was in fact preparatory and temporary.” (Hodge, 2 Corinthians). In other words, they failed to understand that the old covenant was fading away in order to make room for the new; that in the fullness of time, the husk of the old covenant would be peeled away in order to extract the true kernel; Christ. Either way, Moses veiling his face was not a good thing for Israel. Either it hid from them the true scope of the old covenant, which was Christ and the new covenant (Romans 10:4); or, it hid from them the transitory nature of the old covenant, which would make way for Christ and the new covenant. So in either interpretation, the veil did not hide from Israel the curse of the Law; but rather it hid from them the mystery of Christ; functioning, it seems, in a very similar way as did Christ's parables, “so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forever.” (Mark 4:12). For more on Moses' veil, see Ball's extended reasoning, pp98-100.

35 Some of the first commands that God gives after the 10 Commandments have to do with constructing a proper altar to offer sacrifices of atonement (Exodus 20:24-26; cf. Exodus 23:14-18). We could also add a few other reasons here for not seeing the Covenant of Grace as beginning in Exodus 24: First, just as we see grace before Exodus 24; we also see the legal strictness that many would attribute to a Covenant of Works principle after Exodus 24: Moses seems to deal just as strictly with Israel in smashing the two tablets as He does in first giving them the 10 Commandments. Yet, in this view, Moses smashing the two tablets of the Law (in Exodus 32:19) would actually fit into the timetable of the Covenant of Grace, which had begun back in Exodus 24. Further, according to the proponents of this view, the whole reason that God gave Israel the Law as a Covenant of Works the first time was that they were so puffed up with pride, thinking they could keep the Law. He gave them the Law therefore to break and humble them of their pride, and only after they were humbled did He renew the Covenant of Grace with them. But if the Covenant of Grace is renewed in Exodus 24, this theory doesn't fit at all, because the people do not only respond in Exodus 19:8 by telling God that they will indeed do all that He commanded them by keeping His Law (and so to humble them, God gives them the Law in Exodus 20); but they also respond in exactly the same way (actually, twice; v3,7) in Exodus 24. So if the whole point of God giving them the Law as a Covenant of Works in Exodus 20 was to humble them for their arrogant response in Exodus 19, how can we say that God then renewed the Covenant of Grace in Exodus 24 with a now broken and humbled people, when in that very chapter the people respond to God in exactly the same way they did before?36

36 Lovingkindness is not something that God lavishes out in the Covenant of Works; otherwise work is no longer work. Further, the two-fold timetable for the first two sub-views doesn't quite work, because just as there is grace from the very beginning of the Mosaic Covenant, there is also the strictest demand for works until the very end. Remember, both of the first two positions of the Mixed View ultimately make the claim that there was at first a Covenant of Works given to Israel (whether it was limited to the Moral Law of the Decalogue, or up until the second giving of the Law), but after Israel was humbled for their sin, the rest of the Mosaic Covenant falls into the category of a Covenant of Grace. But when Paul quotes verses from the Law to show that the system of the Law (do and live) was a completely contrary system to that of the gospel (believe and live), the verses he quoted were from the end of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In other words, the strongest Scriptural proof
3) Lastly, it might eliminate a lot of confusion to point out that declaring the requirements of God's Law isn't the same thing as bringing people under a Covenant of Works. Fisher (of Mixed View A) and Boston (of Mixed View C) both quote Jesus' interaction with the rich young ruler to defend their positions. The man asks what he must do to inherit eternal life, and Jesus responds by quoting from the 10 Commandments. The reason Jesus did this was to expose to this man just how much of a law-breaker he really was, in order to drive him to seek salvation by grace alone. This is, indeed, one of the chief purposes of the Law, to expose our sin—to show us just how sinful we really are. So far, so good. But when Jesus used the Law this way, He wasn't putting anyone under the Covenant of Works. Jesus was exposing the sin of this man, yes; but that's not the same thing as saying that Jesus was putting this man temporarily under the Covenant of Works in order to bring him into the Covenant of Grace. Faithful pastors will preach on the 10 Commandments. But when they do so they're not putting their congregations temporarily under the Covenant of Works. They're merely expounding God's Law.

### Final Summary of the 3 Sub-positions of the Mixed View

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views</th>
<th>How Distinguished</th>
<th>The Covenant of Works</th>
<th>The Covenant of Grace</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mixed View A</td>
<td>The Type of Law</td>
<td>The Moral Law</td>
<td>The Ceremonial Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed View B</td>
<td>The Giving of the Law</td>
<td>The 1st Giving of the Law</td>
<td>The 2nd Giving of the Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed View C</td>
<td>The Function of the Law</td>
<td>Functioned in this way for unbelievers</td>
<td>Functioned in this way for believers</td>
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3. The THIRD View: The Mosaic Covenant was given as a SUBSERVIENT COVENANT

**A. Summary of View:** Another way of viewing God's dealings with Israel under Moses is by seeing them through the lens of what has been called a subervient covenant. According to this view, the Mosaic Covenant is neither a renewal of the Covenant of Works nor a manifestation of the Covenant of Grace. It is argued that when we compare the Mosaic Covenant with both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, we find that it is something that seems to be distinct from both of them. The Mosaic Covenant has similarities with both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, but there are also, it is said, irreconcilable differences. The covenant under Moses at Sinai seems to be something

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58. Boston in The Marrow (p56); Fisher likewise in The Marrow describes God's dealings with Israel at Sinai in this way: "Therefore it was needful that the Lord should deal with them after such a manner to drive them out of themselves, and from all confidence in the works of the law; that so, by faith in Christ, they might obtain righteousness and life. And just so did our Savior also deal with that young expounder of the law, Matthew 19:16, who it seems, was sick of the same disease” (pp64-65). We might add that it wasn't only proponents of the Mixed View that cited the Lord's dealings with the rich young ruler as the pattern and purpose of the Law. Bolton, a proponent of the Subservient view cites the same passage in order to explain his view of the Law's function (p107). And proponents of the Majority View cite the same text as well (cf. Strong, pp28-29).

59. Thomas Blake's words are especially helpful in light of Boston's position: "What this [Mosaic] covenant is to any, that it is to all, whether it be of works or of grace; what it is itself in the tender and terms of it, that is the denomination [IE, nature] of it. This is plain. Mens faith or unbelief, mens obedience or transgression, cannot diversify the nature of that which God does tender; and what God spoke to the people, he spoke to all the people, the same to all, that he spoke to any (Exodus 19:20 with 20:18), and therefore that is a mistake in some that say, that the Law is doubtless a pure Covenant of Works to some men, but not to all; [that] it is a Covenant of Works occasionally and accidentally. . . .For] The Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Works are two distinct and opposite species. . . .Therefore as an ox can by no occasion or accident, be a horse, or a horse a sheep, or a sheep a lion, or a lion a man, so a Covenant of Grace, can by no occasion or accident be a Covenant of Works; one and the same thing intended for one end, may occasionally and accidentally have another event [IE, effect]. . . .but no occasion or accident can change the nature of any thing, into that which is of a kind opposite to it, and different from it” (Blake, p213). We must remember though, that Boston was an earlier pioneer and didn't have the luxury of reading carefully constructed taxonomies of Sinai and selecting the one he liked the best—he was a lone soldier on the front lines, doing his best to sort through these issues as best he could. Besides—and this is of note—semantics alone may indeed account for much of the reason we've put him in with the Mixed View rather than the Majority View. This is all the more true of Fisher, who wrote The Marrow in 1645, just as many other writings started appearing on the covenants. Especially for Fisher, it could well have been that his terminology simply wasn't as nuanced yet. I love Boston and Fisher and read them both with absolute pleasure.

60. This view holds that the Mosaic Covenant differs from the Covenant of Works in the following ways: a) the covenant of nature [IE, works] was made with all men, the subervient covenant with the Israelites alone; b) the covenant of nature brings us to Christ, not directly but indirectly. . . .But God ordained the subervient for no other end than that man, being convinced
that doesn't quite belong either to the Covenant of Works or the Covenant of Grace, and, in the words of Samuel Bolton, “If it be neither a covenant of works, nor a covenant of grace, then must it of necessity be a third kind of covenant. . . Hence it is called a subservient covenant.” It's something distinct from both of them; a third covenant, that is both subservient to and preparatory for the Covenant of Grace.

This view is also called the Trichotomist view because its proponents have a three-fold understanding of God's covenant dealings. According to John Cameron, who is credited with first articulating this view, “there is one covenant of nature [IE, works], one of grace, and one subservient to the covenant of grace (which in Scripture is called the 'old covenant'). . .” This contrasts the Dichotomist view, which sees God's covenant dealings as simply two-fold: 1) the Covenant of Works and 2) the Covenant of Grace.

According to this view, the requirement of the covenant under Moses was essentially the same as that of the Covenant of Works; namely, Do this and live: “God required obedience from the Israelites. . . Blessings in the possession of Canaan were promised to obedience, and curses and miseries to those who broke the covenant. . .” So then, what God required of Israel under Moses was not a gospel obedience (the obedience of faith), but rather a perfect legal obedience (as with the Covenant of Works). This is significant. In the Covenant of Grace, God requires faith apart from works, but in this covenant God was requiring works apart from faith: “Sincere, gospel obedience was not acceptable in this covenant.”

However, this view has a unique understanding of the promises and threatenings that God declared to Israel in case of obedience or disobedience. Adherents of the Subservient View argue that the blessings and curses proclaimed at Sinai had nothing to do with the eternal state—they actually referred solely to temporal blessings and curses that Israel would incur in the land of Canaan: “it was temporary, and had respect to Canaan and God's blessing there, if and as Israel obeyed. It had no relation to heaven. . .”

of his weakness and impotency, might fly to Christ; c) the covenant of nature was to be eternal, but this subservient covenant was but temporary; d) the covenant of nature was engraved in the heart, but the other was written on tables of stone; e) the covenant of nature was made with Adam in Paradise, but the subservient covenant at Mount Sinai; f) the covenant of nature had no mediator; the subservient covenant had Moses for a mediator; g) the covenant of nature obliged only to obedience due by the law of nature; the other bound also to ceremonies; h) the one covenant was made with man created and perfect, the other with a part of mankind sinful and fallen (see Bolton, pp95-96; Roberts, p749; Ball, pp93-94). Further, this view holds that the Mosaic Covenant differs from the Covenant of Grace in the following ways: a) in this covenant, God merely reproves sin and approves righteousness, but the in the Covenant of Grace, He pardons sin and renews man in righteousness; b) this covenant says “Do this and live” but the Covenant of Grace “Believe and live”; c) this covenant was added after God had established the Covenant of Grace; d) this covenant merely restrains from sin, but the Covenant of Grace inclines the sinner; e) this covenant brings sinners to Christ indirectly, but the Covenant of Grace does so directly; f) this covenant was a means to an end, the Covenant of Grace was the end itself; j) this covenant terrified the conscience, the Covenant of Grace comforts it; k) this covenant addressed to sleeping sinners; the Covenant of Grace to awakened sinners; l) this covenant merely shows the way to worship, the Covenant of Grace ushers in worship; m) this covenant contained decrees against us, the Covenant of Grace an easy yoke; n) this covenant was given from Mt. Sinai, the Covenant of Grace from Mt. Zion; o) This covenant excluded Gentiles, the Covenant of Grace includes them; p) This covenant looks to life in Canaan, the Covenant of Grace to life in eternal glory (see Bolton, p97; cf. Roberts, pp749-50 and Ball, pp94-95 who do not hold to view).

61 The True Bounds of Christian Freedom, p99. Samuel Bolton was a man proponent of the Subservient View.
62 As we noted earlier, this is in some ways the opposite of the Mixed Covenant View. According to that view, the Mosaic Covenant comprised both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace (it was both/and). Here it is neither/nor.
63 Quote from Beeke, Puritan Theology. Roberts follows this understanding in his description of this view, dividing it between 1) a covenant of nature [works] with man in innocency; 2) a covenant of grace with man lapsed; and 3) a subservient covenant which is called in Scripture the Old Covenant (p748). This is a separate view than the view of Cocceius, which is also at times referred to as Trichotomist. Vos calls Cocceius’ view a trichotomy, describing his 3-fold view in this way: 1) From Adam to Moses: before the law; 2) from Moses to Christ: under the law; and 3) after Christ: after the law (V2, pp132-33). Witsius refers to the same view, also calling it a trichotomy: “First Under the Promise and before the law, which they contend to have been a promise of mere grace and liberty, without any yoke, or burden of an accusing law; Secondly: Under the law, where they will have the Old Testament begin; Thirdly: Under the gospel, where the New begins.” (V1, p317). The difference is that the Subservient view has a 3-fold understanding of God's covenant dealings in general, whereas Cocceius’ view has a 3-fold understanding of the Covenant of Grace in particular. They are thus both trichotomist (3-fold), but in different respects.
64 Samuel Bolton, True Bounds, p95.
65 Patrick Ramsey, p9. He goes on: “Israel was to obey for the blessings and 'not trust and obey.' . .” He quotes Samuel Annesley who says: “their legal covenant neither admitted of faith in the Redeemer, nor repentance of sin. . . But to speak of the legal promises as legal, so they are of temporal good things; and they were made to works, not to faith.” (p9, cf. pp4,10). As Bolton says: “the old covenant runs, 'Do this and live'. . . the new, 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved.'” (True Bounds, p97).
66 True Bounds, p89, cf. also p93.
In other words, God related to His people under Moses differently in spiritual matters than He did in temporal ones. While God dealt with His people Israel according to grace when it came to their eternal salvation, He dealt with them according to their works when it came to their temporal life in the land of promise. Spiritual blessings or curses were based on God's grace, but temporal blessings or curses in Canaan were based on Israel's obedience. Though keeping the Law could never be the basis of Israel's inheriting eternal blessing, it was in fact the sole basis of their maintaining temporal blessing.

Understanding the Subservient Covenant

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covenant</th>
<th>What was Required</th>
<th>What was Promised</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Covenant of Grace</td>
<td>Faith alone apart from works</td>
<td>Eternal and temporal blessings</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Subservient Covenant</td>
<td>Works alone apart from faith</td>
<td>Only temporal blessings in Canaan</td>
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According to this view, the reason the subservient covenant was given to Israel was to make them long for the gospel freedom that would be ushered in with the New Covenant. Because such strict obedience was required of Israel, and because no strength was provided under the Law to meet those requirements, this covenant functioned to expose their sin and their inability to keep God's Law. And indeed, this was its very purpose. As one put it: “God made this Covenant with the people Israel at Mount Sinai, to prepare them unto the faith, and to inflame them with desire of the promise and evangelical covenant (which otherwise had languished in their minds) and to restrain them from sin as with a bridle, till the time that he should send the Spirit of adoption into [their] hearts, and should govern them by the Law of liberty.”

67 For more, see Ramsey, In Defense of Moses, pp3, 6-10. A question arises here: “If retaining temporal blessings in Canaan was contingent on perfect obedience, and Israel in truth began breaking this covenant from the day of its conception, then why was it that they were not immediately cast out of the land?” According to Ramsey, this question was answered by proponents of the Subservient view in two ways: 1) Bolton answered in this way: “When [Israel] had broken [the Subservient Covenant], they were not to think the case hopeless, but had liberty of appeal from the law to the Gospel, from God's justice offended to God's mercy pardoning and covering their sin, as we find the people frequently doing when they implored mercy and pardon for His Name's sake: For thy name's sake forgive, and for thy name's sake cover our transgressions; under which expressions Christ was darkly foreshadowed” (True Bounds, p98). 2) John Owen wrote that “God reserved the right not to pour out the full measure of the curses upon Israel until His great end was accomplished.” (Ramsey, p9; cf. Owen from his Works, 22:84).

68 Quote from Roberts, p748; see also Ball, p93; both are describing Bolton, The True Bounds of Christian Freedom, p95. It seems necessary here to add a brief Addendum about the views of Meredith Kline and his followers: I. THE KLINIAN VIEW. A modern hybrid of the Subservient view is the view set forth by Meredith Kline, articulated also by Michael Horton, Mark Karlberg, and others. We'll classify it as the “Klinian” view here. It is a bit tricky to classify since it doesn't fit exactly into any of the classical four positions on the Mosaic Covenant. It is often simply referred to as “Replication,” but it does not in fact align much with traditional Replication, most notably since many of its proponents claim that the Mosaic Covenant was indeed also part of the Covenant of Grace, which traditional Replication never affirmed. It could also be confused with the Mixed view, since most proponents affirm that the Mosaic Covenant was, in a real sense, part of the Covenant of Grace, but “in some sense” also a renewal of the Covenant of Works. But Patrick Ramsey in his article, In Defense of Moses, argues convincingly that Kline's view coincides most closely with the traditional Subservient view, articulated by John Cameron and Samuel Bolton. In particular, he points out that the traditional Subservient View agrees with the present views of Kline and Karlberg in at least six ways: 1) The way of eternal salvation has been the same throughout the history of redemption, that is, by means of the Covenant of Grace. 2) The blessings and curses of the Mosaic Covenant refer to temporal blessings in the land of Canaan. 3) The Mosaic Covenant is distinct from the Abrahamic and New Covenants. 4) The Mosaic Covenant is distinct from the Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace. 5) The condition of the Mosaic Covenant is works apart from faith in Christ. 6) The Mosaic Covenant was designed to lead people to Christ by exposing their sin.” Most notably, for Kline, the Mosaic Covenant is divided into two distinct spheres, just as it is in the Subservient view: eternal blessing was obtained only by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, but temporal blessing in the land was retained by merited legal obedience. Thus, Kline's view closely parallels the Subservient view in its understanding of both: 1) the NATURE of the Mosaic Covenant (that it's gracious as it relates to eternal blessings but meritorious as it relates to temporal blessings); and 2) the REQUIREMENTS of the Mosaic Covenant (faith for the eternal but works for the temporal). Kline also follows the idea in the Subservient view that the obedience which God required of His people to retain the temporal blessings was a legal obedience (as opposed to gospel obedience: IE, to obey rather than to trust and obey). Though very similar, the Klinian view does also part with the traditional Subservient view in two notable ways: 1) in the Klinian view, imperfect legal obedience is acceptable to merit temporal blessings in the land, whereas in the traditional Subservient view perfect obedience was necessary; and 2) for Kline, one major reason why God dealt with Israel according to a system of merit was in order to foreshadow the merit Christ would earn on behalf of His people. II. THE SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR KLINIAN VIEW. Ramsey summarizes the biblical support given for the Klinian view in the following way: “1) Leviticus 18:5 (see also Ezek. 20:11; Luke 10:28; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12) teaches that the blessings of God are obtained on the basis of obedience (IE, the works-inheritance principle). 2) The Babylonian exile is evidence that Israel was under a works-inheritance principle. 3) 2 Corinthians 3 can only be explained by the works-inheritance principle. 4) Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-28 set forth the blessings and curses of the Mosaic Covenant, which indicate that Israel was under a works-
**B) Synopsis of View:** As we begin a synopsis, let’s remember that there have been godly men who have held to this view for commendable reasons. That isn’t to say we believe it’s right (or even compatible with the Westminster standards). But it is to say that we don’t have the right to demonize a particular view or those who held to it simply because we don’t agree with it. Remember, there were many good men within the Reformed tradition who differed in their views on the Mosaic Covenant. Having said that, we respectfully disagree with those who hold to a Subservient covenant for the following reasons:

1) **First, the idea of the Subservient covenant doesn’t fit with Scripture.** It obscures the biblical simplicity of God’s dealings with man: that the Lord first entered into a Covenant of Works with man perfect; but when Adam failed, He entered into the Covenant of Grace with man lapsed, under which, in turn, each stage in the Covenant of Grace (including Sinai) builds upon the former in perfect unity. It’s also baffling why a covenant besides these two is so necessary. To insist there was a need for a Subservient covenant makes it seem as if there is something inherently defective in the Covenant of Grace.

2) **Secondly, the condition of the Subservient covenant doesn’t fit with Scripture.** Several passages of Scripture make it very clear that the obedience required of Israel was gospel (not legal) obedience. As just one example among many, Moses exhorts the people in Deuteronomy 10:16: “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.” This is gospel (not legal) obedience. Further, it can’t be true that God gave separate requirements for Israel based on whether the blessings promised were inheritance principle.” (cf. p6).

**III. THE HISTORY BEHIND KLINIAN VIEW.** The recent publication entitled *Merit and Grace* has given us a very helpful background to the formulation of the Klinian view. In many ways it was a reaction to the views of Norman Shepherd, who has come to be aligned with the Federal Vision movement. Shepherd took over after John Murray and taught at WTS Philadelphia from 1963-1982. Controversy arose over Shepherd’s teaching, and he was dismissed as a result in 1982. In short, Shepherd: 1) rejected the “works” principle of the Covenant of Works, thus denying the essential distinction between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace as outlined in the Westminster standards; leading to his next distinctive, that he 2) embraced covenant faithfulness as the condition God required in every covenant (both the Covenant of Works and Grace), blending the obedience required in the Covenant of Works with the faith required in the Covenant of Grace into a single condition (which, incidentally, was probably a result of confusing the requirement of the covenant head with the requirement of the covenant members), leading to the doctrine that fallen covenant-keeping was the way to inherit eternal life; which in turn, led to his third distinctive, that he 3) denied the imputation of the active obedience of Christ, a doctrine so foundational to the Reformed understanding of justification. Kline began to form a particular view of Scripture that not only preserved a works-merit principle of the Covenant of Works, but further solidified that principle by seeing it reaffirmed and renewed once again at Sinai in the Mosaic Covenant.

Remember: Samuel Bolton, Jeremiah Burroughs, Thomas Goodwin, and John Owen all held to this view in some degree. Though there were disagreements among the Puritans about the nature of the Mosaic Covenant, the early proponents of these views held respect for one another. In speaking of differing views—views they would go on to critique—the early Puritans often began by referring to them as other views held by “orthodox divines” (Boston) or “the learned” (Burgess). Today some of us are far too quick to brand as heretical views that were actually associated with the early Reformed tradition.

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 eternal (IE, by faith) or temporal (IE, by merit), because there are passages in the Law that promise both eternal and temporal blessings and require the same thing for obtaining them both.\textsuperscript{71} Besides, these two principles of grace received (on the one hand) and merit achieved (on the other) are so opposed to one another that Jesus’ words seem likewise fitting here: A house divided against itself cannot stand.\textsuperscript{74}

3) Thirdly, the evidence for the Subservient covenant doesn't fit with Scripture. Some of the classical proofs put forward by Samuel Bolton and others for the Subservient view simply don't hold up to close biblical scrutiny. For example: 1) It's said that God in this Subservient Covenant only reproves sin and approves righteousness, whereas in the Covenant of Grace He actually pardons sin and renews man in righteousness. But when we examine Scripture, we find that this simply isn't true. We see God explicitly pardoning sins throughout His dealings with Israel under Moses, both through the provision of the sacrifices, as well as in the declaration of Exodus 34:6-7, that He “forgives iniquity, transgression and sin...” Again: 2) It’s said that the covenant at Sinai only terrified the conscience while the Covenant of Grace comforts it; but Scripture teaches us that there is both comfort at Sinai as well as terror in the Covenant of Grace. On the one hand, Deuteronomy is full of gospel comforts like 7:6: “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession”, and on the other hand, the teaching of the New Testament (including that of Christ himself) is filled with sober warnings of failing to enter the kingdom of God (Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:25).\textsuperscript{75}

4. The FOURTH View: The Mosaic Covenant was given as part of the COVENANT OF GRACE

Summary of View: The final way of understanding God's dealings with Israel under Moses is that it was simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace. This is the way that the majority of the Puritans understood the Mosaic Covenant,\textsuperscript{76} and the view articulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{73} See for example Deuteronomy 30:15-20, where both “life” (the eternal) and “prosperity” (the temporal) as well as death (the eternal) and adversity (the temporal) are set before Israel. Notice that there are not separate requirements given to obtain eternal blessings on the one hand (IE, by faith) or temporal blessings on the other (IE, by merit). Rather, God gives Israel the same command; namely, to love Him and walk in His ways and keep His commandments, which would in turn result in both eternal blessing (“that you may live...”) and temporal blessing (“...and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess,” v10). Deuteronomy 7:12-16 is even clearer, where Israel’s listening and doing what the Lord says results in both 1) the Lord keeping with them His lovingkindness which He swore to their fathers, as well as 2) all manner of physical and temporal blessings. So then, at times Scripture binds together both the eternal and temporal blessings and annexes to them the very same requirement (rather than separating them and annexing opposing requirements). Scripture at times beckons us to think of our heavenly father by comparing the best of earthly fathers. To have an earthly father who in the same sentence tells his son he loves him no matter what, and yet threatens to throw him out of his house (removing all temporal care) for the slightest mistake, seems not a fitting picture of our heavenly father’s care for His children.

\textsuperscript{75} A few more: C) The covenant at Sinai excluded Gentiles while the Covenant of Grace includes them: But it's not true to say that the covenant at Sinai excluded Gentiles, for among other passages, Numbers 15:1-16 makes it undeniably clear that believing Gentiles were no less included in the covenant: “There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you.” (cf. 15:29; Exodus 12:48-49). D) This covenant looks to life in Canaan, the Covenant of Grace in eternal glory: But how can it be explained or proven that Canaan pointed to eternal glory in the Abrahamic Covenant, but only to earthly and temporal things in the Mosaic Covenant? There is great inconsistency here. For more, see Roberts, pp732-53.

\textsuperscript{76} See Ball, p95; Kevan, p117; Beeke, ch.17.

\textsuperscript{77} The Republican View is clearly not in accord with the Westminster Confession, in that the Confession sees the Mosaic Covenant as an administration of the Covenant of Grace (cf. WCF 7.5 below). See the second footnote under Synopsis of the Subservient View for why we concluded that this view is not compatible with the Confession. It is debatable whether or not the Mixed View is in line with the Westminster Standards. Ball seemed to think so (see first footnote under synopsis of the Mixed View); more accurately, he seems to classify it as an acceptable sub-view under the Majority View. Ramsey argues in his article, In Defense of Moses (pp27-31) that a) Fisher's Mixed renewal view could perhaps comply with the standards, along with b) the view that the the Covenant of Works, though not renewed, was indeed restated at Sinai; and c) the view that the Law as abstracted or strictly taken does indeed in and of itself consider the content of the Covenant of Works. We should note that these latter two views I have placed as sub-views under the heading of View 4 (to be addressed in detail later). The OPC Report on Republication found that View 4 is the only view that is aligned with the Westminster Standards: “there are two forms of republication, substantial and administrative. Views 1–3 fall into the designation of substantial, since they place the republication of the Adamic covenant works in the substance of the Mosaic covenant in some fashion (e.g., in terms of its principle or constitutive condition). Whereas, View 4 is seen as administrative...” (Chapter 5, 1). The Report goes on: “We have seen how views 1–3 outlined above all articulate a form of 'republication.' In spite of their differences, they all have common cause in placing this 'republication' of the Adamic covenant within the substance of the Mosaic covenant. That is why this report refers to them as versions of 'substantial' republication. With views 1 and 3 [same numbering as ours here], this republication composed the sole essence of the covenant. In view 2, it was but part of the essence. View 4 can speak of
According to this view, there are only two covenants revealed in Scripture: the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace; and the Mosaic Covenant is simply one of the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. Those who adhere to this view recognize that there are differences between the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace (the old covenant) and the inauguration of the new covenant in Christ—and that these differences are perhaps most pronounced at Sinai—but they are nonetheless to be considered differences in administration rather than differences in substance. In other words, the difference between Sinai and Calvary isn’t one of essence—but simply of external form; the two are not different in regard to what they are (matter) but rather in how they are set forth (manner). In short, the Mosaic Covenant is simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace.

V. Evidence that the Mosaic Covenant is part of the Covenant of Grace

1. This view has the greatest biblical support. First, Scripture tells us that the ESSENCE of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: Moses tells Israel in Deuteronomy 7:12, “Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers.” Notice that Moses is not saying: If you listen to these judgments, then the Lord will keep with you the covenant He is making today with you. Rather, Moses is saying: If you listen to these judgments, the Lord will keep with you the covenant He had made with the patriarchs. God isn’t saying: If you embrace the terms of the Mosaic covenant containing some form of a republication of the covenant of works. For this reason, this report refers to it as holding to an ‘administrative’ or ‘accidental’ republication of the covenant of works in the Mosaic covenant. And again: “In broadest terms, there are really only two basic options in formulating a doctrine of ‘republication.’ The republication of the covenant of works is either part of the substance of the Mosaic covenant (as is the case with Views 1-3, in varying degrees), or it is simply part of the administration of that covenant (as is the case with some variants of View 4).” (Chapter 5, III). And finally: “The fourth view maintains that the Sinai covenant is in substance a covenant of grace. As noted above, this is the position affirmed in our standards.” (OPC Report, Chapter 6, IV). We’ll deal more with “administrative republication” later.

As Kevan writes: “The adjective ‘old’ refers to that part of the Covenant of Grace that belonged to the times of the history of Israel (including its Abrahamic and Mosaic forms), and ‘new’ indicates that part which was promised in Jeremiah and which came to realization in the times of the Gospel. The Old Covenant is called old, not in opposition to the Covenant of Grace as made in Genesis, but in opposition to the Covenant of Grace as it is in the Gospel. They are called ‘old’ and ‘new’, not because they differed in substance, but on account of their different ways of administration. The Church of Israel and the Church of Christ are both under the same Covenant of Grace in substance. They are distinguished as being first under a legal, and then under an evangelical administration. ‘The Old Covenant speaks of Christ to come; the New Covenant of Christ already come.’” (pp120-21). On the Old Covenant: As with Kevan, we are predominately using the phrase “old covenant” to refer to all the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. This understanding is biblically warranted, since, as we saw in the first Lesson, our English word “Testament” actually comes from the Hebrew word for “Covenant”, so that we can refer to the entire Old Testament Scriptures as “The Old Covenant” as much as we can “The Old Testament.” It’s a helpful way to briefly refer to all the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace, and it’s often been used in this way (as Kevan above). However, we should note that in Hebrews 8, this phrase, “old covenant” is used specifically for the Mosaic Covenant, where it’s contrasted with the new covenant. But though it’s the Mosaic Covenant in particular that is here contrasted with the new covenant, still, it is the Mosaic Covenant being set forth as the epitome and fulfillment of all the other Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. For the same reason, the Mosaic Covenant is also described in that same passage in Hebrews as the “first” covenant (8:7,13; 9:1). Roberts explains: “It’s evident, that [Hebrews 8:8] calls that Sinai Covenant the First Covenant, and the New Covenant, the Second. But how can we understand this; seeing the Sinai Covenant was not the First Covenant; God’s covenants with Adam, Noah and Abram going before it; nor is the New Covenant the Second after the Sinai Covenant; God’s [covenant] with David. . .coming between them? . . .These were tendered to the greatest number of people: The Old Covenant to the whole national church of Israel, the New Covenant to the whole Ecumenical or General church gathered out of all nations in the world Jewish and Gentile. Whereas the covenants with Adam, Noah, Abram, David, were directed but to their particular persons, families and their seed. . .So that, . . .these two Covenants may be called the First; and the Second Covenant; because they are the First and Second most illustrious Covenants; although in regard of time, and order of discovery, the old covenant was not precisely the First; nor this New, the Second.” (Mystery and Marrow, p1263). As Kevan notes: “Because of its rigorous form, the Mosaic Covenant was recognized as occupying a distinctive place of its own”, for, “Although the Mosaic Covenant is not different in species or kind from the Covenant of Grace, it is nevertheless ‘distinct.’” (pp122,128). This distinctiveness was perhaps due to its requirement, which we’ll deal with later in more detail.

WCF 7:5. “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 foresignifying Christ to come. . .” (cf.Roberts, p753,769; Bridge, p48; Vos, V2 #43, etc). We’ll explain and unpack these differences more in detail later.

Most of the following evidences were gleaned from the writings of Puritans such as John Ball (pp102-143); Francis Roberts (pp757-764); Anthony Burgess (pp234-237); and Thomas Blake (pp202-219). Cf. also Colquhoun, Law and Gospel, pp34-62.
the Mosaic Covenant, I will give you the blessings of the Mosaic Covenant. Rather, He’s saying: If you embrace the terms of the Mosaic Covenant, I will give you the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. This is because the covenant that God was renewing with Israel at Sinai was the same covenant He had made with Abraham. The Mosaic Covenant was simply a continuation of the Abrahamic Covenant. This is all the more explicit in Deuteronomy 29:10-13, where Moses tells Israel, “You stand today. . .that you may enter into the covenant with the Lord your God. . .in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God. . .” This is God’s promise to Israel at Sinai: “I will. . .be your God, and you shall be My people” (Leviticus 26:12). We’ve shown earlier that this is the very heartbeat of God’s promise to His people in the Covenant of Grace. 86 God further tells Israel in Exodus 19:5-6 that if they will listen to His voice and keep His covenant, “then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples. . .and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are also the same privileges given in the Covenant of Grace, for we read of the very same gospel privileges in 1 Peter 2:9-10, where Peter quotes this same verse, applying it to Gentile believers and telling them: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession. . .” Further, God freely bestows the land of Canaan to His people Israel as an inheritance, which He had previously sworn on oath to give to the patriarchs and their descendants. This was also a gospel privilege, since the land of Canaan was a picture of the eternal inheritance God has sworn to freely give to His people in Christ. 87 So then, all the privileges given at Sinai were truly gospel privileges. 88

2. Scripture tells us that the PRIVILEGES of the Mosaic Covenant are the same as the Covenant of Grace. The passage from Deuteronomy 29 quoted above doesn’t just teach us about the essence of the Mosaic Covenant, but also about the privileges contained in the Mosaic Covenant. We read again: “You stand today. . .that you may enter into the covenant with the Lord your God. . .in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God. . .” This is God’s promise to Israel at Sinai: “I will. . .be your God, and you shall be My people” (Leviticus 26:12). We’ve shown earlier that this is the very heartbeat of God’s promise to His people in the Covenant of Grace. 86 God further tells Israel in Exodus 19:5-6 that if they will listen to His voice and keep His covenant, “then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples. . .and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are also the same privileges given in the Covenant of Grace, for we read of the very same gospel privileges in 1 Peter 2:9-10, where Peter quotes this same verse, applying it to Gentile believers and telling them: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession. . .” Further, God freely bestows the land of Canaan to His people Israel as an inheritance, which He had previously sworn on oath to give to the patriarchs and their descendants. This was also a gospel privilege, since the land of Canaan was a picture of the eternal inheritance God has sworn to freely give to His people in Christ. 87 So then, all the privileges given at Sinai were truly gospel privileges. 88

3. The CONTEXT of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: The Lord begins the Ten Commandments by reminding Israel why it was that they were to obey the Law they were about to receive: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (Exodus 20:2). 89 In Israel’s slavery in Egypt they were confronted with their desperate need for

84 See also Luke 1:54-55, where Mary declares the same truth: “He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever.”

85 “This speaks clearly and fully to the point, that by this covenant He would be their God, and they should be His people, as He had sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that is, according to the tenor of His covenant with Abraham, etc. So that this confirms God’s former covenant with Abraham, and the same covenant interest betwixt God and Abraham with his seed, and in the same way, as he had sworn to Abraham, etc; therefore these covenants were one and the same for substance.” (Roberts, p758). Of Deuteronomy 7:12, Roberts says, “Their keeping of this Sinai-Covenant, has the promise of God’s keeping to them, and performing to them his covenant and mercy sworn to their fathers; therefore this Sinai-Covenant, and that covenant made with their fathers, held forth. . .unto them the same mercy, and are, for substance, the same kind of covenant.” (p757).

86 See also Deuteronomy 29:12-13. As Roberts puts it: “How can the Lord be a covenant-God to sinners; or sinners be a covenant-people to God, but only in Christ by faith? . .Therefore this evangelical covenant relation betwixt God and Israel. . .proves this covenant to be a covenant of faith.” (p759). Ball says, “faith in the promised Messiah. . .is implied in the promise, I will be thy God, and commanded in the precept built upon it, Thou shalt have me to be thy God.” For God is not the God of Israel, but in and through the Mediator, neither can Israel take God to be their God, but by faith in the Messiah.” (p134).

87 As Calvin says, “the Lord of old willed that his people direct and elevate their minds to the heavenly heritage; yet, to nourish them better in this hope, he displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, taste, under earthly benefits. But now that the gospel has more plainly and clearly revealed the grace of the future life, the Lord leads our minds to meditate upon it directly, laying aside the lower mode of training that he used with the Israelites. . .[others] teach that the Israelites deemed the possession of the Land of Canaan their highest and ultimate blessedness, and that after the revelation of Christ it typified for us the heavenly inheritance. We contend, on the contrary, that, in the earthly possession they enjoyed, they looked, as in a mirror, upon the future inheritance they believed to have been prepared for them in heaven.” (Institutes, 2.11.1).

88 “these pure gospel-blessings in Christ do necessarily infer a pure gospel-covenant at Sinai promising them” (Roberts p758).

89 As John Ball says, “When God then says to Israel, ‘I am your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt’; does he not propound himself as their King, Judge, Savior, and Redeemer: Spiritual Redeemer from the bondage of sin and Satan, whereof that temporal deliverance was a type [?] . .The reason from all this is plain, that Covenant wherein the Lord promises, or proclaims himself to be the God of Israel, is the Covenant of Grace, which God made with Israel.” (p105).
redemption; but in their deliverance we behold God's gracious provision of redemption. They had been enslaved, but now they were set free through the power of God (Exodus 9:16; Psalm 106:8), having been marked with the blood of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:22). The Law, then, is only given to Israel in the context of redemption. Israel is not to obey God's Law in order to be set free from their slavery in Egypt—but because they had been set free; they are not to obey God's voice in order to be redeemed—but as those who already had been redeemed. We see the same pattern throughout the Law. Leviticus 11:45 says, “For I am the Lord who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy.” Deuteronomy constantly invokes God's redeeming of Israel from Egypt as the grounds and reason for their obedience.90 Over and over again we read in the Law Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 27:9-10, where Moses says to Israel: “This day you have become a people for the Lord your God. You shall therefore obey the Lord your God, and do His commandments, . . .” God doesn't give Israel the Law in order that they might become His people; He gives them the Law as those who had become His people. Isn't this exactly how God calls us to obedience in the Covenant of Grace?91 Just like Israel, we were enslaved to our sin (John 8:34); but Christ, our Passover lamb was sacrificed; and through faith in Him we are now set free by the power of God (Romans 1:16). Having been set free, God gives us His Law to obey. But like Israel, we do so, not in order to be redeemed, but rather because we've already been redeemed. So then, Israel was to obey for the same reason we do now in the gospel.

4. The REQUIREMENT of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment, He replied that the whole Law could be condensed into this: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Our Savior chose to quote Deuteronomy 6:5, but the Law is full of Scriptures like these. We read in Deuteronomy 10:12, “Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, . . .?” Deuteronomy 11:18 says, “You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul.” What we see is that the obedience God required of Israel reached far beyond externals to the very depth of their being. The Law was never fulfilled by merely keeping a set of rules; it always goes beyond actions to the deepest longings of our hearts. God was not just commanding Israel to obey Him in a perfect but mechanical, robotic way. He was commanding them to love Him, to belong wholly to Him, to know and cherish and walk with Him, to cling to Him; to follow Him and serve Him with all their hearts. When Jesus expounded the Law in the gospels, He wasn't teaching anything new; He was merely showing what the Law had required all along. This is why Paul says in Romans 7:14 that “the Law is spiritual”; it requires far more than just external obedience; it extends to our thoughts, motives, and the deepest longings of our hearts.92 So then, what God required of Israel under Moses is what He requires of us still in the Covenant of Grace. This is perhaps most

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90 Deuteronomy 1:30; 4:30, 34, 37, 5:6, 15, 6:12, 21-23; 7:8, 18; 8:14; 10:19; 13:5, 10; 15:15; 16:1, 12; 20:1; 24:18, 22; 26:8.
91 Theologians call these the “indicatives” (what is true) and “imperatives” (what to do) of Scripture. The imperatives are always grounded in the indicatives. A few New Testament examples of this are the doctrines of Romans 1-11 (indicatives) grounding the exhortations of Romans 12-15; or the indicatives of Ephesians 1-3 grounding the exhortations of Ephesians 4-6.
92 Luther puts it beautifully: “But God judges according to what is at the bottom of the heart, and for this reason, His law makes its demands on the inmost heart and cannot be satisfied with works, but rather punishes works that are done otherwise than from the bottom of the heart, as hypocrisy and lies. Hence all men are called liars, in Psalm 116, for the reason that no one keeps or can keep God's law from the bottom of the heart, for everyone finds in himself displeasure in what is good and pleasure in what is bad. If, then, there is no willing pleasure in the good, then the inmost heart is not set on the law of God, then there is surely sin, and God's wrath is deserved, even though outwardly there seem to be many good works and an honorable life...For even though you keep the law outwardly, with works, from fear of punishment or love of reward, nevertheless, you do all this without willingness and pleasure, and without love for the law, but rather with unwillingness, under compulsion; and you would rather do otherwise, if the law were not there. The conclusion is that at the bottom of your heart you hate the law. To fulfill the law, however, is to do its works with pleasure and love, and to live a godly and good life of one's own accord, without the compulsion of the law.” (from Luther's commentary on Galatians). Colquhoun says: “The laws then, which Jehovah prescribed to the Israelites, . . .required internal, as well as external, obedience; the obedience of the heart, as well as of the life; they directed and bound every Israelite, in the inward man, as much as in the outward. The sum of the duty required in the moral law, is love: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might. . .” (p74). And again: “The Law is also spiritual. The Lawgiver is a spirit, the God of the spirits of all flesh; and he beholds all the inclinations and affections of the soul, as well as all the deeds of the body. His Law therefore is spiritual (Romans 7:14), requiring internal, as well as external obedience. It reaches the understanding, will, and affections, with all the other faculties of the soul, as well as all the gestures, words, and actions of the body. It extends, not only to external appearances, words, and works, but to the dispositions, thoughts, principles, motives, and designs of the heart; and requires the spiritual performance, both of internal and external obedience (Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 22:37-39).” (p88). And finally: “every Divine precept requires spiritual obedience, the service of the whole heart, as well as of the whole life.” (p244).
clear in Deuteronomy 10:16, where God commands His people to *circumcise their hearts*. This shows us that all the obedience God requires in the Law is a *gospel* obedience. God isn't just commanding Israel to obey Him, but to obey Him in a *gospel way*. He's not commanding a robotic, *legal* obedience; He's commanding a true and living *evangelical* obedience. Not just to obey Him, but to obey Him with hearts that have been circumcised by the gospel. What God required at Sinai was *gospel* obedience.93

5. The **PROVISION** of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: God required Israel to love Him with all their being, but in doing this, He actually required the impossible. Adam's fall has made it impossible for man to love God. Jesus tells us in John 3:19 that all of us are born with hearts that love the darkness rather than the Light. To say that all of us fall short of loving God with all our heart and soul is a massive understatement. As fallen sinners, we're naturally both *enslaved* to our sin (John 8:34) and *in love* with our sin (John 8:44). We're not only slaves, but *willing* slaves. We're neither *able* nor *willing* to love God. But as we've learned, God provides all that He asks in the Covenant of Grace. God would provide for all the miserable imperfections of His people through the *blood of atonement*. Christ was fore-pictured and proclaimed in the sacrifices of Leviticus. The believing Israelite would bring an animal to the tabernacle “to make atonement on his behalf” (Leviticus 1:4). The man would lay his hand on the head of the animal, picturing the truth that his sin was being imputed to the animal on his behalf; then he would slay the animal to symbolize the truth that God's wrath must be satisfied—and yet that it might be borne by a substitute. So then, there was *forgiveness* in the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 34:6-7).94 Transgression was atoned for; sins were forgiven. There was grace under Moses because Moses was part of the Covenant of Grace. Of course, the blood of goats and bulls can never take away sins. But they pointed to the One who would. God would one day send to His people the Lamb of God, who would live a life of perfect obedience and submission to the Father and then take upon himself on the cross the punishment that every one of us deserves for our sin.95 Further, we read in Deuteronomy 30:6, “Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God will all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.”

God wouldn't just atone for the sins of His people; He would also take away their hearts of stone and give them circumcised hearts; radically new hearts. So that the Lord would not only provide forgiveness for His people, but also make them *willing* and *able* to love the Lord—not perfectly—but no less truly. So then, the way that God provided for His people at Sinai is no different than how He still does today.

6. The **CONTENT** of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: Simply put, the Mosaic Covenant points us to Jesus and the gospel over and over again. Through pictures, promises, and prophecies, we see His fingerprints on every page of His covenant at Sinai. This is why the Savior plainly told the Jews, “if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.” (John 5:46). That's an amazing statement. Here, Jesus himself is giving us His own interpretation of the Mosaic Covenant. And what we learn is that, at the end of the day, *the Law of Moses is ultimately about Christ*.

What did Moses write about? He wrote about Christ. In the same way, the author of Hebrews tells us that all those who were listening to Moses had the “good news” preached to them—the same good news that is preached to us (4:2,6). In other words, *it was the gospel that was preached to Israel under Moses.*

93 Bavinck puts it this way: “The entire law, which the covenant of grace at Mount Sinai took into its service, is intended to prompt Israel as a people to ‘walk’ in the way of the covenant. It is but an explication of the one statement to Abraham: ‘Walk before me, and be blameless’ [Gen. 17:1], and therefore no more a cancelation of the covenant of grace and the foundation of a covenant of works than this word spoken to Abraham.” (*Reformed Dogmatics*, V3, p222). Ball sums up much of what we've seen, saying: “the covenant that God made with Abraham was the Covenant of Grace, as it is acknowledged; but the covenant made with Abraham is for substance the same with the covenant made with Israel upon Mount Sinai; the promise is the same, and the things required the same. For in that [covenant] God promised that he would be God all-sufficient to Abraham, to bless him with all necessary blessings for this life, and the life to come. In this he promises freely and of his own mere grace and favor to be their God, and make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation unto himself. In that he requires of Abraham, that he walk with or before him in integrity; in this he covenants, that they should obey his voice, and keep his commandments. And what is it to walk with God or before God, but to walk in his Law?” (pp108-09). Kevan notes: “The Covenant at Sinai is but the working out of the Covenant with Abraham, both in its promises and its requirements.” (p123).

94 See also Leviticus 1-6; Deuteronomy 4:30-31; 30:1-5; etc. As Ball notes: “The legal covenant or Covenant of Works cannot be renewed after it is once broken, seeing it admits not repentance of sin past, but exacts perfect and perpetual obedience. But this covenant made with the Israelites might be renewed after transgression, [and] did admit repentance. . . And if the Covenant after transgression may be renewed, it is of grace.” (Ball, p107). And again, “The frequent and earnest exhortations of the prophets made to backsliding and rebellious Israel, that she should acknowledge her wickedness, and return unto the Lord, is a full commentary of that which God required of them in this covenant.” (Ball, p133).

95 Actually, even more: not only would our sin be imputed to Christ, but His righteousness would be imputed to us.
So then, Moses’ ministry was actually an evangelical ministry—a gospel ministry. How so? We might give just a few examples here: 1) Moses himself points to the greater Prophet like him who was yet to come, of whom God said: “I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. . .whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.” (Deuteronomy 18:15-19).  2) The Passover and sacrifices of atonement point to Jesus, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29), as we’ve seen.  3) The Tabernacle points us to Jesus, who became flesh “and tabernacled among us” (John 1:14).  4) The Priesthood points to Jesus, our greater high priest who offered himself once for all and ever lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:23-28).  5) The Manna points to Jesus, the true bread that has come down out of heaven to give life to the world (John 6:30-33, 49-51).  6) The bronze serpent points us to Christ, who was lifted up just as the serpent in the wilderness, that “whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” (John 3:14-15).  7) The Rock that Moses struck in the wilderness points to Jesus, for Paul tells us that Israel was “drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1Cor.10:1-4).  And whatever else we might find in the Law, Scripture sets forth as shadows of the good things to come (Hebrews 10:1); all serving to point us to Christ and his gospel. Christ and His redemption are either pictured or promised on every page of the Law of Moses. The Scriptures themselves testify that ultimately, the ministry of Moses at Sinai was all about Christ. And surely it is no different for us now in the Covenant of Grace.

7. Lastly, the MEANS of benefiting from the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace. Everything in the Law pointed to Christ. We see Jesus everywhere. But just like us, Israel was called upon to embrace this message of life in Christ from the heart, by faith. Israel had to respond in faith. This is most evident from one particular passage of Scripture. In Romans 10:5-9, Paul says the following:

“For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. “But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: ‘Do not say in your heart, “who will ascend into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down), ’or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).’ But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, ‘that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.’ ” (Romans 10:5-9).

Here Paul seems to contrast two ways of life, two ways of righteousness; the righteousness that is based on
Law and the righteousness that is based on faith. Later we'll deal in detail with the nature of the contrast, but for now I want us to just notice one thing: the Scripture that Paul here quotes in order to describe the righteousness that is based on faith actually comes from a passage in the Law. Let's say it again. Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 30:11-14, a passage in the Law, to describe the righteousness that is based on faith. Isn't that amazing? Paul here quotes from the Law to teach us about the righteousness that is by faith. And the reason is simple: the Law required faith. Just as the Law pointed to Christ in so many ways—it also required Israel to put their faith and hope in that Messiah it was so often prefiguring.

Likewise, Scripture helps us understand that the reason most of the first generation of Israel under Moses never made it into the promised land was not because of a lack of works—but because of a lack of faith. The author of Hebrews had told us that the word which was preached to Israel under Moses in the wilderness was the same "good news" that is preached to us—that is, the gospel (4:2,6). Nevertheless, he goes on, "the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard" (4:2; cf. 3:19). In other words, the very place that Israel went wrong was that they failed to believe in the same gospel that's preached to us. And this isn't something we only learn about in the book of Hebrews; the same truth is recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures themselves. For, when Moses recounts why Israel was made to wander 40 years in the wilderness, he declares to them the reason was: "you did not trust the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 1:32). This is also echoed in the Psalms. Reflecting on why God entered into judgment with Israel under Moses in the wilderness, the psalmist declares: "Therefore the Lord heard and was full of wrath; and a fire was kindled against Jacob and anger also mounted against Israel, because they did not believe in God and did not trust in His salvation," (78:21-22), and again, because they "did not believe in His wonderful works (v32). So then, the reason that many under Moses missed out on the blessing was not because of a lack of legal obedience—but rather a lack of faith.

So then, the question that we would put to any who would hold to a different view of Sinai is this: If the essence of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace, and if the privileges of the Mosaic Covenant are the same as the Covenant of Grace, and if the context, and the requirement, and the provision, and the content, and the means of entering into the blessing in the Mosaic Covenant are all

100 Calvin says of this passage in Deuteronomy 30, "the apostle, our sure interpreter, removes our every doubt when he declares that Moses here spoke of the teaching of the gospel [Romans 10:8]. . . It is perfectly clear then that by these words Moses meant the covenant of mercy that he had promulgated along with the requirements of the Law." (Institutes, 2.3.12). Roberts speaks of the significance of Romans 10, saying, "Paul himself derives and proves the righteousness of faith from this Sinai-Covenant; as contained therein, and revealed thereby. . . From where did this description [in Romans 10:6-11] of the righteousness of faith come from; but from Moses describing the Law or Sinai-Covenant? And Paul excellently expounds the words of Moses, as peculiarly intending to set forth the righteousness of faith. We cannot wish a better commentator." (p767). Samuel Rutherford likewise notes here: "This covenant has the promise of a circumcised heart, Deuteronomy 30:6, and of the word of faith that is near in the mouth, and of the righteousness of faith clearly differented from the righteousness of the Law by doing. For so Paul, Romans 10:5,6,7, etc, expounds Moses, Deuteronomy 30:11,12,13,14." (Rutherford, p61). And Turretin, noting the passage quoted in Romans 10:6-8, asks, "Now how could Paul have said this unless he had recognized that covenant, by virtue of which such promises were given, to be not so much legal as evangelical?" (Institutes, V2, p206).

101 Noting Romans 3:21-22, Roberts states simply: "The Law itself testifies that the righteousness of God (viz, which God has ordained, revealed, and will accept), is without [IE, apart from] the Law; that is, by faith without the deeds of the Law." (p787).

102 Roberts says, "Faith in Jesus Christ and justification by faith in him, must be necessarily implied in the same covenant. For these, Christ and saving faith; Christ and justification by faith; have inseparable connection and dependance one upon the other; as the act and object, as the cause and effect. Where Christ is revealed for life and justification, there faith in him is implicitly required; and where Christ is received by faith, there justification by faith must infallibly ensue." (pp763-66). Ball puts it this way: "the Law requires faith as well as love and obedience, and does build these upon it as a foundation. It prescribes faith in the first place, and throughout, namely that we acknowledge God the Law-giver, to be the Lord our God, the only true God, and testifies that faith unto him, by an universal and uniform obedience to that whole Law and every title thereof. . .Certainly, 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin', even all works, though good in show, and for substance seeming agreeable to the rule of the Law, if they issue not from faith, they are vain and hypocritical, if they be not quickened and enlivened by faith, they are but the carcass of a good work. . .Therefore the Lord in Covenant commanding the observation of his Law, exacts faith also, without which the Law cannot be obeyed in an acceptable manner. For when the Law is spiritual, and commands true worship and invocation, how can it be observed without faith?" (pp105-106). And again, "the Law requires faith as well as love and obedience, and does build these upon it as a foundation. . .that love which the Law requires, either towards God or towards man, must flow from a pure heart, and faith it is that purifies the heart." (Ball, p109). And finally, "The condition of this covenant [at Sinai]. . .is faith in the promised Messiah, which is implied in the promise, 'I will be thy God,' and commanded in the precept built upon it, 'thou shalt have me to be thy God.' For God is not the God of Israel, but in and through the Mediator, neither can Israel take God to be their God, but by faith in the Messiah." (Ball, p134).

103 This is also given as the reason for the exile of Israel, which was outlined in the Mosaic Covenant. We read in 2 Kings 17:14: "However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God."
the same as the Covenant of Grace—then how can it be said that the covenant God made at Sinai with Israel was anything other than simply one of the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace?  

It's hard to deny the fact that the Mosaic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace. But there are also important objections that we need to deal with. There are certain Scriptures that seem to contradict the things we've been affirming. Some passages of Scripture seem to speak quite negatively about the Mosaic Covenant, making Sinai appear to be something entirely different than the Covenant of Grace. We read for instance in John 1:17: “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.” And in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul refers to the Law as a letter that kills, a ministry of death, and a ministry of condemnation; where in contrast, the Spirit gives life and is a ministry of righteousness. And in Galatians 3:23, Paul writes that “before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.” If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the nature of the Mosaic Covenant? Further, Scripture seems to tell us that what God requires under Moses is something very different than what He requires of us now in the gospel. Paul says in Romans 10:5: “For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows...” And again, in Galatians 3:11-12, Paul says: “Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident, for, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith.’ However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, ‘He who practices them shall live by them.’” If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the requirement of the Mosaic Covenant? There are also certain Scriptures that seem to teach that the Law is now null and void for us as Christians. For instance, Paul says in Romans 6:14, “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” And he writes again a chapter later in Romans 7:4 that we “were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ” and that “we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound” (v6). Paul also testifies of himself in Galatians 2:19: “For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.” If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the authority of the Mosaic Covenant as it relates to us now as believers?

These are important questions that require thoughtful explanation. In fact, they're so important that we are actually going to devote the entirety of the next lesson to answering these questions in detail: First, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the nature of the Mosaic Covenant? Secondly, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the requirement of the Mosaic Covenant? Lastly, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the authority of the Mosaic Covenant?

104 We might also note: H) The BESTOWER of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: For Acts 7:38 tells us that it was actually the angel of the Lord who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, the same angel that appears throughout the Old Testament, and is understood by most to be the pre-incarnate Christ (see Gen.22:12,15ff; Exod.3:2-6; Jud.2:1-3; 13:15-22); so that the One who gave the Law at Sinai was none other than Christ himself. This was a commonly held view by the Puritans and others (cf. John Colquhoun, A Treatise of the Law and Gospel, p52). I) The FOUNDATION of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: For the ratification ceremony recorded in Exodus 24:3-8, and Moses sprinkling the people with the blood of the covenant, did also show forth Christ, whose blood is the only foundation of hope we have in the new covenant. Ainsworth says, “Thus the first covenant was not dedicated without blood, and the patterns of heavenly things were purified by the blood of these sacrifices; signifying that Christ by his death should sanctify himself for his people, and them unto himself, by the blood of a better covenant, John 17:19; Heb.9:13,14; 1Pet.1:2.” Fisher also says that by Moses' sprinkling of blood, “they were taught that by virtue of blood, this covenant betwixt God and them was confirmed, and that Christ, by his blood shed, should satisfy for their sins; for, indeed, the Covenant of Grace was, before the coming of Christ, sealed by his blood in types and figures.” (p68). And Burgess, “the visible seal to ratify this covenant which you heard, was by sacrifices, and sprinkling the people with blood: And this did signify Christ, whose blood is the only foundation of hope. . .” (pp209-210). J) The SACRAMENTS of the Mosaic Covenant are the same as the Covenant of Grace: As Blake says, “the Jews had Christ in their sacraments (1 Cor.10:4-5,7), and we have no more in ours. . .The inaugurating sacrament of the Jews. . .was that painful circumcision in the flesh, yet, those that would be the Lord's did, and must submit unto it. . .he that was not circumcised in the flesh, might not eat of the Passover (Exod.12:48). A full text against all that plead for unbaptized persons admission to the Lord's table, God will not suffer that disorder, that the leading sacrament should come after. The inaugurating sacrament with Christians is that of baptism, no sooner was a man brought into covenant, but he was straight baptized; as soon as he made profession, he had this sealing engaged sign. . .The following sacrament in the old covenant was that of the Passover, a lamb without blemish to be eaten in the place and way that God prescribed. That in the New Testament, is the Supper of the Lord, in ordinary, common, useful, and necessary elements, bread and wine, which are of a strengthening and cheering nature. . .” (p264). And Roberts says, “this Sinai-Covenant, being confirmed and ratified by these seals and tokens of the Covenant of Faith it must needs be a Covenant of Faith in Christ; for it were most improper and absurd to add the seals of the Covenant of Faith, to a Covenant of Works, a Mixed Covenant, a Subservient Covenant, or to any other sort of Covenant but the Covenant of Faith.” (p764).
The Covenant at Sinai (Part 2)
# The Mosaic Covenant (Part 2)

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The Mosaic Covenant (Part 2)

Answering Questions about Sinai

I. An Introduction

In the last lesson, we gave several reasons for why we take Sinai as being, in essence, a gracious covenant. It's hard to deny the fact that the Mosaic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace. But there are also important objections that we need to deal with. There are certain Scriptures that seem to contradict the things we've been affirming. Some passages of Scripture seem to speak quite negatively about the Mosaic Covenant, making Sinai appear to be something entirely different than the Covenant of Grace. We read for instance in John 1:17: “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.” And in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul refers to the Law as a letter that kills, a ministry of death, and a ministry of condemnation; where in contrast, the Spirit gives life and is a ministry of righteousness. And in Galatians 3:23, Paul writes that “before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.” If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the nature of the Mosaic Covenant? Further, Scripture seems to tell us that what God requires under Moses is something very different than what He requires of us now in the gospel. Paul says in Romans 10:5: “For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows...” And again, in Galatians 3:11-12, Paul says: “Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident, for, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith.’ However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, ‘He who practices them shall live by them.’” If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the requirement of the Mosaic Covenant? There are also certain Scriptures that seem to teach that the Law is now null and void for us as Christians. For instance, Paul says in Romans 6:14, “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” And he writes again a chapter later in Romans 7:4 that we “were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ” and that “we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound” (v6). Paul also testifies of himself in Galatians 2:19: “For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.” If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the authority of the Mosaic Covenant as it relates to us now as believers?

These are important questions that require thoughtful explanation. In fact, they're so important that we are going to devote the entirety of this lesson to answering these questions in detail: So: First, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the nature of the Mosaic Covenant? Secondly, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the requirement of the Mosaic Covenant? And lastly, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the authority of the Mosaic Covenant?

II. The First Objection: The Nature of the Mosaic Covenant

So then, the first objection has to do with the nature of the Mosaic Covenant. If Sinai is part of the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain the ways that certain Scriptures seem to speak negatively about the Mosaic Covenant, contrasting it, and even seeming to oppose it to the grace of the gospel? This is an important question. What we're going to see is that many of these Scriptures can be understood in light of what the older writers referred to as differences in administration between the old and new covenants. That is, there are indeed differences between the way the Covenant of Grace was revealed in the Old Testament and the way it's revealed in the New Testament. Further, these differences seem to be most pronounced at Sinai. Still, these are not differences that have to do with the essence or core content of...
the covenant (its substance), but rather differences that relate to the outward form or application of the covenant (its administration). To give an example: Say that yesterday, you picked a delicious mango off the tree. Today, you peeled off the skin, cut the mango into bite-size pieces (yummy!), and then placed those pieces in a bowl. Is there a difference between the mango from yesterday and the one from today? Yes! Yesterday, the mango still had its skin; today it's been peeled, cut up, and ready to eat. But it's still the same mango. Well, just like that mango, there are differences between the old and new covenants, to be sure. Yet, those differences don't have to do with the nature of the covenant, but simply with the way that covenant is outwardly presented. Speaking of the Covenant of Grace, the Westminster Confession says: “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, paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come. . . Under the Gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited. . . it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament.”

So then, the old covenant no less belongs to the Covenant of Grace, but it was “administered” differently than the new. Just like the mango, it was the same Covenant of Grace—just presented in a different way. But how so, exactly? There are at least seven differences in administration between the old and new covenants:

1. EMPHASIS: One of the contrasts of “administration” between the old and new covenants has to do with what seems to take center-stage. In the old covenant, the earthly and temporal are set forth most visibly, while it’s the heavenly and eternal that are front and center in the new covenant. This can create confusion as we think about the old covenant. But what we have to realize is this: Gospel truths were no less present in the old covenant—it’s just that those truths were set forth in and through earthly pictures. That is, the old covenant set forth earthly benefits in order to teach us about eternal ones. We see this in Hebrews 11:8-10: “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” Verse 8 tells us that Abraham left his home in order to receive another land, which God was promising to give him as an inheritance. And as we read through the rest of Genesis, the focus is clearly on the geographical territory we know as the land of Canaan. But verses 9-10 clarify that the inheritance God was promising Abraham was never just a physical piece of property. Even as he dwelt in Canaan, Abraham lived as an alien, as in a foreign land; because his heart was set on inheriting the city that would last forever. So then, in the Old Testament, the focus was on the physical land of Canaan. But the New Testament helps to clarify that all along, it only served as a picture or type of the heavenly inheritance that God was promising His people. And so, though it was physical, temporal things (like Canaan) that were often emphasized in the Old Testament; still, those physical, temporal things were always meant to signify spiritual realities. Just as a kernel of rice is wrapped in an outer husk, so too, gospel truths were wrapped with an earthly husk in the old covenant.

2. Other examples here would include the ceremonial laws; including the temple furnishings, sacrifices, and ritual cleansings. “The Old Testament...and the New, are sometimes compared and considered by sacred writers, as the thing including and the thing included, the husk and the grain. The gospel before Christ's time, was in the Law as the corn new set in the ear.” (Ball, p117).

3. We see this in Galatians 4:1-4: “Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.” Paul is speaking about the Old Testament church, comparing them to children; and he’s likening the ceremonies, pictures, and types of the old covenant to guardians and managers. Calvin uses this text as the clearest example of this first difference: “Although Paul applies this comparison chiefly to the ceremonies, nothing prevents us from applying it most appropriately here as well. Therefore the same inheritance was appointed for them and for us, but they were not yet old enough to be able to enter upon it and manage it. The same church existed among them, but as yet in its childhood. Therefore, keeping them under this tutelage, the Lord gave, not spiritual promises unadorned and open, but ones foreshadowed, in a measure, by earthly promises.” (Calvin, Institutes, 2:11:2).
differences in regard to administration, there were betwixt their way of salvation, or covenant of grace, and ours... but in regard to substance, they were all one and the very same. ... in these covenants Jesus Christ is the subject matter of both, salvation the fruit of both, and faith the condition of both."\(^\text{6}\)

### The First Difference in Administration: Emphasis

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2. **CLARITY:** Because gospel truth in the old covenant was wrapped in the outer husk of the earthly and temporal, it was more hidden from view. In the old covenant, God spoke gospel realities to His people, but He did so *indirectly*, through pictures and types; whereas now in the new covenant He speaks to us *directly*, face to face. There is a measure of clarity in the new covenant that old covenant believers didn't get to experience.\(^\text{7}\) Perhaps this is why the author of Hebrews uses the imagery of *shadows* (rather than pictures or types) to describe the ministry of the old covenant (8:5; 10:1); there was an element of murkiness involved.\(^\text{8}\) The new covenant is at times contrasted with the old because, with the coming of Christ, the things that were formerly dark or obscure have now become crystal clear. Calvin likens it to the light of dawn compared to noonday.\(^\text{9}\) And another writer put it this way: "The revelation of faith before and under the Law was so small, imperfect, dim and obscure, in comparison of the clear, full and glorious manifestation of faith afterwards under the New Testament, that till then it seemed as if it were not... revealed at all."\(^\text{10}\) This is what Paul is speaking of when he says in Ephesians 3:5 that the mystery of Christ “…in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit…”\(^\text{11}\) The mystery that Paul is referring to is a certain aspect

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\(^6\) Fisher in *The Marrow*, pp69,71. As we noted, Calvin taught that spiritual blessings in the old covenant were represented by the temporal. He explains it thus: “Now this is the first difference: the Lord of old willed that his people direct and elevate their minds to the heavenly heritage; yet, to nourish them better in this hope, he displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, taste, under earthly benefits.” (*Institutes*, 2.11.1). Calvin also later retorted: “But away with this insane and dangerous opinion—that the Lord promised the Jews, or that they sought for themselves, nothing but a full belly, delights of the flesh, flourishing wealth, outward power, fruitlessness of offspring, and whatever the natural man prizes! Christ the Lord promises to his followers today no other 'Kingdom of Heaven' than that in which they may 'sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' (Matt. 8:11).” (*Institutes*, 2.11.23). Ball says: “The good things promised in this Covenant [IE, the old covenant] are temporal or spiritual; but the temporal as types of spiritual.” (p130). Witsius puts it: “The difference of the economies [between the Old and New Testaments] consists in this, that the same inheritance is held forth different ways: in the New Testament clearly and absolutely, as if Faith was not at all revealed till after the Law, for Faith was revealed before the Law, as is evident in the

\(^7\) Perhaps this is why the author of Hebrews uses the imagery of shadows (rather than pictures or types) to describe the ministry of the old covenant (8:5; 10:1); there was an element of murkiness involved. The ceremonies might be said to shadow out an absent Christ, but to us he is represented as actually present, and thus while the fruit was ripe and broke through the husk... Nothing of the Old Testament is lost in the New, but everything is fulfilled, matured, has reached its full growth, and now, out of the temporary husk, produces the eternal core.” (Bavinck, V3, p224).

\(^8\) As Blake puts it: “In the Old covenant, all was held out to the people under types, figures, shadows; all about the tabernacle and temple, persons, utensils [?], sacrifices, did lead to Christ; all of these, darkly holding him forth. They had a shadow of good things to come, and not the image of the things themselves (Hebrews 10:1); a little of reality in a great bulk of ceremony. In the New Testament, the truth of it is clearly, and manifestly (without figure or type) held forth unto us.” (p207).

\(^9\) Calvin understands Galatians 3:23 to be speaking of a difference in Clarity. Here’s the quote used above in its fuller context: “Faith was not yet revealed, not because the fathers wanted [IE, lacked] light, but because they had less light than we have. The ceremonies might be said to shadow out an absent Christ, but to us he is represented as actually present, and thus while they had the mirror, we have the substance. Whatever might be the amount of darkness under the law, the fathers were not ignorant of the road in which they ought to walk. Though the dawn is not equal to the splendor of noon, yet, as it is sufficient to direct a journey, travelers do not wait till the sun is fully risen. Their portion of light resembled the dawn, which was enough to preserve them from all error, and guide them to everlasting blessedness.” (*Galatians*).

\(^10\) Francis Roberts, p768.

\(^11\) This is also how Calvin explains Galatians 3:23 (above); it’s also how Roberts sees Galatians 3:23: “Though the Apostle says, 'Before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed' (Galatians 3:23); as intimating that Faith was not revealed before, or under, but after the Law; yet his words are not to be taken simply and absolutely, as if Faith was not at all revealed till after the Law, for Faith was revealed before the Law, as is evident in the
of gospel truth—that the Gentiles are also fellow inheritors of the promises to Abraham. And Paul is saying that this aspect of gospel truth, though present in the old covenant, had nevertheless been much less clear. But now it has been revealed to the apostles as clear as day. As Bridge puts it: “though the covenant of grace was made with the Jews that were saved, yet it was given more darkly and obscurely; there was a veil upon Moses. . . But now we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord,’ says the apostle, as speaking of the difference between the one and the other (2 Corinthians 3:18).”

### The Second Difference in Administration: Clarity

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3. **Consummation:** Your children can tell you there’s all the difference in the world between looking at the sign of the ice-cream shop and actually going in and devouring two scoops of mint chocolate-chip. So too, when I was first getting to know my wife, it was a long-distance relationship. And though it was great talking over the phone and looking at her picture, there was a massive difference between that and finally seeing her face to face. Well, that’s what it was like with the ushering in of the new covenant. When Christ came into the world, all the signs and pictures of the old covenant finally became a reality. Jesus had come. The signs gave way to the substance. Christ took on flesh and dwelt among us. In the old covenant the Covenant of Grace was fore-pictured, but in the new it was actually fulfilled. What was promised in the old was finally and actually performed in the new. Scripture often contrasts the old and new covenants in this way.

The author of Hebrews tells us that under the old covenant with Abraham, and with Noah; and under the Law, as I have formerly manifested, and as Paul himself plainly testifies; but they must be understood only comparatively and respectively, that till after the Law faith was not revealed so fully and clearly. (p768). Calvin also explains Luke 16:16 as a difference of Clarity: “Not that the holy patriarchs were without the preaching that contains the hope of salvation and of eternal life, but that they only glimpsed from afar and in shadowy outline what we see today in full daylight.” (Institutes, 2.7.16). And again of Luke 16:16: “What did the Law and the Prophets teach to the men of their own time? They gave a foretaste of that wisdom which was one day to be clearly disclosed, and pointed to it twinkling off. But when Christ could be pointed out with the finger, the Kingdom of God was opened.” (2.11.5; cf. 2.11.10).

As Hodge explains: “That the Gentiles were to partake of the blessings of the Messiah’s reign . . . is not only frequently predicted by the ancient prophets, but Paul himself repeatedly and at length quotes their declarations on this point to prove that what he taught was in accordance with the Old Testament; see Romans 9:25-33. The emphasis must, therefore, be laid on the word as. This doctrine was not formerly revealed as, ie, not so fully or so clearly as under the gospel.” (Ephesians).

Not so Clear, Jesus and the Gospel

Bridge, Christ and the Covenant, p49. This is how Hodge understands 2 Corinthians 3:12-13: “And not as Moses, that is, we do not do what Moses did. Paul had just said that he used great plainness of speech, that he practiced no concealment or reserve. Of course he means that Moses did the reverse. He did use concealment and practice reserve. This is no impeachment of the character of Moses. Paul is not speaking of his personal character, but of the nature of his office. The truth concerning man’s redemption was not ‘in other ages made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,’ Ephesians 3:5. It was not consistent with the nature of the ministry of Moses to use the parraesia, the openness, in communicating the doctrines of redemption, which it is the glory of the Christian ministry to be permitted to employ. He was sent to speak in parables and in types, to set forth truth in the form of significant rites and ceremonies. He put a veil over the glory, not to hide it entirely from view, but to obscure its brightness. The people saw the light, but only occasionally and imperfectly. Paul had already spoken of the brightness of Moses’s face as a symbol of his ministry, and therefore he represents him as veiling himself, to express the idea that he communicated the truth obscurely. Paul was sent to let the truth shine forth clearly; he did not put a veil over it as Moses did, and was commanded to do.” Another passage that draws out this difference in administration is 1 Peter 1:10-12: “As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow . . .” David Murray notes of this passage: “the prophets studied their predictions. Because it was not always immediately or entirely clear to the prophets what their predictions meant, they ‘inquired and searched carefully’ into the salvation they prophesied. . . . Peter then said the prophets knew their predictions would be even better understood by future generations. . . . Though the prophets grew in understanding of the Savior they were looking for, Peter told us they knew their predictions would fully make sense to their readers only when they happened.” Peter was . . . expressing a lack of full understanding.” (Jesus on Every Page, pp21-23).

Ball writes, “The Old [Testament] doth involve the doctrine of the grace of the Messiah under the shadows of types and rites; the New doth contain the fulfilling of the types and figures. Moses is the typical Mediator of the Old Testament; Christ is the true Mediator of the New. The Old is sealed by the blood of sacrifices; the New is ratified by the blood of the Mediator and death of the Testator. The Old by oblations did not pacify the wrath of God, nor purge the conscience; the New contains the true propitiation in the blood of Christ.” (p96); and again: “the first covenant. . . must bring forth a second, in which is fulfilled that which in the first is prefigured.” (p119). Roberts notes: “This unusual way of the Sinai-covenant’s administration, was notwithstanding. . . accommodate to that time and people. . . the Ceremonial Law, wherein as in their A.B.C of Christianity they might learn to spell out C-h-r-i-s-t, and sinners’ salvation by him; till they should come to ripeness of age in the fullness of
covenant, “both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshipper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.” (9:9). And again, he says, “the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.” (10:1). The author’s point isn’t to bash the sacrifices of the Old Testament (after all, it was God himself who commanded them). His point is rather to show us that those sacrifices, in and of themselves, could do nothing—considered apart from Christ whom they signified. The sacrifices were only the shadow—Christ himself is the substance to which all the Old Testament shadows had for so long been pointing. Think of it this way: If you are a man dying of thirst in a scorching desert, the shadow of a gushing river—in and of itself—won’t do you any good. It’s the actual gushing river you need. So too, the Old Testament sacrifices—in and of themselves, considered apart from Christ—could do nothing to take away sins. But they were meant to point us to the One who would. As Calvin put it: “in the absence of the reality, [the old covenant] showed but an image and shadow in place of the substance; the New Testament reveals the very substance of truth as present.”

### The Third Difference in Administration: Consumption

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4. **ABROGATION:** Another way we can understand the contrasts in Scripture between the old and new covenants is through the principle of abrogation. Now, it’s important to understand that when we speak here of abrogation, we’re not saying that the Law as a whole is now abrogated for believers in Christ (we’ll deal with this in more depth later). Rather, we’re speaking of particular aspects of the Mosaic Law. As we saw in the last lesson, the Mosaic Law may be divided up into three sub-categories: the Moral, the Ceremonial, and the Civil (or Judicial) Law. The Moral Law is summarized in the 10 Commandments; it is the eternal expression of God’s will for mankind, and thus perpetually binding for all men. But the Ceremonial and Civil Laws were never meant to be perpetually binding. The Ceremonial Laws had to do with Israel’s worship; the Civil Laws had to do with Israel’s civil State. And these were added as appendixes to the Moral Law. They were given to a particular people (the Jews) for a particular time.
(before the coming of Christ), and thus served a temporary purpose.\textsuperscript{19} In the words of the Confession (19:3): “Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth diverse instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament.” And again (19:9): “To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging under any now, further than the general equity thereof may require.” This is why Jesus declared all foods to be clean in the new covenant. And it’s what Paul was speaking of when he wrote in Colossians 2:16-17, “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”\textsuperscript{20} If you’ve ever watched the launching of a space shuttle, you might have noticed that after a certain time, part of the shuttle disconnects and falls back to the earth. The piece that disconnects is the external fuel tank; it provides the fuel needed to get to space; but after it serves its purpose, it’s no longer needed and disconnects from the shuttle. The Ceremonial and Civil Laws of Israel were like that external fuel tank. They served a temporary purpose, but now that Christ has come, they’re no longer needed. Now that we have the kernel, we can do away with the husk.\textsuperscript{21}

things that related to judicial sentences and proceedings in the court of law. They were thus added as an appendix to the second table of the Law—which dealt with the relationship between man and his neighbor. Roberts notes: “The Ceremonial Laws may all be referred to the first table; the Judicial Laws to the second table of the Moral Law, as explanations thereof to that people of Israel.” (p659). And again: “The Ceremonial and Judicial Laws are nothing else but special appendices to the Moral Law... special ordinances peculiarly concerning the Jewish Church and Commonwealth. The Ceremonial Laws are the exercises of the first table, determining the worship of God prescribed in the first table by external circumstances. The Judicial Laws are the exercises of the second table, determining in like sort righteousness towards men prescribed in the second table by outward circumstances. . . For, the Ceremonial Laws vanished at Christ’s death, having received their accomplishment in him; and the Judicials expired at the dissolution of the Jewish Commonwealth.” (pp662-663). Colethoun writes: “He gave the moral law to them, as the primary rule of the obedience, which he required in this covenant (Deut. 4:13). He gave them also, the ceremonial and judicial laws, as appendages to it. . . The ceremonial institutions, which, in the sacred history, are frequently called Statutes, were, for the most part, reducible to precepts of the first table; and the judicial laws, which, in the same history, are often styled Judgments, were mostly reducible to precepts of the second table.” (p73). Roberts is in agreement, adding that the Moral Law was often called “commandments”, “laws” or “testimonies” (pp661-62).

\textsuperscript{19} This is even reflected in one way Roberts categorizes them: “God’s Law given to Moses and Israel on Mount Sinai, is... most usually divided into three sorts; [namely], Moral, Ceremonial, and Judicial. Or, if we rather affect a dichotomy, into two sorts; [namely], 1) Perpetual, of obligatory force and power forever, as the Moral Law, contained in Ten Commandments. 2) Temporary, of obligatory power and force only for a certain time, and then determinable; and this concerning, a) the worship and service of God, as the Ceremonial Law; b) the Civil State and Polity of the Jews, as the Judicial Law. Both of which were to determine and expire after the death of Christ; Christ being the substance or body of those shadows, the accomplishment of those ceremonies; and the Commonwealth of the Jews not long after Christ’s death being utterly dissolved.” (Roberts, p661).

\textsuperscript{20} Together with the principle noted earlier of Emphasis, the principle of Abrogation is also part of what Paul was speaking of in Galatians 4:1-11. The Old Testament Church was under the guardians and managers of the ceremonial laws (vv2-3), but now that Christ, the substance, has come (v4), there’s no need to continue to observe the Old Testament shadows whose sole purpose was to point to Him (vv9-10). This passage in Galatians 4 is one of the main proof texts for the portion of WCF 20:1 which reads that, “But, under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected. . .” Citing Galatians 4:1-4, Ball likewise writes: “The Jews were children and heirs, but tutored and kept under with many ceremonial ordinances and observations as appendices to the Law, expedient for that time and state.” (p141). Galatians 3:25 also in part refers to the “tutelage” of the ceremonial laws that have now been abrogated. We’ll talk more about this in the next section (Freedom), but here we could briefly note that 3:25 looks back to both v22 and v23: we are free both from the Law’s condemnation (v22) as well as the Law’s ceremonies (v23).

\textsuperscript{21} I love how Burgess puts it: “The Law, in that Mosaic administration, was to endure but till Christ the fullness came; and then, as the scaffolds are pulled down when the house is built, so were all those external ordinances to be abolished, when Christ himself came. A candle is superfluous when the sun appears. A school-master is not necessary to those that have Christ himself. And when the fruit comes, the flower falls to the ground. . .” (Burgess, p230). Calvin explains it this way: “For because the Old bore the image of things absent, it had to die and vanish with time. The gospel, because it reveals the very substance, stands fast forever” (Institutes 2:11:8). Burgess says: “The second excellency [of the ministry of the gospel above that of the Law] is in regard of continuance and duration. The ministry of Moses was to be made void and abolished; which is to be understood of that Jewish pedagogy, not of every part of it; for the Moral, as given by Moses, does still oblige us Christians, as has been already proven; but the ministry of the gospel is to abide always. . .” (p268). Fisher writes, “the old covenant, in respect of the outward form and manner of sealing, was temporary and changeable; and therefore the types ceased, and only the substance remains firm. . .” (p71). But Calvin also reminds us: “The ceremonies. . . have been abrogated not in effect but only in use. Christ by his coming has terminated them, but has not deprived them of anything of their sanctity; rather, he has approved and honored it. . . Let it be regarded as a fact that, although the rites of the law have ceased to be observed, by their termination one may better recognize how useful they were before the coming of Christ, who in abrogating their use has by his death sealed their force and effect.” (Institutes, 2.7.16).
5. FREEDOM: Because the Ceremonial Laws have been abrogated and the Judicial Laws have expired, New Testament believers now in turn have a greater measure of freedom. It's this distinction that Paul seems to be referring to in Galatians 3:23, where he says, “But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.” Most traditional commentators understand the phrase, before faith came, as referring not to the message of faith (IE, before the way of salvation was revealed), nor to the reception of faith (IE, before we put our trust in Christ), but rather to Christ, the object of faith (IE, before Jesus took on flesh and inaugurated the new covenant).\(^\text{22}\) And Paul is saying, before Christ came into the world, God's Old Testament people “were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.” Well, it sure doesn't sound very good, and it's a definite contrast, but this verse is not here putting the old covenant against the new. In the context of the passage, Paul has been describing how the Moral Law condemns us all for our sin (v22). We are guilty sinners, and the Moral Law is hunting us down to execute judgment against us. It's in this light that Paul begins to talk about the Ceremonial Law. For the Old Testament people of God, being under the Ceremonial Law was like being “in custody”—it was burdensome, to be sure—but it was a gracious custody. How so? As Calvin beautifully puts it: “They were besieged on every hand by the curse, but this siege was counteracted by an imprisonment which protected them from the curse; so that the imprisonment by the law is here proved to have been highly generous in its character.”\(^\text{23}\) Think about all those families in Germany during the reign of Hitler who risked their lives to hide Jewish people in their homes. Now, for those Jewish people hiding behind bookcases and in secret rooms, life for them was very much like an imprisonment. They were restricted and confined; it was unpleasant and burdensome—but it was this very imprisonment that actually served to protect them. Well, the Ceremonial Laws were just like this for God's people. They were burdensome, and yet also merciful, because it was those very laws that taught them of Christ, so that those pictures and sacrifices were the very means by which they were saved. After all, as one pointed out, “by the Law they were, not shut up from the faith, but shut up unto the faith, that after should be revealed.”\(^\text{24}\) The Ceremonies served to

\(^{22}\) Not the message of faith, because that message was revealed far before the Law was declared, beginning with the promise of Genesis 3:15; not the reception of faith, because the verse isn't speaking of us coming to faith, but rather of faith coming to us. As Calvin says: "Faith was not yet revealed, not because the fathers wanted light, but because they had less light than we have. The ceremonies might be said to shadow out an absent Christ, but to us he is represented as actually present, and thus while they had the mirror, we have the substance." (Galatians). Perkins says of Galatians 3:23: “Paul in the 19th verse had said, that the law was for transgressions, till the seed come, to which the promise was made. And here [in Galatians 3:23] he makes a more large declaration of his own meaning. . .Faith [signifies] the gospel, or, the doctrine of remission of sins and life everlasting by Christ, exhibited in the flesh.” (p198). In other words, the “faith” that “came” in 3:23 refers back to the “seed” yet to “come” in 3:19. John Gill says: “But before faith came. . .This is to be understood, not of the grace of faith, which was under the former dispensation, as now; the Old Testament saints had the same Spirit of faith, and the same grace of faith, as for its nature, object, and use, as New Testament saints have; Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham [etc] believed in Christ, and were justified by faith in his righteousness, as we are. . .it is best to interpret it of Christ, the object of faith, who was to come, and is come in the flesh, to fulfill the law; and, by so doing, has put an end to it; and to redeem his people from under it, and to save them with an everlasting salvation. . .” Luther says of Galatians 3:23, “We know that Paul has reference to the time of Christ's coming. It was then that faith and the object of faith were fully revealed. But we may apply the historical fact to our inner life. When Christ came He abolished the Law and brought liberty and life to light. This He continues to do. . .”

\(^{23}\) From Calvin, Galatians, on his note for 3:23. How does the entire passage of 3:19-25 fit together? I take the “Therefore” of v24 as referring back not only to verse 23, but also to the whole passage of vv19-23. So how did the Law thus become our tutor (IE, the tutor of God of people and with us as secondarily application)? In two ways primarily: 1) It condemned us for our sin (what Paul said in vv19-22); and 2) it bound us to the ceremonies (what we just saw from v23). Put simply, the condemnation of the Moral Law as outlined in v22 (IE, the Law strictly taken—Do this and live, do it not and die) served to drive them to the Ceremonial Law as outlined in v23 (IE, the Law largely taken—including the promises and pictures of the gospel), which was their gospel as it fore-pictured Christ. As we quoted Edward Fisher saying earlier: "the moral law did teach and show them what they should do, and so what they did not; and this made them go to the ceremonial law; and by that they were taught that Christ had done it for them; the which they believing, were made righteous by faith in him." Then for v25: it is in these two ways that we are no longer under the authority of the Moral Law as believers. But we are no longer under the Law 1) as it condemns us for our sin—cf. v22 (this aspect was also true for OT believers); nor are we under the Law 2) as it binds us to the ceremonies—cf. v23 (this aspect is true only for us as new covenant believers).

\(^{24}\) Here's the full quote from Francis Roberts: “the Law. . .is not against the promises, or Covenant of faith. It is diverse, but
protect God's people until the coming of Christ. But in the new covenant we are set free from the bondage connected with them. Those Jews in hiding must have been grateful beyond words for those secret rooms; but after all, it was just a temporary arrangement. Once the country was liberated, they no longer needed to keep living "in custody." And so it is for us as new covenant believers in Jesus.

### The Fifth Difference in Administration: Freedom

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6. **EFFECT:** You may be familiar with the theologian Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening that became associated, in part, with his ministry. It was at the height of the Great Awakening, in July 1741, that Edwards preached a sermon called, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.* God spoke to the listeners of this particular sermon in such a powerful way that Edwards was interrupted several times by people audibly moaning, and crying out, "What shall I do to be saved?" But not everyone knows that this was actually the second time Edwards preached this sermon. He preached the same sermon to his own congregation earlier, and as far as we know, there wasn't nearly the same effect. Sometimes God is pleased to work more powerfully than at other times. And this is another way that Scripture seems to contrast the old and new covenants. In Jeremiah 31:33, the Lord tells His people about the new covenant He would make with them, contrasting it with the covenant He had made with them at Sinai, saying: "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' This is truly an amazing promise; but it also leaves us wondering: Didn't God do the same thing in the Old Testament? Did God only begin to write His Law in the hearts of His people in the new covenant? Wasn't it David who wrote, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11)?

How then are we to understand the prophecy in Jeremiah? I think in this way: God did write His Law on the hearts of His old covenant people. There were indeed many in the Old Testament, such as David, who embraced God's covenant through faith. God took His Word and applied it effectually to their hearts. But, sadly, there were also countless others who remained unchanged. Moses told his whole congregation in the wilderness: "Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear." (Deuteronomy 29:4). And Isaiah not adverse; subordinate, not contradictory to the New Testament. . . by the Law they were, not shut up from the faith, but shut up unto the faith, that after should be revealed." (pp744-45). It's an important distinction. If Paul had said that the Law shut us up from the faith, it would have been opposed to the new covenant. But the Law actually shut us up unto the faith that was later to be revealed. Galatians 3:23 isn't saying that the Law kept us from Christ, but rather that the (Ceremonial) Law kept us for Christ. The verse is saying that the Ceremonial Laws were actually God's way of protecting His Old Testament people.

Another example here could be Noah's ark. I'm sure it wasn’t a pleasant place to live for an entire year—it would have been restrictive, like being shut up in a prison—and yet it was the very means of Noah and his family being saved and entering into the new heavens and the new earth. So too, after the flood was over, there was no need to continue living in the ark.

Together with Emphasis and Abrogation, we also see this truth in Galatians 4:1-11. Calvin: "The Old held consciences bound by the yoke of bondage; the New by its spirit of liberality emancipates them into freedom. . . Further, we shall deny that [even the patriarchs] were so endowed with the spirit of freedom and assurance as not in some degree to experience the fear and bondage arising from the law. For, however much they enjoyed the privilege that they had received through the grace of the gospel, they were still subject to the same bonds and burdens of the ceremonial observances as the common people. They were compelled to observe those ceremonies punctiliously, symbols of a tutelage resembling bondage (cf. Gal. 4:2-3); and the written bonds (cf. Col. 2:14). . ." (2:11:9). Hodge: "when contrasted with the new or Christian economy, as a different mode of revealing the same covenant, it is spoken of as a state of tutelage and bondage, far different from the freedom and filial spirit of the dispensation under which we now live." (V2, p376). The Westminster Confession says: "under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish Church was subjected" (20:1). Shaw comments on WCF 20:1 saying; "Christians are now freed from the yoke of the ceremonial law. The Jewish Church was kept 'in bondage under the elements of the world' (Gal. 4:3); but that burdensome yoke is not imposed on the Christian Church (Acts 15:10). The ancient ceremonies were abrogated, in point of obligation, by the death of Christ; and though, for a time, the use of them was indifferent, yet, upon the full promulgation of the gospel, and the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, the observance of them became unlawful; and the Apostle Paul exhorted Christians to 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.' (Gal. 5:1)."

See also Psalm 37:31, where David, writing in the old covenant, says of the righteousness that the Law of God is in his heart.

And Deuteronomy 32:5 declares, "They are not His children, because of their defect; but are a perverse and crooked generation." Witsius: "In that one nation of Israel, very few were partakers of saving grace. . . and therefore Moses said to the whole people, with a reference to the generality of them, Deut. 29:4. Jehovah hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes
cried out, “For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant within them will return...” (10:22). So then, though many in the old covenant embraced the message of the gospel, many more remained unchanged. Though there were periods of revival and decline in Israel, it seems on the whole that few embraced Christ. But it would be different in the new covenant. This is the point of Jeremiah’s contrast. God would write His Law on the hearts of His people on a much greater scale. So that if we think of the multitude of those whom God is now effectually drawing to Himself in the new covenant Church, we have to say that those who embraced the covenant in ancient Israel were few by comparison. Just as with Edwards’ sermon, the content was the same in the Old Testament; the old covenant was no less about the gospel (Hebrews 4:2,6). But the effect would be different in the new covenant, because God now applies His Word powerfully to the hearts of His people, by His Spirit, in a much greater proportion. As one writer put it: “as one star differs from another in glory, thus did the Church of the Jews, from that of Christians. They had drops, but we have the fountain.”

Writing on Jeremiah 31:33, Calvin grapples with the question: “Was the grace of regeneration wanting to the Fathers under the Law? But this is quite preposterous. What, then, is meant when God denies here that the Law was written on the heart before the coming of Christ?... this grace of God was rare and little known under the Law; but... under the Gospel the gifts of the Spirit have been more abundantly poured forth, and... God has dealt more bountifully with his Church.” And again: “But it may be asked, whether there was under the Law a sure and certain promise of salvation, whether the fathers had the gift of the Spirit, whether they enjoyed God’s paternal favor through the remission of sins? Yes, it is evident that they worshipped God with a sincere heart and a pure conscience, and that they walked in his commandments, and this could not have been the case except they had been inwardly taught by the Spirit; and it is also evident, that whenever they thought of their sins, they were raised up by the assurance of a gratuitous pardon. And yet the apostle... by referring the prophecy of Jeremiah to the coming of Christ, seems to rob them of these blessings. To this I reply, that he does not expressly deny that God formerly wrote His Law on their hearts and pardoned their sins, but he makes a comparison between the less and the greater. As then the Father has put forth more fully the power of His Spirit under the kingdom of Christ, and has poured forth more abundantly his mercy on mankind, this exuberance renders insignificant the small portion of grace which he had been pleased to bestow on the fathers.” (Hebrews 8:10). He then clarifies: “If it be objected and said, that the faith and obedience of Abraham so excelled, that hardly any such an example can at this day be found in the whole world; my answer is this, that the question here is not about persons, but that reference is made to the economical condition of the Church.” And the Westminster Annotations on Jeremiah 31:33 says: “...that spiritual grace is withall here promised, whereby they should be enabled to become God’s people, not in title and profession alone, but in truth (John 1:17; Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:15-16).”

The full quote is: “The second particular difference is in respect of the measure of grace. Hence the Scripture speaks, as if they had under the Old Testament none at all, merely because there was not such a plentiful effusion of his Spirit upon them; not but that if we consider some particular persons, they might have such degrees of grace, that few under the Gospel can be compared unto them, as Abraham and David; but this was not according to the ordinary dispensation of his graces then. So that as one star differs from another in glory, thus did the Church of the Jews, from that of Christians. They had drops, but we have the fountain: they had glimmerings, but we have the sun itself.” (Institutes, 2.11.8). Roberts: “Under the Old Covenant the Spirit of God was given but so sparingly, so restrictively, to an handful of people the Jews, and in such small measure, and producing so few and small effects; that it is said, not to be given; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. But under the New Covenant the Spirit was shed forth abundantly, in great variety of graces and gifts, both upon Jews and Gentiles, beginning at Pentecost to be poured forth upon the Apostles, and afterwards falling upon private believers.” (p1258). Again: “The Efficacy of former administrations, was very weak and small, in comparison of this New Covenant administration which is great and powerful. Under those the Holy Spirit was but as it were sparingly sprinkled upon them; their knowledge and love of God was dark, feeble childlike; their hearts were very stony hard and inflexible, as God intimated to them in writing His Laws upon stones, etc. But under this, the Holy Spirit is plentifully poured forth as in streams and rivers upon them; and into them; their knowledge and love of God is clear, strong, ripe, man-like: their hearts very fleshy and flexible to God and His will, etc. Hence, the Old Testament ministration is called the ministration of the letter, that condemns and kills, viz, an ineffectual ministration, showing the letter of the duty and death in case of non-performance, but affording no ability for that duty; but the New Testament ministration is called the ministration of the Spirit that quickneth, and is a ministration of righteousness, viz, an effectual and powerful ministration, that affords sufficiency of ability for the duty which it requires. Hence, the Spirit is said not to be given, till Christ was glorified: not as if it had not been given at all; but because it was bestowed so sparingly and slenderly, in comparison to what is now, that it might seem not to be given at all. [Also, the] the Extent of former Covenant administrations, was but to particular families, as of Adam, Noah, Abraham, David; or to some particular tribes, as to the...”
7. COMPARISON: The last difference in administration between the old and new covenants is in many ways a summary of all that has gone before. We've seen that in the new covenant, we have the gospel kernel removed from its outward, earthly husk. The gospel clarity we now enjoy in the new covenant is like high-noon compared with the light of dawn by which the old covenant saints walked. Instead of merely the shadow of gushing water in a desert, we have Christ, the fountain himself. We enjoy a greater captives of Judah and Benjamin, or to a select nation, as to the Jews at Mount Sinai: Alas, how few, what a small handful were all these to the rest of the world! And yet of this small number, how few were there that had any saving inscription of God's Laws upon their hearts at all? And we say, minimum in imago nihil, a small thing in that which is great is as nothing; a drop is as nothing in the sea, a grain of sand is as nothing in the earth; so the writing of God's Laws in the hearts of so few, is as nothing in the world. But the extent of this New Covenant administration is universal, to all nations in the whole world; and consequently God's writing of his Laws in mens hearts is proportionately extended to all Gods people in all those nations: to many thousands and ten thousands more then under all former Covenant expressers. (pp1383-86). Why was the old covenant was less efficacious? Roberts says: "Under the Old Testament, as the foederates knowledge of God was less clear and less perfect, so it was less efficacious. The power and efficacy thereof was proportionable. They rested much in a literal and notional knowledge; few of them had a spiritualized knowledge; consequently the efficacy of their knowledge upon them was either none at all, or very slender. Literals and mere notionals have no efficacy; weak spirituals have but weak efficacy upon the hearts and lives. But under the New Covenant, the foederates knowledge of God, etc, is much more powerful, strong, and efficacious. The Apostle signifies this excellently, saying, 'But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'" (p1408). MORE THOROUGH EXPOSITION OF JEREMIAH 31:31-34: I wanted to add a bit more detail here. Many understand the words "new covenant" in Jeremiah 31:31 as encompassing all of the differences in administration that we've been speaking of between the old and new covenants (IE, emphasis, clarity, consummation, abrogation, freedom), as well as that of efficacy, but while all of these may be mentioned, still it seems Jeremiah is mainly speaking of the difference in efficacy between old and new covenants. He's not contrasting the old and new covenants in general, but especially one aspect of them in particular: in the old covenant, God's people broke his covenant, because, it is inferred, God's Law was written externally on stone but not in their hearts; whereas in the new covenant, God's Law would be written internally in their hearts, and thus they would be covenant keepers rather than covenant breakers. IE, in the old covenant God's people turned away because they didn't have God's Law in their hearts; but in the new they would never turn away because they truly would have His Law in their hearts. For full understanding, we need to clarify a few things from the passage: 1) The essence or substance of the two covenants is exactly the same: Notice that the word "Law" is actually used of the new covenant, not the old. Jeremiah isn't saying that the Law was what was written in the old covenant, but the gospel would be written in the new. Nor does Jeremiah say a new Law would be given, but rather that a new covenant would be made, in which the same Law would be written in a different place. The difference isn't in what was written but rather in where it was written. So it's not that the Mosaic Covenant was about the Law, whereas the new covenant will be about the gospel. The Mosaic Covenant was no less about the gospel. So when we read that Israel broke this covenant, we're not to think that Jeremiah means that Sinai was a legal dispensation and the people broke the Law (as all of us do). After all, if that's what Jeremiah is saying, how do we make any sense of the contrast? If we also in the new covenant break God's Law by not keeping it perfectly, what sense can we make of Jeremiah's contrast, where the new will be so different from the old? No, when Jeremiah speaks of Israel breaking the covenant, he's not talking about breaking the Law, he's actually talking about breaking the covenant itself—which was a Covenant of Grace. In other words, he means they failed to embrace the covenant from the heart, by faith. And this is what would be different in the new covenant: God's new covenant people would embrace the covenant from the heart. 2) The members of the two covenants are spoken of in general: When God says that "they" broke the old covenant (v32), he's not speaking of every single individual, as we've seen, but rather about Israel in general, on the whole. Again, there were indeed many who embraced God's covenant from the heart under the old covenant, but taken on the whole, the people turned away. Well, the same principle applies to the objects of the new covenant. When God says that in the new covenant He will put His Law within "them", He's not talking about every single individual, but of the people on the whole. If it is objected that verse 34 tells us that God is indeed speaking of every individual, in that it says "they will all know Me", we would simply refer back to verses 29-30, which clarify that not every single individual is meant, but again the population on the whole, for even in the new covenant there will be some who yet eat the sour grapes and die for their own iniquity. This is confirmed by that expression in verse 34, "from the least of them to the greatest of them", for Jeremiah uses the same phrase twice before this passage (6:13; 8:10) in speaking of how Israel in his day had turned away from the Lord; but surely no one takes him to be speaking of every single individual; the prophet is rather characterizing the vast majority of the people. Jeremiah is not saying there were no individuals who knew God in the old covenant, nor is he saying that every individual would know God in the new covenant, but rather that on the whole, God's people turned away from Him in the old, but that they would know and walk with Him in the new. 3) The reason for this contrast between old and new covenants is that God would cause His Word to take effect upon His people in a much greater proportion in the new covenant, as we've shown above. This isn't to say that there were periods in the old covenant when the Spirit was so powerfully at work that it seemed as if that time belonged to the new covenant; or in turn, that there will be periods in the new covenant when the workings of the Spirit seem so small and insignificant that it will resemble more the
measure of gospel freedom, having been released from the burdens of the Ceremonial Laws. And now in the new covenant, God writes His Law on the hearts of His people in a much greater proportion than ever before. In light of these things, though the old covenant was full of gospel glory, it’s almost as if it had no glory at all when we compare it to the new covenant. Well, this was exactly what Paul was saying in 2 Corinthians 3:7-11: “But if the ministry of death, . . . came with glory, . . . how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?” For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.” A little later we’ll deal with this passage in much more detail. But for now, just notice that Paul is affirming that the ministry of Moses had glory; he’s just saying that the glory of the new covenant is so much more by comparison. Francis Roberts puts it beautifully: “This New Covenant outshines the Old, as far as the sun out-shines the moon. Yea as the moon derives and borrows all her clear light from the sun. . . so the Old Covenant. . . derived and borrowed as it were all her clearest light from Christ, and the mysteries of the New Covenant. There was a gloriousness in the Old Covenant: but a far greater glory in the New.” The painting of a lavish feast is fine and good, but it can never compare with the banquet itself (especially if you’re hungry). Looking at a picture of my wife is wonderful, but it can never compare to being with her face to face. This is Paul’s whole point in 2 Corinthians 3. It’s also what the author of Hebrews was speaking of when he calls the new covenant “a better covenant” (7:22; 8:6). The new covenant is infinitely better than the old because we now have Christ minus the husk, we have Christ himself instead of the shadows, we have Christ without the burdens of the Ceremonial Laws, and we have Christ applying His Word effectually to our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It is truly an amazing privilege to be a Christian in the new covenant church.

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**SUMMARY:** We’ve been trying to answer the question: If the Mosaic Covenant is really part of the Covenant of Grace, why is it that certain Scriptures seem to speak so negatively about Sinai? And we’ve seen that many of these Scriptures speak this way because they’re comparing and contrasting the ministry of the old covenant with that of the new. The difference isn’t in what the covenant is—but rather in how}

32 Roberts, *Mystery and Marrow*, p1714; cf. pp1410, 1689. Hodge says, “It was of the same kind, though less in degree, as the glory of the gospel. The one dispensation was indeed glorious, but the other was more so.” (2 Corinthians; p78).

33 Roberts likewise understands the new covenant to be “better” in many of the same ways we have been describing: “Now this New Covenant is called a Better Covenant and Testament in opposition to the Old Covenant and Testament. And this, not in essence and substance; but in accidents and circumstances, viz: 1) Because, it is established upon better promises. The promises of the Old Covenant were a) more carnal and earthly, b) more obscure, in Christ to come afterwards; c) more restrained, to one nation of the Jews. . . But the promises of this New Covenant are a) more spiritual and heavenly, b) more clear and conspicuous in Christ come already; c) more extensive and universal, to all nations. 2) Because, it is not an earthly, servile, slavish, terrible dispensation, . . . but a heavenly, free, filial and comfortable dispensation. . . 3) Because, it was dedicated with better sacrifice and blood, than the Old Covenant. Not with the typical sacrifices and blood of slain beasts; but with the true sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ. . . 4) Because, it is administered by a better priesthood, even the perfect, everlasting, unchangeable Melchizedekian priesthood of Jesus Christ himself. . . 5) Because, upon all the grounds why it’s called, A New Covenant, it may also deservedly be counted a better covenant.” (pp1264-65). Later, he adds: “The New Covenants promises are better promises, than those of the Old Covenant, and consequently much more than those of the fore-going covenants, in many regards; as: 1) Better in regard of perspicuity and clearness. . . 2) Better in regard of spirituality. . . 3) Better in regard of divine efficacy and sufficiency. . . 4) Better in regard of extent. . . 5) Better in regard of duration. . .” (pp1674-75). See also Witsius, V2, pp362ff. We could summarize by saying: “The same redemption, sanctification, justification, adoption and glorification, even the same complete salvation by Christ, was revealed in both covenants; though in different manners and degrees. . . The New Testament promises are better than those of the Old; not in kind, but in degree.” (Roberts, p784).
it’s administered. The essence is still the same: The Old Testament is about Jesus and the gospel just as much as the New Testament. But the way it’s presented; the outward form or administration would be much better in the new covenant. So then, this is what we have to understand: In all these Scriptures, the contrast isn’t between the old covenant and the Covenant of Grace; the contrast is rather between the administration of the Covenant of Grace in the old covenant and the administration of the Covenant of Grace in the new covenant. Scripture isn’t telling us that the Mosaic Covenant doesn’t belong to the Covenant of Grace. It’s simply telling us that the Mosaic Covenant doesn’t belong to the new covenant.34

| Summary of the Differences in Administration between the Old and New Covenants: |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **EMPHASIS** | **In the Old Covenant** | **In the New Covenant** |
| The gospel was packaged in a temporal husk | The gospel is set forth without the temporal husk |
| **CLARITY** | The gospel was revealed but indirectly and darkly | The gospel is set forth with full noon-day clarity |
| **CONSUMMATION** | Redemption was promised, pictured, signified | Redemption is performed by Christ the substance |
| **ABROGATION** | The Ceremonial Laws applied to OT church | The Ceremonial Laws abrogated for NT church |
| **FREEDOM** | God's people were held in custody and burdened | God's people are set free from that bondage |
| **EFFECT** | God's Word produced little effect on most hearts | God's Word has a much greater effect on hearts |
| **COMPARISON** | Thus, the old covenant was full of gospel glory | But the glory of the new covenant is much greater |

III. The Second Objection: The Requirement of the Mosaic Covenant

We’ve been showing that the Mosaic Covenant wasn’t a Covenant of Works, a Mixed Covenant, or a Subservient Covenant, but rather that it’s simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace. We mentioned that there are three main objections to this view. The first had to do with the nature of the covenant at Sinai; this is the objection we just finished dealing with. The second objection has to do with the requirement of the covenant at Sinai; what it is that the Law demands. Paul says in Romans 10:5: “For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows…” This same principle is echoed in Galatians 3:10-12, where Paul writes: “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them.’ Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident, for, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith.’ However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, ‘He who practices them shall live by them.’” 35 Paul is telling us in these passages that the Law operates on a completely different system than that of faith. The Covenant of Grace requires faith, but the Law requires perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience. The Covenant of Grace says: “Believe in Christ and you shall live”, but the Law says: “Keep the commands and you shall live.” This creates a problem: If the Covenant of Grace operates on the principle of faith, but the Law is not of faith, how is it that the Mosaic Covenant can be part of the Covenant of Grace? If the Law and faith are two mutually exclusive systems, how can we say that Sinai is an administration of Grace? If what God requires in the Law is something completely different than what He requires in the gospel, how can we say that the Mosaic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace?

34 Roberts draws out this distinction beautifully in the course of his discussion of Jeremiah 31:33. He says, “The Sinai-Covenant, made with Israel when God brought them out of the land of Egypt, is said to be unlike, or not according to the New Covenant; but it is not said either by the prophet or apostle to be unlike to the Covenant of Faith [IE, Grace]. And the dissimilitude or difference here intimated betwixt the Sinai-Covenant and the New Covenant, is not in substance or kind, for in both the Lord says, ‘I will be their God and they shall be My people;’ but only in manner of administration and degree. God promising in His New Covenant a greater, fuller, and clearer measure of grace upon His people, then under the Sinai Covenant, . . They are both Covenants of Faith, but the New Covenant every way more excellent, complete and perfect.” (Roberts, pp769-70). There are other differences in administration that we didn’t explicitly mention here. For example, another difference is that the old covenant was primarily limited to the Jews, whereas the new covenant is meant to spread to every tribe and tongue and nation. Also, the graces of the Spirit are more generally poured out on believers now in the new covenant than in the old. Further, the old covenant was always meant to be temporary, but the new covenant is permanent.

35 In Romans 10:5-6, Galatians 3:10-12, and similar passages, the word “live” is to be taken as living eternally; IE, “be justified.” The word here is used in the same way our Savior uses it in Luke 10:28, where after the lawyer asks what to do in order to inherit eternal life and correctly summarizes the Law as outlined in Deuteronomy 6:5, Jesus tells him: “You have answered correctly; Do this and you will live.” For a more in-depth explanation of how we know “live” is to be taken as “justified” in Galatians 3:10-12 in particular, see the third footnote in Section III.3 below (“Perfect Obedience in the Law”).
1. GENERAL PASSAGES FROM THE LAW: Paul cites two passages here: In Romans 10:5, he cites Leviticus 18:5; and in Galatians 3:11-12, he cites both Deuteronomy 27:26 and Leviticus 18:5. But the Law is full of these kinds of Scriptures: In Exodus 19:5, the Lord tells His people: “Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples. . .” Deuteronomy 4:1 says, “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live. . .” Deuteronomy 5:33 says, “You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you. . .” Deuteronomy 6:25 tells us, “It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us.” Deuteronomy 7:12 says, “Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers.” Again, Deuteronomy 8:1 tells us, “All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land. . .” Moses says in Deuteronomy 11:26-27: “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.” And Deuteronomy 28 tells us: “The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. . .But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you” (vv9,15). We could list many other passages as well, but we can begin with these. What do these Scriptures mean? How are we to understand such passages? Many of them—not all (some, such as Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26, are exceptions). We’ll get to these soon.

2. GOSPEL OBEDIENCE IN THE LAW: The first thing we can say is that many of these kinds of passages have traditionally been understood as being actually evangelical in nature (rather than legal). Obedience is required—but in many of these passages, it may indeed be gospel obedience—rather than legal obedience, that God is commanding. That is, God is requiring of Israel to prove through their obedience to the Lord that they have actually embraced His covenant from the heart by faith. This is especially clear in passages such as Deuteronomy 7:9, “Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” The passage tells us, in effect, that God blesses those who keep His commandments; but Calvin clarifies that “this indicates what kind of servants they are who have undertaken his covenant in good faith rather than expresses the reason why the Lord benefits them.” In other words, this passage isn’t describing the cause of entering into God’s blessing, but rather the characteristics of those who have entered into it. It’s not saying our obedience is the means of salvation—it’s saying our obedience is the mark of salvation. This passage isn’t describing how to gain God’s favor, but rather who it is that has gained it. We can understand many similar passages in the Law in the same way. And not only passages in the Law, but many other passages of Scripture. This is how

36 John Ball rightly notes that live in these passages refers primarily to eternal life: “Eternal life is promised in the Covenant [IE, at Sinai]. . .Not only long life and good days, in the land of Canaan, but eternal life is assured by the promise to them that keep Covenant, as eternal death and destruction is comprehended under the curse denounced against them that break the Covenant. . .eternal life is comprehended under the terms of life and blessing, as eternal death under the terms of death and the curse. Eternal life in heaven, eternal death in hell, the Law notes, though it does not expressly name them.” (p132).

37 Many of them—not all (some, such as Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26, are exceptions). We’ll get to these soon.

38 Institutes, 3.17.6. Calvin goes on to say: “Whenever, therefore, we hear that he does good to those who keep his law, let us remember that the children of God are there designated by the duty that ought in them to be perpetual.” And, “But again, let us keep in mind that the fulfillment of the Lord’s mercy does not depend upon believers’ works but that he fulfills the promise of salvation for those who respond to his call with upright life, because in those who are directed to the good by his Spirit he recognizes the only genuine insignia of his children.” (3.17.6). That Calvin sees this principle as applying to multiple similar passages is clear not only from his sermons on Deuteronomy, but also because he affirms in the same section (3.17.6) that among the promises of the law sprinkled throughout the books of Moses, “in them many evangelical promises also occur. . .” John Gill also understands Deuteronomy 7:9 in this way. He says, “See (Exodus 20:6) which are not the causes or conditions of his covenant and mercy, nor of his keeping them, but descriptive of the persons that enjoy the benefit thereof.”

39 As Ball notes: “In Scripture they are pronounced blessed, who keep the Commandments, and observe the Statutes and Judgments of the Lord; but withal their blessedness is said to consist in this, that God imputes not sin unto them, that their sins be forgiven, and transgressions covered. The true worshippers of God then are happy, not for their works, but because God is pleased to accept them in Christ, and to pardon their offenses. This is the true sense of those promises made to or spoken of them that walk in the perfect way, and do no iniquity. . .life and salvation [are] promised to them that observe and
we can understand the Beatitudes: When Jesus pronounces blessing on the poor in spirit, the gentle, and the pure in heart, He's not telling us how to enter into God's blessing, but who it is that has entered into it; He's not describing the means of obtaining God's favor, but the characteristics of those who have obtained it. This is also how we can understand what Jesus meant when He said in John 5:29 that "those who did the good deeds [will arise] to a resurrection of life"; or when He told the crowds in Luke 11:28, "blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." Why are they blessed? Not because they can earn God's blessing by doing what He says—but rather because in doing what God says they show themselves to be the recipients of God's blessing by faith. This is what David was saying when he wrote in Psalm 103:17-18, "But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to those who keep His covenant and remember His precepts to do them." David isn't saying that our obedience is the basis of our good standing with God, He's saying that it's the proof; he's not limiting the amount of God's grace, but simply qualifying who are the ones that have obtained it.  

This is also how we can understand passages in the New Testament epistles, such as Romans 8:13, where Paul writes: "for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Here too, Paul isn't describing how to enter into life, but who are those that will enter into it; he's not speaking of the means of obtaining eternal life, but rather the marks of all those who will one day inherit it.

keep the Statutes, Judgments and Ordinances of the Lord, not for the dignity of the work, but through the mere grace and mercy of God pardoning transgressions and sins. . ." (p110). And again: "True it is the promises run upon this condition: If you obey My voice and do My Commandments. . . but conditions are of two sorts, antecedent or consequent. Antecedent, when the condition is the cause of the thing promised or given. . . Consequent, when the condition is annexed to the promise as a qualification in the subject. . . And in this latter sense, obedience to the Commandment was a condition of the promise: not as a cause why the thing promised was vouchsafed, but a qualification in the subject capable, or a consequence of such great mercy freely conferred." (Ball, p133). Speaking of Exodus 19:5, Roberts says: "Generally, that since entire constant obedience is not required in this Sinai Covenant in a Legal, but in an Evangelical sense; not as an exact condition of the Covenant of Works, but as an upright condition of the Covenant of Faith. . . And, being a Covenant of Faith, it could not formally require the condition of the Covenant of Works, as such. As the Covenant was Evangelical, so the conditioned obedience was Evangelical also. . . Particularly; sincere, entire and constant obedience was required in this Sinai Covenant.

1) Not as an Antecedent Condition of the Covenant, moving God to enter into Covenant with Israel, or meriting in any sense any such thing from God; but as a Consequent Condition of the Covenant, required by the Covenant from all that accept God's Covenant. 2) Not as performable Legally by a man's own mere natural ability, as it was in the Covenant of Works made with all, in the First Adam; but Evangelically, by supernatural ability from Christ, who gives both to will and to do; which ability also this Covenant promises. . . 3) Not as opposite to true faith and grace; as in the Covenant of Works, doing and works, were opposed to faith and grace, Adam was to have life by working in and from himself, not by believing in a Mediator; but as consequent from, and subservient to grace and faith. True obedience is a consequent fruit or effect of faith, and faith is a fruit of divine grace. 4) Not as a joint cause with faith in justification. . . but as a proper fruit and effect of true justifying faith. . . Faith justifies our persons before God, applying Christ's righteousness to that end; obedience sincere entire and constant justifies our faith before God, ourselves and in men, God requiring true obedience from faith ourselves and others discerning and discovering truth of faith by true obedience." (pp874-75). And of passages such as Deuteronomy 4:1; 5:33; 6:24-25 and 30:16, Blake says: "We may so interpret those Scriptures (and the Jews, as it appears for a great part, did so interpret them) that they hold out a Covenant of Works, when grace was not at all acknowledged to assist in doing, nor Christ known at all to satisfy for failing, and to expiate for transgression. . .[But] They may yet be so interpreted as taking grace in the work for change of the heart, and putting it into a posture for obedience, according to that even in Moses: 'I will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live,' (Deuteronomy 30:6), and in this sense (which they may well bear, and I take to be their native sense) here is no more than what we find in the gospel, from Christ and the Apostles: They that have done good, shall rise unto the resurrection of life' (John 5:28-29); [and], 'To them that by patient continuing in well-doing, seek to obtain the promise of eternal life, both to the resurrection of the dead, and to life everlasting.' (Romans 2:7). He concludes, "A righteousness, which is the condition of the Covenant of Works; out of our inherent strength and abilities, in an exact perfection, is denied; a righteousness, not of us, but through grace wrought in us, in sincerity, which the Covenant of Grace calls for, is asserted and required." (Blake, p218).

John Gill on Psalm 103:17-18: "not that the fear of God is the cause of mercy or grace; but, on the contrary, grace and mercy are the cause of the fear of God; which is a blessing of the covenant of grace, and one of the first things which appear in conversion; but this properly describes the persons who openly and manifestly share in the grace or mercy of God."  

Perkins says of Romans 8:13: "The promises of the gospel are not made to the work, but to the worker; and to the worker not for his work, but for Christ's sake, according to his work. As for example, promise of life is made not to the work of mortification, but to him that mortifies his flesh, and that not for his mortification, but because he is in Christ, and his mortification is the token or evidence thereof," (Galatians, p171). And of Galatians 6:6-7, Perkins says: "the Papists reason thus: works are seeds; but seeds are the proper cause of the fruit; therefore good works are the proper cause of eternal life, and not faith only. . .[But] the Apostle [here] shows only who they are that shall inherit eternal life; and the order how life is attained; but not the cause wherefore it is given. . .We are just by faith, but we are known to be just by our works. . .Now a tree is not known what it is by his sap, but by his fruit; neither are men known to be just by their faith, but by their works. Indeed a tree is therefore good, because his sap is good; but it is known to be good by his fruit. So, a man is just, because of his faith, but he is known to be just by his good works; therefore seeing that the last judgement must proceed according to evidence that
3. PERFECT OBEDIENCE IN THE LAW: But though this principle helps us to interpret many passages in the Law, it still can't explain all of them. Paul makes it very clear in his references to Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26 (in Romans 10:5-6 and Galatians 3:10-12) that, at the very least, these two passages are talking about something very different. In Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12, Paul tells us that Leviticus 18:5 sets forth a righteousness that is based on the Law, wherein the condition for eternal life is nothing short of perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience to God's commands. He who practices them shall live (IE, be justified) by them. This is a righteousness that is obtained by doing rather than believing. And not only does the Law offer us the blessing of God on the condition of perfect obedience, it also curses anyone who would fall short of it, for in Galatians 3:10 Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them.” The Covenant of Grace tells us: Believe in order to live; but here the Law is telling us: Obey in order to live. And again, believing and doing are two mutually exclusive systems.

So, if the Law is not of faith, how can the Mosaic Covenant be part of the Covenant of Grace? Is the Law upon record... all must be judged by their works, which are evident and apparent to the view of all men, and not by their faith, which is not exposed to the sight of any. And hence it is that the Scripture says, we shall be judged according to our works, but it is nowhere said, for our good works... good works are the way, but not the cause [of life]. In the evangelical covenant, the promise is not made to the work, but to the worker; and to the worker, not for the merit of his work, but for the merit of Christ. Here Paul is saying that the outcome of a life of godliness is eternal life. Godliness results in eternal life. A life of godliness isn't the basis or means of our salvation, but it is the narrow road by which we must walk in order to obtain it. It's the same truth Christ spoke of when He said: “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:14). It's the narrow way that leads to eternal life; there's no other way to get there. We aren't saved by our godliness, but in a very real sense, we can't be saved without it. The narrow path is the only path that results in eternal life: “It is not the foundation by which believers stand firm before God that is described but the means whereby our most merciful Father introduces them into his fellowship, and protects and strengthens them therein.” (Calvin, Institutes, 3.17.6). It may be that passages such as Deuteronomy 5:33 and 8:1 are best interpreted in this way. Still yet, other passages seem to describe the MEANS OF LIFE in an evangelical sense; that is, some passages in the Law seem to actually command faith. In Exodus 15:5 the Lord tells His people: “Now, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples...”. In the literal Hebrew, it says “if you will listen to My voice.” A similar passage is Deuteronomy 4:1: “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live...”. Literally, “listen...that you may live.” Here, life is contingent on listening and this listening seems to be gospel listening—the listening of faith.

Compare Isaiah 55:3 (“Listen, that you may live”); Galatians 3:2,6 (“the hearing of faith”); and Hebrews 3:15 and 4:7 (where Israel fails to listen to God's voice, which is associated with the message of good news preached to them; cf. Psalm 95:7). This listening seems to be synonymous with faith in Deuteronomy; indeed, these passages seem to be commanding faith. Colquhoun draws this out from Deuteronomy 5:27, noting: “they do not say, as they did, before the publication of the law at Sinai, ‘All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do;’ but, ‘We will hear and do.’” For speaking in this strain, the Lord commanded them thus: They have well said all that they have spoken... . They said well, in that they made hearing or believing, the principle of acceptable obedience. (pp65-66). Even when obedience is mentioned together with hearing (cf. 7:12), we may regard it as commanding that true faith that produces obedience as its fruit (cf. Matthew 7:21). It may even be the majority of these passages quoted above are commanding perfect obedience. It's not an easy thing to discern. One example of just how difficult it can be to classify certain passages is Calvin, who in his Institutes classifies Deuteronomy 7:12-13 (along with “a thousand other passages of the same type”) as commanding perfect obedience as the cause of life (see 3.17.1), and yet in his sermons on Deuteronomy, speaks of the same passage as rather describing evangelical obedience as the proof of eternal life. Though there were exceptions (see Ball and Blake above), most of the Puritans were hesitant to classify particular passages, preferring to rather cite Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26 as very sure examples.

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### Table: Understanding Gospel Obedience in the Law

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<tr>
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42 It may be the majority of these passages quoted above are commanding perfect obedience. It's not an easy thing to discern.

43 This is the language of the Westminster Larger Catechism, #93.

44 We know that in this passage, “live” is speaking of justification (as opposed to “walk according to,” which would indeed be redundant) because of the context.

45 Bolton lists no less than 6 separate possible interpretations of Leviticus 18:5 (True Bounds, pp104-06). Ball tried to exposit Leviticus 18:5 in the same way as the other places in the Law that require an evangelical obedience. He says: “These words, ‘Do this and live,’ must not be interpreted, as if they did promise life upon a condition of perfect obedience, and for works...
4. A TWO-FOLD UNDERSTANDING OF THE LAW: One of the most valuable things I've learned personally as I've studied through the Mosaic Covenant is how the older writers resolved this question. There is a single overwhelming answer that both the Reformers and Puritans give that resolves what must surely be the biggest difficulty in understanding the covenant at Sinai. What they tell us is that the Law must be considered from two different perspectives: As both largely and strictly considered. Largely considered, or taken on the whole, the Law refers to the entire doctrine delivered at Sinai, including not only the commands and precepts—but also the promises of Christ and gospel mercy, which are sprinkled throughout the books of the Law. And so, in its larger, wholistic sense, the Law in so many different ways sets forth Christ over and over again, and calls upon us to believe in Him as the way to God's blessing. But there are also times when the Law sets forth perfect obedience as the way to God's blessing. This is the Law Strictly considered; the Law as an abstracted rule of righteousness, that sets forth life upon no terms but perfect obedience, and threatens death to all who would come short of it. This is the way we can make sense of all the conflicting passages we read in the New Testament about the Law. How can it be that, on the one hand, Scripture tells us that Israel had the same good news preached to them under Moses that we do today (Hebrews 4:2,6; IE, the gospel); but that on the other hand, Scripture also tells us that Moses' ministry was a "ministry of death" and "condemnation" that actually "kills" (2 Corinthians 3:6-9)? How can we reconcile the fact that one Scripture tells us the ministry of Moses was a gospel ministry, and yet another Scripture tells us that Moses' ministry brought death and condemnation? By understanding that the New Testament writers themselves sometimes spoke of the Law as viewing it in its larger sense; but sometimes they spoke of it as viewing it in its stricter, abstracted sense. In other words, the reason we read two very different things about the Law in the New Testament is that the Law itself commands two very different things: On the one hand, the Law commands faith in Christ as the way to God's blessing (the Law as largely considered). But on the other hand, the Law also commands perfect obedience as the way to God's blessing (the Law as strictly considered). So then, the Law itself sets forth two very different ways to enter into God's blessing. And this is the reason we read such conflicting things done in such exactness as is required; but they must be expounded evangelically, describing the subject capable of life eternal, not the cause why life and salvation is conferred. . .[these] passages are to be understood of sincere and upright walking, and show who are justified, and to whom the promises of life pertain, but not why they are justified" (pp136-37). But Roberts is right to humbly correct him. Quoting Ball here, Roberts says: "But this interpretation (though in itself very pious) comes not home to satisfy and remove the force of the objection; and therefore I cannot acquiesce in it. For, it may be easily replied: That, Do this and live, has something more in it, than those other passages of Scripture alleged by him. They may be interpreted Evangelically, but this phrase in the passages objected can hardly be so interpreted. Partly, because Doing, in those Scriptures is directly opposed to Believing, as to the point of justification and life (Lev. 18:5 with Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12). Here the Apostle purposely compares the righteousness of works and the righteousness of faith together (says Calvin) that he may the better show the repugnancy of them one to another. Partly, because the curse is denounced upon the least failing (Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10). But failings in Evangelical obedience are covered, not cursed..." (p773). We should also note that though Ball seems to deny that the Law sets forth eternal life upon condition of perfect obedience, at least in Leviticus 18:5; still, in other places, he equally affirms that it does just that: "The Law in itself considered exacted perfection of works as the cause of life; but when that was impossible to man by reason of the infirmity of his flesh, it pleased the Lord to make known to his people by the ministry of Moses, that the Law was given, not to detain men in confidence of their own works, but to lead them unto Christ." (pp113-114). Again: "For though the Law of righteousness promise a reward to the keepers thereof; yet after it has shut up all men under sin, it does substitute another righteousness in Christ, which is received by faith" (p114). And again: "the Law...exacts perfect obedience of man in his own person" (p114). Later, Ball clarifies, saying: 'Perfect obedience is commanded, that if a man will trust in his works to be justified thereby, he must either bring that which is every way complete, or be cast in judgment. Sincere obedience, though imperfect is approved, that the imperfection of their best works being covered, and their transgressions graciously pardoned, they might be accepted by faith in Christ, who is the end of the Law, as righteous unto eternal life...The Law requires perfect and exact obedience...and he that trusts in his works, if he continues not in everything that is written in the book of the Law to do them, he is accursed. But to them that be in Covenant, the Law was given with such moderation, that he that continues not in everything that is written in the book of the Law to do them, he is accursed. But to them that be in Covenant, the Law was given with such moderation, that sincere obedience was accepted of them. ..." (pp153). Some today seem to want to deny that the Law truly demands perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience as the condition for life and curses all who come short of it. But this denial not only opposes the Westminster Confession (Chapter 19); it also opposes the clear teaching of Scripture itself. The OPC Report on Republication helps to bring needed clarity as they address one view they see as erroneous: "the view that we have referred to as the 'misinterpretation' theory has sometimes been articulated in such a way as to deny the requirement of perfect obedience in the moral law. In other words, Paul's references to the law's requirement for perfect obedience exist only in the minds of the Judaizers, and are not in some way expressed in the content of the Decalogue itself. This presentation of the misinterpretation theory sees the law's requirement of perfect obedience existing only subjectively in the minds of the Jews, rather than objectively in the law itself. . .Surely these are errors to be avoided. A better way to articulate the misinterpretation position is to recognize that while the law itself always requires perfect obedience, it can also have several functions and uses in this regard. . .this [more correct] articulation of the misinterpretation position distinguishes between the law in itself and the use or function of the law. While it affirms that the Judaizers abused the law in its use, it recognizes that the law itself always requires perfect obedience." (OPC Report, Ch.6, IV).
about the Law in the New Testament. When the New Testament writers refer to the Law, sometimes they're speaking of it on the whole, as including gospel mercies, promises of grace, and atonement for sin through Christ. When they refer to it this way, they are speaking of the Law in its larger sense—as it sets forth faith in Christ as the way to God's blessing. But other times, when the New Testament writers refer to the Law, they're speaking of it as it is also often presented, as an abstracted rule of righteousness, demanding perfect obedience and cursing all who fall short. When they refer to it this way, they are speaking of the Law in its stricter sense—as it sets forth perfect obedience as the way to God's blessing.46

THE LAW LARGELY TAKEN VERSUS STRICTLY TAKEN

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A) A Few Examples: This is exactly the tool we need to help us understand passages like Romans 10:5-6 and Galatians 3:10-12. In Romans 10:5-6, Paul tells us: “For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.” Then in verse 6, he contrasts the righteousness that comes through the Law with the righteousness that comes by faith. But as we noted earlier, when Paul begins speaking of the righteousness that comes by faith, in verse 6, in order to describe it, he actually quotes a passage from the Law: “But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down), or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).’ But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” The passage Paul is quoting here from here is Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Again: Paul is quoting here a passage from the Law in order to describe the righteousness that is by faith. And all this after he had just told us in verse 5 that the righteousness of the Law is something completely different than the righteousness of faith! How can we make any sense out of what Paul is saying here? By understanding that Paul is considering the Law from two different angles: If we take the Law strictly—as abstracted from all the promises of Christ and His redemption—then the Law indeed

46 Roberts notes: "Now here it is diligently to be observed, that the word 'Law', as used for God's Law given to Moses for Israel on Mount Sinai, is taken, 1) More largely; 2) More strictly; and 3) Most strictly: 1) More largely and generally, for the whole dispensation of all sorts of commandments: Moral, Ceremonial, and Judicial; given and promulged on Mount Sinai. . . 2) More strictly, and specially for the Moral Law, or Ten Commandments, taken complexively with the preface prefixed, and the promises interwoven therein, as God spake them on Mount Sinai out of the midst of the fire to Israel, and afterwards wrote them, and gave them to Moses. . . 3) Most strictly, and restrainedly: the word [Law] is taken for The Law abstracted from Moses' administration of it, and precisely considered as an abstracted rule of righteousness, holding forth life merely upon terms of perfect and perpetual personal obedience and denouncing death and the curse upon every one, and that without mercy, in case of the least contrary failing." (pp639-640). And again: “the Law may be considered, more largely, as comprehending the whole doctrine and administration of the Sinai-covenant, as delivered by Moses on Mount Sinai; [but also] more restrictively, as it is an abstracted rule of righteousness consisting in precepts, threats and promises; holding forth life upon a condition absolutely impossible to lapsed men; viz, perfect and perpetual personal obedience to the Law; but denouncing the curse and death upon the least contrary failing.” (Roberts, p773). Burgess writes: “The Law, . . may be considered more largely, as that whole doctrine delivered on Mount Sinai, with the preface and promises adjoined, and all things that may be reduced to it; or more strictly, as it is an abstracted rule of righteousness, holding forth life upon no terms, but perfect obedience. Now take it in the former sense, it was a Covenant of Grace; take it in the latter sense, as abstracted from Moses' administration of it, and so it was not of grace, but works. This distinction will overthrow all the objections against the negative.” (p239). Blake says: “Though the whole Law that Moses delivered from God on Mount Sinai to the people, . . do contain a Covenant of Grace, yet the Law is taken sometime[s] in that strict sense, as containing a Covenant of Works, and holding forth life upon condition of perfect obedience. So the Apostle, [in] Romans 10:5-6 puts an opposition between the righteousness of the Law, and the righteousness of faith; so also Galatians 3:18. If righteousness be by the Law, it is no more of promise, so that there is a necessity of distinguishing between the Law abstracted from the promise, . . and the Law including this promise. . . so that the works of the Law, considered in the bare mandatory part of it, can save none. . . yet the righteousness witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-22). . . brings salvation (Romans 3:21-22). . . So that the Law abstracted from Christ. . . was a ministry of condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:9). . . but including Christ, it was perfect, and saves the soul (Psalm 19:7).” (pp218-219). And Kevan affirms all this when he says: “The Puritans. . . [distinguished] between the Law, in the narrow sense of the Divine requirements of man, and the Law in the wider sense of the whole Mosaic order of things. More strictly and properly the Law signifies the Covenant of works, which is also called the Law of works, Rom. 3:27. . . more largely 'Torah the Law signifies the whole doctrine of the Old Testament'. . . Put briefly, the Law can be considered as it is an 'abstracted rule of righteousness', or as comprehending 'the whole Doctrine and Administration of the Sinai-Covenant.'” (p110; quoting Roberts pp773-74).
commands perfect obedience as the condition of life and condemns and curses all who fall short. This is Paul's meaning in verse 5. But if we take the Law as a whole, including the promises of Christ and His redemption that are scattered throughout the Law, we see that God, in the Law, is requiring faith in the Messiah who is often revealed in the Law in its larger sense. And this is Paul's meaning in verse 6.\(^{47}\)

A similar passage is Romans 3:21-22, where Paul writes: “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe...” Speaking of Christ, Paul tells us here that the righteousness of God for salvation is apart from the Law (v21a) and yet witnessed by the Law (v21b). How to make sense of this? It seems Paul is contradicting himself. Is faith in Christ something separate from the Law (21a), or is it something actually taught in the Law (21b)? Here again, Paul is considering the Law in both its larger sense (including Christ) as well as its stricter sense (as abstracted from Him). The passage makes perfect sense if we read it this way: “But now apart from the Law [strictly taken] the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law [largely taken]. . . even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ...” In other words, the righteousness of faith is apart from the Law strictly taken, but it is also revealed in the Law largely taken. I love how Francis Roberts puts it: “The Law itself testifies, that the righteousness of God is without [IE, apart from] the Law...”\(^{48}\)

\(^{47}\) As Calvin says of Romans 10:5: “But we ought to understand the reason why Paul harmonizes the law with faith, and yet sets the righteousness of one in opposition to that of the other: The law has a twofold meaning: it sometimes includes the whole of what has been taught by Moses, and sometimes that part only which was peculiar to his ministration, which consisted of precepts, rewards, and punishments... But as evangelic [IE, evangelistic] promises are only found scattered in the writings of Moses, and these also somewhat obscure, and as the precepts and rewards, allotted to the observers of the law, frequently occur, it rightly appertained to Moses as his own and peculiar office, to teach what is the real righteousness of works, and then to show what remuneration awaits the observance of it, and what punishment awaits those who come short of it. For this reason Moses is by John compared with Christ, when it is said, ‘That the law was given by Moses, but that grace and truth came by Christ.’ (John 1:17). And whenever the word law is thus strictly taken, Moses is by implication opposed to Christ; and then we must consider what the law contains, as separate from the gospel. Hence what is said here of the righteousness of the law, must be applied, not to the whole office of Moses, but to that part which was in a manner peculiarly committed to him. . . [But in verse 6] He then means not the law only, but generally the whole of God’s truth, which includes in it the gospel.”

\(^{48}\) Roberts’ full quote is: “The Law itself testifies, that the righteousness of God (viz, which God has ordained, revealed, and will accept), is without the Law; that is, by faith without the deeds of the Law.” (p787). In the quote, he refers to the Law as largely taken in the first usage of the word, and strictly taken in the second usage. Again, Roberts says: “In both the former [larger] and latter [strict] sense, the word ‘Law’ seems to be used in that passage, [Romans 3:21-22]: But now apart from the Law [IE, strictly taken] the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law [IE, largely taken] and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe... [Thus] the Law largely taken, holds forth life on condition of believing in Christ, and in this notion it was given in the Sinai-covenant, which therefore is a Covenant of Faith [IE, Grace]; but [the Law strictly taken] requires perfect doing, and in that sense Moses gave it not, nor is it a Covenant of Faith but of works.” (Roberts, pp773-775). Roberts isn’t saying that we’re wrongly imputing the strict sense into our understanding of the Law, but only that in this sense the Law is not of faith but of works. Most commentators understand the second usage of ‘Law’ in Romans 3:21 as referring to the entirety of the first 5 books of Moses, as the phrase “Law and Prophets” often takes on this meaning (cf. Matthew 22:40). But this in no way nullifies the point we’re making here, since even that broader definition of the Law always also includes the dispensation at Sinai (indeed, Sinai makes up the majority of the Pentateuch). Thus Calvin comments on Romans 3:21: “This righteousness then, which God communicates to man, and accepts alone, and owns as righteousness, has been revealed, he says, without the law, that is without the aid of the law; and the law is to be understood as meaning works; for it is not proper to refer this to its teaching, which he immediately adds as bearing witness to the gratuitous righteousness of faith. . . Being proved (or approved) by the testimony, etc. He adds this, lest in the conferring of free righteousness the gospel should seem to mitigate against the law. As then [IE, v21a] he has denied that the righteousness of faith needs the aid of the law, so now [IE, v21b] he asserts that it is confirmed by its testimony... you will find in the commandments a demonstration of your iniquity, and from the sacrifices and oblations you may learn that satisfaction and cleansing are to be obtained in Christ alone.” In his Institutes, Calvin also notes: “Paul...justly makes contraries of the righteousness of the law and of that of the gospel (Rom. 3:21f; Gal.3:10f; etc). But the gospel did not so supplant the entire law as to bring forward a different way of salvation. Rather, it confirmed and satisfied whatever the law had promised, and gave substance to the shadows... Hence Paul, calling the gospel ‘the power of God unto salvation for every believer’ (Rom.1:16p), presently adds: ‘The Law and the Prophets bear witness to it’ (Rom.3:21). . . From this we infer that, where the whole law is concerned, the gospel differs from it only in clarity of manifestation.” (Institutes, 2.9.4). Haldane likewise says of Romans 3:21: “Being witnessed by the law...[the righteousness of faith] was intimated in the writings of Moses, in every declaration of the forgiveness of sin, and every call to repentance. All the declarations of mercy that are to be found in the law of Moses belong to the Gospel. They are all founded on the Messiah and His righteousness, and are made in consequence of God’s purpose to send His Son in the fulness of time into the world, and of the first promise respecting the seed of the woman.” (Romans). Murray notes of this passage: “We have here an instructive example of the ease with which the apostle can turn from one denotation of the word ‘law’ to another. The righteousness that is unreservedly without law in one sense of the word ‘law’ is, nevertheless, witnessed to and therefore proclaimed by the law in another sense of that term. Law in one sense pronounces the opposite of justification, the law in another sense preaches justification.” (Romans, p110).
In Romans 3:21-22 and 10:5-6, Paul is considering the Law from both perspectives: in its strict sense—as abstracted from Christ and the promises, as well as in its larger sense—including Christ and the promises. In other passages, though, Paul refers only to the Law as considered in its strict sense. This is what he is describing in Galatians 3:10-12, where he tells us that “the Law is not of faith” (v12). We know that Paul can’t mean this in an absolute or unqualified sense, because of what he had told us elsewhere in passages like Romans 3:21-22 and 10:5-6, where, once again, he had proven the righteousness of faith from the Law. Rather, Paul is speaking here of the Law in a particular sense—in its strict sense—as abstracted from the promises of Christ and the gospel, which were also revealed in the Law. And it’s in this strict sense, where the Law commands perfect obedience and curses all who would fall short, that Paul is telling us the Law is not of faith. We might put it this way: The way of the gospel is in the Law but it’s not of the Law. It’s in the Law (largely taken), but not of the Law (strictly taken). This is also what Paul is referring to in 2 Corinthians 3:6-9, where he describes the Law as a ministry of death and condemnation that kills its hearers. Here also, Paul isn’t speaking of the Law in a way that is absolute or unqualified, but rather in a particular sense: he’s talking about the Law as it’s considered strictly taken, removed and abstracted from Christ and the promises of grace that are revealed in the Law in its larger sense. And indeed, in and of itself and removed from Christ, the Law is very rightly described as a ministry of death, since all it can do is justly condemn us for our many sins. So then, though Paul at times considers the Law from both perspectives, at other times he only speaks of the Law in its strict sense. Consider the following chart:

90 Speaking of Galatians, Calvin asserts: “[Paul] was disputing with perverse teachers who pretended that we merit righteousness by the works of the law. Consequently, to refute their error it was sometimes compelled to take the bare law in a narrow sense, even though it was otherwise graced with the covenant of free adoption.” (Institutes, 2:7:2). Turretin unpacks Calvin, saying: “The law is said ‘to be not of faith’ (Galatians 3:12), not as taken broadly and denoting the Mosaic economy, but strictly as taken for the moral law abstractly and apart from the promises of grace. . .” (p267). And Francis Roberts likewise notes: “Most strictly, and restrainedly; the word [Law] is taken for the Law abstracted from Moses' administration of it, and precisely considered as an abstracted rule of righteousness. And in this sense the Apostle takes the word [Law] in his dispute about justification by faith, and not by the works of the Law; opposing Law, to Gospel and to Grace; works, to faith; and justification by works, to justification by faith. . .But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the Law is not of faith: but, the man that doth them, shall live in them.” . .In these, and like passages, the word Law is considered in this most restrictive sense, as abstracted and separated from all other additions in Moses' administration of it. And in this strictest sense, the Law is materially and for substance the same with the Covenant of Works written in Adam's heart in innocency. . .” (p660). Again Roberts says: “That, whereas Paul elsewhere says, 'The Law is not of faith', that is, sets not forth the righteousness of faith, Galatians 3:12, to this I answer. . .that this cannot be meant of the Law, absolutely taken (for then, you see, Paul should contradict himself, who proves the righteousness of faith from the Law, as revealed [in Romans 10:6ff]); but it must needs be intended of the Law in some limited and restrictive sense. . .this cannot be meant of the Law, more generally and complexively taken. . .but it may be intended of the Law, more strictly and abstractively taken, for the more preceptive part of the Law, as declarative of, and in substance one with the Law of nature in Adam's heart, and as abstracted from Moses administration. . .” (pp767-68). And again: "the Law may be considered, more largely, as comprehending the whole doctrine and administration of the Sinai-covenant, as delivered by Moses on Mount Sinai; but also more restrictively, as it is an abstracted rule of righteousness. . .In the latter sense Paul understands the Law in Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12 and in this sense, the righteousness of the Law stands in perfect doing: 'the man that does them shall live in them'. . .But this acceptance of the Law abstracts the Law from Moses' dispensation of it, from faith, and from Christ the soul of the Law; and so leaves the Law as a mere ministry of death and condemnation. . .To this effect says one, 'The Law in itself considered, exacted perfection of works as the cause of life; but when that was impossible to man by reason of the infirmity of his flesh, it pleased the Lord to make known to his people by the ministry of Moses, that the Law was given, not to detain men in confidence of their own works but to lead them unto Christ'”. . .(Roberts, pp773-74).

90 John Ball says: “The words of Paul [that the Law is a killing letter and ministration of death and condemnation] . . .are not to be understood absolutely of the Law, but as it was separated from Christ and the gospel. . .the Law animated by Christ is pleasant and delightful, but as it is barely considered in opposition to Christ and to the gospel, as it exacts perfect obedience, but gives no ability or power to perform what is required, it wounds, terrifies, kills and works wrath. Of the Law there is a twofold use and consideration. One as it is a rigid exactor of entire obedience, and hand-writing against us for sin, and thus of itself barely considered, it wounds, but heals not, it revives sin, but mortifies it not. The other, as it points to Christ in whom salvation is to be found, and directs how to walk in all well-pleasing before the Lord; and thus it is an easy yoke. The Law considered without Christ wounds, kills, and revives sin by reason of our corruptions; but the Law considered in Christ, and as it points unto him, kills corruption, and converts the soul.” (pp120-121). Vos notes: “The covenant with Israel served in an emphatic manner to recall the strict demands of the covenant of works. . .It is for this reason that in [2 Corinthians 3:7 and 9], Paul calls the ministry of Moses a ministry of condemnation. This simply shows how the demand of the law comes more to the fore in this dispensation of the covenant of grace.” (Reformed Dogmatics, V2, p130). Bavinck adds: “The law of Moses, accordingly, is not antithetical to grace but subservient to it and was also thus understood and praised in every age by Israel's pious men and women. But detached from the covenant of grace, it indeed became a letter that kills, a ministry of condemnation. . .that it might arouse the consciousness of sin, increase the felt need for salvation, and reinforce the expectation of an even richer revelation of God's grace. . .The impossibility of keeping the Sinaiic covenant and of meeting the demands of the law made another and better dispensation of the covenant of grace necessary.” (Volume 3, p222).
THE LAW LARGELY AND STRICTLY TAKEN: A SUMMARY

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B) A Few Clarifications: Towards the beginning of our lesson, we outlined the four major views of the Mosaic Covenant. There we refuted two views that claimed the Covenant of Works was republished at Sinai (the Republication View and the Mixed View). We concluded that the Mosaic Covenant was not a republication of the Covenant of Works in any way, but was rather simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace, and we gave several reasons for why we take it to be so. Well, we're now at the point where we're able to come full circle and clarify our final point about the Mosaic Covenant. And here's what it is: Though it's true that the Law largely taken belongs to the Covenant of Grace, it's also true that the Law strictly taken is actually the content of the Covenant of Works. Let me explain: The Law largely taken belongs to the Covenant of Grace, because it reveals Christ and the gospel and calls us to put our faith in Him. This is why the Mosaic Covenant is a manifestation of the Covenant of Grace, because the essence of the Mosaic Covenant is the Law as it is given largely, the Law taken on the whole— including the promises of Christ and redemption in Him. But though the Law largely taken belongs to the Covenant of Grace, the Law strictly taken actually contains the content of the Covenant of Works: Perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life is the arrangement that God originally entered into with Adam in the garden. Now, at first, this may sound like another form of the Mixed View; it sounds like we're saying that ultimately the Mosaic Covenant was a mix of the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Works. But this is quite distinct, because though the Mixed View tells us that Sinai contained both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, they think of it in a way that is much different. The proponents of the Mixed View assert that at Sinai the Covenant of Works itself was again republished; we're saying that at Sinai the content of the Covenant of Works was simply repeated. They say that at Sinai the Covenant of Works itself was again reinstated; we're merely saying that at Sinai the terms of the Covenant of Works were again reiterated. The Mixed View holds that God was actually renewing the Covenant of Works with Israel at Sinai; we're just saying He was reminding them of its demands.

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51 This is the position of the great majority of the Puritans who subscribed to the Westminster view. Of Galatians 3:10-12, Roberts says: “In these, and like passages, the word Law is considered in this most restrictive sense, as abstracted and separated from all other additions in Moses’ administration of it. And in this strictest sense, the Law is materially and for substance the same with the Covenant of Works written in Adam’s heart in innocency...” (p660). And Turretin writes that the “doctrine of grace delivered to the ancients, promising salvation and life...under the condition of repentance and faith in the Messiah about to come...Strictly, however, it denotes the Covenant of Works or the moral law given by Moses—the unbearable burden of legal ceremonies being added, absolutely and apart from the promise of grace.” (p233-234). And again: “The covenant with Israel served in an emphatic manner to recall the strict demands of the covenant of works. To that end, the law of the Ten Commandments was presented so emphatically and engraved deeply in stone. This law, truly contained the content of the covenant of works. But—and one should certainly note this—it contains this content as made serviceable for a particular period of the covenant of grace. It therefore says, for example, ‘I am the Lord your God’. But also, beyond the Decalogue, there is reference to the law as a demand of the covenant of works (e.g., Lev 18:5; Deut 27:26; 2 Cor 3:7,9). It is for this reason that in the last cited passage, Paul calls the ministry of Moses a ministry of condemnation. This simply shows how the demand of the law comes more to the fore in this dispensation of the covenant of grace.” (Vos, V2, p130). And Hodge: “[The Mosaic Covenant] contained, as does also the New Testament, a renewed proclamation of the original covenant of works.” (Systematics, V2).

52 The Puritans were always very careful in how they used their language here. The overwhelming majority of them (who held to the Westminster view) never affirmed that the Covenant of Works itself was actually republished or renewed at Sinai along with the Covenant of Grace, but clarified that the content of the Covenant of Works was rather there repeated or reiterated. They are clear in the way they articulate their view that it wasn’t that the Covenant of Works was made again at Sinai—but rather that there its terms were again declared afresh (see my Abstracts for more). John Colquhoun summarizes them when he writes: “the covenant made with the Israelites at Sinai could not be the Covenant of Works. God could not consistently... renew or make again that covenant with persons who, by breaking it in the first Adam, had already subjected...
Still, the question remains: If all this is true, how can it be that the Mosaic Covenant actually belongs to the Covenant of Grace? Jesus tells us that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and it's hard to imagine anything more at opposition than the way of works and the way of faith. If it's true that the Law strictly taken is really the content of the Covenant of Works, how can we say that the Mosaic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace? How can anything that includes the content of the Covenant of Works actually be thought of as belonging to the Covenant of Grace? How can the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Works co-exist together at Sinai? The Puritans answered this question by making a distinction between what they called ingrediency and subserviency; or again, between coordination and subordination. What they meant was that, at Sinai, the Covenant of Works was not mixed or blended together with the Covenant of Grace (ingrediency), whereby these two very different covenants took on the form of one and the same covenant (coordination). It wasn't as if the Covenant of Grace, which requires faith alone, was mixed together with the content of the Covenant of Works, which requires perfect obedience, in such a way that they lost all distinction; so that as a result, Sinai now required both conditions: faith and obedience as the requirements for eternal life. Though the content of the Covenant of Works was declared at Sinai, it was never blended together with the Covenant of Grace, but remained distinct. It was added, not by way of ingrediency but rather subserviency; not by way of coordination but subordination. In other words, when God added the content of the Covenant of Works to Sinai, it wasn't like adding chocolate syrup to a glass of milk and stirring it up; it was like adding oil to water: though the content of the Covenant of Works was added to the Covenant of Grace, it remained distinct.

Think of a bag of beef jerky. What's inside? Well, if you've eaten a lot of beef jerky in your life, you know that there are actually two things inside that bag. There are dozens of slices of original, teriyaki, or peppered flavored beef, smoked to perfection. But there is also something else in that bag. Among the slabs of delicious dried meat there is also a strange looking white packet of something called silica gel. You want to keep an eye out for these small white packets in your jerky bag; they always have written on them: “Do not eat” or “Do not consume” because they're not edible, and eating them can be hazardous. So why in the world do they put them in? Well, they put these packets in along with the meat in order to better preserve the taste of the jerky. In and of itself it is inedible and can even be dangerous—but it was never meant to be consumed. Its purpose is to better draw out the taste of the jerky you are meant to eat. Or think of the bay leaves you add to the delicious curry you're cooking on your stove. Now, the bay leaf is not the same thing as the curry of which it is a part. It's part of the curry but it's included in order to serve the curry as a whole. And when you add the bay leaf to the curry it doesn't dissolve into the curry—it retains its distinctive form as you cook it. So that even though the bay leaf is part of the curry, you can still distinguish it from the rest of the curry. Further, just as with the white packets in the beef jerky, you shouldn't try to eat the bay leaves: though part of the curry, they're not edible and can hurt you. So why do you put them in? Because they contribute to the overall taste and enjoyment of the curry as a whole.

themselves to the penalty of it. He could, indeed, display it in its terror before condemned sinners, but could not again make it with them. . .The violated Covenant of Works. . .was not, and could not be, made or renewed with the Israelites at Sinai; for it was a broken covenant. . .But though it was not renewed with them, yet it was, on that solemn occasion, repeated and displayed to them. It was not proposed to them in order that they might consent, by their own works, to fulfill the condition of it; but it was displayed before them in subservience to the Covenant of Grace that they might see how impossible it was for them as condemned sinners to perform that perfect obedience which is the immutable condition of life in it. Although the Lord knew well that they were far from being able to yield perfect obedience, yet He saw proper to set forth eternal life to them upon these terms (Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 27:26). . .in order that the people might, by contemplating it, see what kind and degree of righteousness it required as the condition of eternal life; and that by means of it, finding themselves utterly destitute of perfect righteousness, they might be impelled to take hold of the Covenant of Grace in which the perfect righteousness of the second Adam is provided and exhibited for the justification of all who believe.” (Colquhoun, pp58,63-64).

53 William Strong uses the language we mentioned above. He says, “God's intention was not to join the Law and the promise together in the matter of justification and life; because they be quite cross and contrary one to another. . .[and] do directly destroy each other; [for] if the inheritance be by the Law, it is no more of promise; and therefore no man can be justified by both. Yet God having revealed the Law after the promise, and seeing he will have them both to be perpetual and lasting, they must stand together, and a way must be found out how they may, and not cross one another, nor destroy or disannul each other; for the Law is not against the promise of God, God forbid we should think so; then if they cannot stand together in a way of ingrediency, they may very well in a way of subserviency; if not coordination, they may in subordination; both tending to honor the mercy and grace of God in his Son; the one primarily, and the other secondarily, as an appendix or an addition thereunto. . .Seeing therefore these two must stand together, and the former cannot be disannuled by the latter; hence then it must needs be inferred, that God's intention was in publishing the Law, to do it in subordination unto the gospel, and the second covenant, and that so it is to stand and to be made use of by the Saints.” (Strong, Two Covenants, p87).
This is exactly how the Law strictly taken functioned in the context of the Mosaic Covenant as it was given as a whole. It's how the content of the Covenant of Works was declared at Sinai on the one hand, and yet how the Mosaic Covenant as a whole belonged to the Covenant of Grace. The Mosaic Covenant as a whole was like that bag of beef jerky or the curry on the stove. The content of the Covenant of Works was indeed included in the Mosaic Covenant—but just like the little white packets in the bag of beef jerky or the bay leaves in the curry—it was never meant to be consumed but rather was added to Sinai by way of subserviency and subordination—to serve the larger purposes of the Mosaic Covenant as a whole. In other words, at Sinai, the content of the Covenant of Works was added to the Covenant of Grace in a way that submitted to the Covenant of Grace in order to serve the purposes of the Covenant of Grace. 54

What did this look like in particular? How was it that the content of the Covenant of Works served to advance the purposes of the Covenant of Grace at Sinai? Simply put: the Law strictly considered was added in order to drive God's people to Christ as He was revealed in the Law largely considered. At Sinai, the demand of the Covenant of Works was repeated afresh in order to cause God's people to seek refuge alone in the Covenant of Grace. The command, “Do this and live,” was given to Israel so that, considering the absolute perfection demanded in the Law, they would rather flee to Christ, the only hope for sinners, and in Him might, “Believe and live.” 55 Now, this is where so many of the Jews went wrong.

54 As Turretin says: “The specific difference of a covenant cannot make a diversity of condition, expressed by the law and gospel—of the former imperfect obedience; of the latter in faith. It was not required in the same way, nor for the same end. For faith in Christ is demanded primarily and intended chiefly, but perfect obedience (under punishment of death and the curse) only subordinately and relatively to faith and the righteousness of faith. By convincing man of his sin and weakness, it forced him to seek a remedy in Christ by faith (as we have already said).” (p268). And again: “It is one thing to speak of the law in itself (which had the form of a Covenant of Works and was enacted not with the end of making alive, but to convict of transgression, extort the confession of debt and lead to Christ); another concerning the Sinaic covenant itself, in which the law was enacted. In the former sense, the law is called a handwriting against us and the minister of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9; Col. 2:14); but in the latter sense, that covenant had the lively oracles (Acts 7:38) and contained the saving promises of the grace of Christ.” (Turretin, p269). And Bavinck says, “Concerning the law as law, apart from the promises, to which in the Old Testament the law was made subservient, Paul asserts that it cannot justify, that it increases sin, that it is a ministry of condemnation [2 Cor. 3:9], and precisely in that way prepares the fulfillment of the promise and necessitates another righteousness, that is, the righteousness of God in Christ by faith.” (IV:452-53). Bridge puts it beautifully: “It is plain and clear that the Jews that were saved in the time of the Old Testament, were saved by the same covenant that we now are saved by, yet notwithstanding the covenant of works was declared and promulgated among the Jews; Wherefore then was the law added?” says the apostle. Added then it was. As Sarah and Hagar, made types of the two testaments by the apostle, were at once in Abraham's house; so the old covenant of works, and the new covenant of grace were at once in the Jewish church. But though both these covenants were at once in the Jewish church, the one was declared and the other was made with them; though Hagar was in the same house, yet it was in subserviency unto Sarah; and though the covenant of works was declared and was there at the same time, yet it was in subserviency unto the covenant of grace; It was added, wherefore? says the apostle, because of transgression, to be a schoolmaster to bring to Christ. It was there in subserviency, and upon a gospel design. . .” (pp48-49).

55 Roberts says: “this Sinaic Covenant was in such sort administered, as to press upon them the perfect fulfilling of the Law, as most necessary to life and salvation, denouncing the curse upon the least failing; but withal revealing to them, that this perfect fulfilling of the Law in their own persons being utterly impossible, he was pleased to accept it in Christ their Surety, perfectly fulfilling it on their behalf, and bearing the curse for their offenses, according to the intimation of the many types and ceremonies in the Law. By exacting of them perfect obedience, impossible to them, it takes them off their own seeking for righteousness by their own doing; by representing Christ's perfect obedience and sufferings as a remedy, it teaches them to seek for righteousness by Christ's perfect obedience, through faith in him.” (p768). Burgess says: “Now when we speak of the Moral Law. . .that may be considered two ways. 1) Either rigidly; and in an abstracted consideration from the administration of it, as it does require perfect obedience, and condemning those that have it not. . .2) Or else the Law may be taken in a more large way for the administration of it by Moses, in all the particulars of it; and thus Christ was intended directly, and not by accident; that is, God when He gave the Law to the people of Israel, did intend that the sense of their impossibility to keep it, and infinite danger accruing thereby to them, should make them desire and seek out for Christ; which the Jews generally not understanding, or neglecting, did thereby, like Adam, go to make fig leaves for their covering of their nakedness, their empty, external obedience.” (p206). And speaking of the Galatians, Strong says: “They seeing a covenant made with Abraham, and a promise of free grace and of righteousness, and life without works, an inheritance by promise; and 430 years after a Law given requiring works, and promising life upon perfect obedience thereof, they did not know how to conceive, but that either God did repent of and revoke his former covenant, or else they must be both joined together in the matter of justification and life. Now to answer this the Apostle acquaints them with the end why God did give the Law: it was not to set it up as a Covenant alone, that any man should attain righteousness and life thereby. . .neither was it published to make void the Covenant of Grace, but it was added, not by way of opposition but subordination, that it might be as Hagar to Sarah; a handmaid to further the ends of the gospel, and to advance the grace of it, that it might be as the avenger of blood to the city of refuge, and make men look for the Law in the Ark, Christ, who is the end of the Law for justification. . .[But] This men being ignorant of, they look upon the Law as a Covenant of Works, and all that they do in obedience thereunto is to gain righteousness and life.”
All they saw at Sinai was the command to obey, and obey perfectly; and taking only this command, they sought to establish their own righteousness through the works of the Law. Sadly, they never truly listened to Moses at all; for Moses in the Law wrote of Christ, and had they listened to Moses, they would have been led to seek refuge in Him (John 5:46). Indeed, they not only added many things to the Law, but they also took away from the Law Christ, the hope of salvation, revealed in the Law. For though the Law demands perfect obedience, the reason for such a requirement was never for us to actually try to earn life by obeying its precepts perfectly, but rather in being confronted with how far we come short of it, to flee to Christ. The purpose for which God set forth the Law at Sinai was always to lead men to the gospel.

So then, it's true that the Law as it is strictly taken is very different than the Gospel. And it's truly vital that we never mix them together or confuse them: The Law tells us what is required for salvation; the gospel tells us how God has provided it for us. The Law issues commands; the gospel makes promises. The Law breaks guilty sinners; the gospel heals them. The Law declares what we must do; the gospel declares what God in Christ has done. The Law condemns sinners; the gospel justifies them. The Law brings conviction; the gospel brings comfort. The Law demands righteousness; the gospel provides it. The Law shows us our sin-disease; the gospel cures it. The Law gives the knowledge of sin; the gospel gives the knowledge of the Savior. So that, apart from Christ and the gospel, the Law is merely a letter that kills.

We've noted earlier that some actually seem to deny that the Law contains the requirement of perfect obedience as the cause of eternal life and curses all who fall short (see end of last footnote under #3: Perfect Obedience in the Law). I would guess that many who would hold this view do so because they believe the Mosaic Covenant was indeed part of the Covenant of Grace, and they think that to concede that perfect obedience is demanded in the Law is to weaken the argument that Sinai belongs to the Covenant of Grace. I hope we've demonstrated above that this is emphatically not the case. The Puritans often speak of the Jews misunderstanding God's Law in the context of speaking of the Law in its strict sense. But when they do so, they are not saying that the Jews were mistaken to take the Law in its strict sense—but rather that they were mistaken in failing to also take the Law in its larger sense. The Jews' mistake was not adding to the Law (the strict sense), but rather in taking away from it (cutting Christ out of the Law's larger sense). Their mistake didn't have to do with the Law's demands—but rather misunderstanding why the Law demanded what it did. See footnote above. Ball says: "the condition of obedience, which God requires and man promises, is the chief thing urged in the Law; but free and gracious pardon, wherein consists the happiness of the Saints is therein promised and proclaimed. They under the Old Testament lightly following the letter, mistook the meaning, not looking to the end of that which was to be abolished, wherein Moses had an eye under the veil. For they perceived not so well the grace intended by the legal promise lying under it. . .eternal life [was set forth] according to the clause, 'Do this and live.' On the part of the people, it was a stipulation of obedience to the whole law or righteousness both perfect (Deut.27:26; Gal.3:10) and personal and justification by it (Rom.2:13). But this stipulation in the Israelite covenant was only accidental, since it was added only in order that man by its weakness might be led to reject his own righteousness and to embrace another's, latent [hidden] under the law." (p227).

We've noted earlier that some actually seem to deny that the Law contains the requirement of perfect obedience as the cause of eternal life and curses all who fall short (see end of last footnote under #3: Perfect Obedience in the Law). I would guess that many who would hold this view do so because they believe the Mosaic Covenant was indeed part of the Covenant of Grace, and they think that to concede that perfect obedience is demanded in the Law is to weaken the argument that Sinai belongs to the Covenant of Grace. I hope we've demonstrated above that this is emphatically not the case. The Puritans often speak of the Jews misunderstanding God's Law in the context of speaking of the Law in its strict sense. But when they do so, they are not saying that the Jews were mistaken to take the Law in its strict sense—but rather that they were mistaken in failing to also take the Law in its larger sense. The Jews' mistake was not adding to the Law (the strict sense), but rather in taking away from it (cutting Christ out of the Law's larger sense). Their mistake didn't have to do with the Law's demands—but rather with the Law's design; not with what the Law required, but why it required what it did. Their mistake was never wrongly imposing upon the Law the demand of perfect obedience—but rather misunderstanding why the Law demanded what it did.

See Romans 3:19-20; 5:20; 7:7; 2 Corinthians 3:3-7; Galatians 3:19, 21-22; and John 1:17. On 2 Corinthians 3:3-7, Calvin says: "The law was engraven on stones, and hence it was a literal doctrine. This defect of the law required to be corrected by the gospel...From this, too, it follows, that the law was the ministry of condemnation and of death; for when men are instructed as to their duty, and hear it declared, that all who do not render satisfaction to the justice of God are cursed, (Deuteronomy 27:26), they are convicted, as under sentence of sin and death. From the law, therefore, they derive nothing but a condemnation of this nature, because God there demands what is due to him, and at the same time confers no power to perform it. The gospel, on the other hand, by which men are regenerated, and are reconciled to God, through the free remission of their sins, is the ministry of righteousness, and, consequently, of life also...the office of the law is to show us the disease, in such a way as to show us, at the same time, no hope of cure; the office of the gospel is, to bring a remedy to those that were past hope. For as the law leaves man to himself, it condemns him, of necessity, to death; while the gospel, bringing him to Christ, opens the gate of life." (2 Corinthians 3:6-7). And again, Calvin says: "The law is like a mirror. In it we contemplate our weakness, then the iniquity arising from this, and finally the curse coming from both—just as a mirror shows..."
But though the Law has a different function than the Gospel, they still always have the same goal: to bring sinners to Christ. And so, though they are very different, “the Law . . . is not opposite, but subordinate to the gospel.”

Think of farming: You plow and you sow. But plowing itself never bears fruit. It’s the sowing that bears fruit. So why plow? Because plowing prepares the way for the sowing. In and of itself, plowing actually destroys. But is plowing against sowing? No way. Why? Because though they have different functions, plowing and sowing both work together for the same goal; namely, to bring fruit from the earth. And it’s the same with the Law and the gospel. Though the Law is very different than the Gospel, still, they are not contrary to one another (Galatians 3:21). In and of itself, the Law is indeed a ministry of death. But God’s design in it is to lead us to the life that He has freely provided in Christ.

O One Final Thought: There’s one more reason that God gave us the Law in its strict sense at Sinai. Perfect obedience was commanded under Moses, not only to expose our own wretchedness under the Covenant of Works, but also to demonstrate the requirements Christ himself must fulfill for us under the Covenant of Grace. The older writers recognized that these two conditions—these two wholly opposing conditions—faith and obedience, were both given in the Law because they were equally necessary for our salvation, but in this way: faith is commanded in the Law (in its large sense) because it is required of us in us the spots on our face. For when the capacity to follow righteousness fails him, man must be mired in sins. After the sinfulness comes the curse. Accordingly, the greater the transgression of which the Law holds us guilty, the graver the judgment to which it makes us answerable. The apostle’s statement is relevant here: ‘Through the law comes knowledge of sin’ (Rom. 3:20). . .Related to this are these statements: ‘Law slipped in, to increase the trespass’ (Rom. 5:20), and thus it is ‘the dispensation of death’ (2 Cor. 3:7) that ‘brings wrath’ (Rom. 4:13), and slays. . .It remains, then, to the law to arm God’s wrath for the sinner’s downfall, for of itself the law can only accuse, condemn, and destroy. . .But when we say that, we neither dishonor the law, nor detract at all from its excellence. . .[As Augustine] writes. . .‘The usefulness of the law lies in convicting man of his infirmity and moving him to call upon the remedy of grace which is in Christ.’ . . .Again: The law was given for this purpose: to make you, being great, little; to show that you do not have in yourself the strength to attain righteousness, and for you, thus helpless, unworthy, and destitute, to flee to grace.” (Institutes, 2.7.7-9). Hodge says: “the law as written was something external and objective. It was addressed to the eye, to the ear, to the understanding. It was not an inward principle or power. It held up the rule of duty to which men were to be conformed, but it could not impart the disposition or ability to obey. It was, as it were, a mere writing or book. On the other hand, the gospel is spiritual, as distinguished from what was external and ritual. It is the power of God, Romans 1:6; the organ through which the Spirit works in giving life to the soul. These words therefore express concisely the characteristic difference between the law and the gospel. The one was external, the other spiritual; the one was an outward precept, the other an inward power. In the one case the law was written on stone, in the other on the heart. The one therefore was letter, the other spirit. . .It was the design and effect of the law to kill. . .In all these forms it was designed to bring men to the knowledge of sin and helplessness; to produce a sense of guilt and misery, and a longing for redemption, and thus be a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ (Galatians 3:24).’” (2 Corinthians 3:6-7). Bavinck says, “While, on the one hand, the Reformers held on to the unity of the covenant of grace in its two dispensations against the Anabaptists, on the other hand, they also perceived the sharp contrast between law and gospel. . .the terms law and gospel, in their actual significance they definitely describe two essentially different revelations of divine will. . .[In Scripture] law and gospel are contrasted as demand and gift, as command and promise, as sin and grace, as sickness and healing, as death and life. Although they agree in that both have God as author, both speak of one and the same perfect righteousness, and both are addressed to human beings to bring them to eternal life, they nevertheless differ in that the law proceeds from God’s holiness, the gospel from God’s grace; the law is known from nature, the gospel only from special revelation; the law demands perfect righteousness, but the gospel grants it; the law leads people to eternal life by works, and the gospel produces good works from the riches of the eternal life granted in faith; the law presently condemns people, and the gospel acquits them; the law addresses itself to all people, and the gospel only to those who live within its hearing. . .” (IV:453). And Colquhoun writes: “The law regards us as creatures, originally formed with sufficient ability to yield perfect obedience to it; and accordingly it requires us to retain, and to exert that ability, in performing perfectly all the duties, which we owe to God, ourselves, and our neighbors; whereas, the gospel considers us as sinners, condemned to death. . .totally destitute of strength. . .and it declares to us, what God, as a God of infinite grace and mercy, has done, and what he offers and promises still to be, and to do, for us. . .The law shows us what manner of persons we ought to be’. . .but it does not inform us, by what means we may become such; whereas the gospel teaches us, how we may be made such; namely, by union, and communion with Christ in his righteousness. . .The law condemns [sinners]. . .the gospel justifies the sinner who believes in Jesus. In the former, he curses, as on mount Ebal; in the latter, he blesses, as on mount Gerizim. . .While the law, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, serves to convince the sinner of his sin, and of his want of righteousness; the gospel presents him with a perfect righteousness, for his justification before God. The law, wounds and terrifies the guilty sinner; the gospel heals and comforts the guilty sinner who believes in Jesus. The one shows him, that his debt is infinitely great, and that he has nothing to clear it; the other informs him, that, by the obedience and death of Jesus, his Divine Surety, it is paid to the utmost farthing. . .by the law, is the knowledge of sin; by the gospel, is the knowledge of a Savior. . .The law shows the sinner his disease; the gospel presents him with healing balm. . .The former presents grounds of fear; the latter, a foundation of hope. . .” (p162-70).
the Covenant of Grace; *perfect obedience* is commanded in the Law (in its strict sense) because it is *required of Christ* in the Covenant of Grace. *Evangelical faith* and *perfect obedience* are both required at Sinai because both are equally necessary for our justification—but again, in this way: it’s *Christ's perfect obedience* (not ours) that will justify us; but this perfect obedience can only be imputed to us by *faith*.

Turretin gives a beautiful summary of these things in his Institutes. He says: “Again, these two conditions are proposed because they are necessary to the salvation of the sinner: *perfect obedience in Christ* to fulfill the righteousness of the law...without which the justice of God did not permit life to be given to us; *faith however in us* that the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ might be applied to us and become ours by imputation. *Thus what was demanded of us in the Covenant of Works is fulfilled by Christ in the Covenant of Grace*. Nor is it absurd that in this way justification takes place by works and by faith—by *the works of Christ* and by *our faith*. And thus in sweet harmony the law and the gospel meet together in this covenant. The law is not administered without the gospel, nor the gospel without the law. So that it is as it were a legal-gospel and an evangelical-law; a gospel full of obedience and a law full of faith. So the gospel does not destroy the law, but establishes it (Romans 3:31) by giving us Christ, who perfectly fulfilled it. And the law is not against the gospel, since it refers and leads us to it as its end.”

Francis Roberts also has condensed down many of the things we’ve been discussing into a beautifully rich section in his writings. It’s a bit lengthy, but it’s so valuable that I’d like to end by quoting him at length. He says: “I add therefore, for the unfolding of this mystery more clearly...these few considerations touching the Law or Sinai Covenant, and the condition of life and happiness therein revealed, [namely]:

1) “That the Sinai Covenant was purposely so dispensed as to tender life and happiness upon two opposite and contrary conditions; viz, works and faith; perfect doing, and believing: a) *Upon perfect doing* all in the Law; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12 with Leviticus 18:5; the curse being denounced against the least failing, Galatians 3:10 with Deuteronomy 27:26. b) *Upon believing in Jesus Christ* the Messiah promised, Romans 3:21,22 and 10:6-12; compared with Deuteronomy 30:11-14. . .To deny this, which is so clear, will but tend to weaken Paul's authority, [and] to darken many Scriptures. . .

2) “That, in this Sinai Covenant these opposite conditions, of perfect doing under pain of curse and death, and of believing in Christ, are very differently required and revealed: a) *Believing in Christ* is revealed very sparingly and obscurely; b) *perfect doing* very frequently and plainly. . .Whence (as Calvin notes) though the whole ministration of the Sinai Covenant belongs to Moses' office; yet that function most properly. . .seems to be ascribed to him, which consisted in teaching what the true righteousness of works was, and what rewards or punishments attend upon the observers or breakers of the Law. . .

3) “That, though these two conditions of perfect doing, and believing, be thus differently revealed and required in the Sinai Covenant; yet *believing in Christ* unto life and righteousness was therein chiefly and ultimately intended, and *perfect doing* only urged upon Israel's subordination. . .and tendency to believing and the righteousness of faith, [for]. . .The Scripture, peculiarly the Law, *hath hereby concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ may be given to them that believe*. . .

4) “That, the condition of *perfect doing* under pain of curse and death, convincing the sinner of his sin and misery, leaves him hopeless *in himself*, not to trust in his own works. . .but the condition of *believing* gives him hope, *without himself*, in Jesus Christ, to trust to him alone for justification. . .

5) “That the Sinai Covenant tendered life and happiness upon these two opposite conditions of perfect doing under penalty of curse and death; and of believing in Christ; because both these conditions were necessarily required to the sinners' [eternal] happiness: [whether] in the sinner, or the sinners' Surety: a) *Perfect doing of all God's Law upon pain of death was required to the sinners' happiness*: because God's Covenant of Works, at first made with Adam and with all his posterity in him, but broken by them, cannot be eluded or evaded. They must do it, or die; otherwise God himself should not be just and true. Do it, in their own persons, they could not, because the flesh was weak; therefore they lie under the curse and death. This covenant hereupon. . .reveals the sinners' Surety Jesus Christ, who alone could satisfactorily bear this curse upon himself, and perform the duty of the Law to the uttermost, for the

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sinners’ redemption and righteousness.  b) Believing in Christ is also necessary to the sinners’ happiness: because without faith his Surety’s perfect doing and enduring cannot become his by imputation. . .

6) “That, perfect doing on pain of death, and believing in Jesus Christ are so required and conditioned in this Sinai Covenant, as to let all men see, that the penalty and duty of the Covenant of Works, have their plenary accomplishment in the Covenant of Faith [Grace] through Jesus Christ alone. . .Herein they are directed unto Jesus Christ by faith, for life and righteousness.  Thus according to the tenor of the Sinai Covenant, the Covenant of Works has its perfect accomplishment in Christ—by doing and enduring, all which becomes ours—by believing.  Thus the Covenant of Works is digested into, incorporated with, and wholly swallowed up by the Covenant of Faith.  Thus perfect doing is attained by believing. . .

7) “That, the condition of perfect doing being thus attained by believing, with greatest ease unties the knots of many difficulties, and unveils the secret of many mysteries [and especially]. . .How sinners are at once justified by perfect doing, and by believing.  By perfect doing, in Christ’s person, to whom the Law drives them, by exacting impossibilities of them.  By believing, in their own persons; whereunto the Law allures them, by representing Christ as the scope and end of the Law to them.  Thus it’s no paradox for sinners to be justified, in the sight of God, both by works, and faith; by Christ’s works, by their own faith. . .In themselves, through the weakness of the flesh, they can do nothing, as the Law requires. . .and yet in Christ, the perfect Performer of the Law, embraced by faith, they can do all things perfectly; Christ’s perfect obedience being imputed to them by faith.  This Sinai Covenant therefore, requires perfect doing from the sinner under pain of curse, that it may drive him from himself who can do nothing; and requires believing in Christ, that it may draw the sinner unto Christ, who has done all things that so the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled in him. . .Hereby God will have us know, that neither God nor man shall lose by substituting the Covenant of Faith instead of the Covenant of Works, but rather both shall gain; God shall gain a better observance of His Law in the second Adam, than He had in the first; and man shall gain a better righteousness in Christ by faith, than ever they had in themselves before the fall.  Thus the gospel does not overthrow, but establish the Law, by setting forth Christ the most perfect Performer of the Law.”

61 We’ve charted out Roberts’ main thoughts in the chart given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT THE LAW DEMANDS</th>
<th>MANNER IN WHICH EACH IS REVEALED</th>
<th>INTENDED FOCUS</th>
<th>GOD’S PURPOSE FOR US IN EACH COMMAND</th>
<th>ULTIMATE REASON BOTH ARE GIVEN</th>
<th>WHAT WE ARE MEANT TO LEARN IN THIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do and live</td>
<td>Often &amp; clearly</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>To drive sinners to Jesus</td>
<td>We need both Jesus’ doing &amp; our believing</td>
<td>We obtain perfect doing in Christ by faith in Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe and live</td>
<td>Seldom &amp; obscurely</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>To save sinners in Jesus</td>
<td></td>
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5. A CLOSING SUMMARY: We’ve been dealing with objections to the view that the Mosaic Covenant rightly belongs to the Covenant of Grace.  The second objection had to do with the requirement of the Law at Sinai: How is it that the Mosaic Covenant, which demands perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life, is part of the Covenant of Grace, which requires faith apart from works?  What we’ve shown is that the Law demands both perfect obedience and faith, but for very different reasons.  We take the Mosaic Covenant to be part of the Covenant of Grace because, as a whole (largely taken), Moses not only points us to Christ, but also requires faith in this Messiah to whom he is pointing us (Romans 10:6).  The requirement of perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life is indeed also given in the Law, yet it was never given as an alternate way of salvation—but rather in order to serve the purposes of the Covenant of Grace.  The strict requirement of the Law confronts us with just how far short we fall of God’s perfect standard, and was always meant to drive us to Christ for life, who is revealed in the Law more largely.  Just like with silica gel in the packet of beef jerky, or the bay leaf in the pot of curry, the strict requirement of the Law was never meant to mix and blend together with the way of faith also revealed at Sinai, neither was it meant to oppose or contradict it, but rather its purpose was to compliment and serve the ends of the gospel.  How so?  The command “Do and live” was always meant to point us and drive us to Christ, that in Him we would “Believe and live.”  The purpose for which God set forth the Law at Sinai was always to lead us to the gospel.  Indeed, though it’s even true to say that both evangelical faith and perfect obedience are demanded by the Law because they’re both necessary for our salvation, still, the perfect obedience that alone saves us is Christ’s obedience, which is then imputed to us through faith in Him.

61 Roberts, Mystery and Marrow, pp775-78.  Note: Reference to Calvin (point #2) refers to his commentary, Romans, 10:5.
IV. The Third Objection: The Authority of the Mosaic Covenant

The Marrow of Modern Divinity is considered to be one of the most important books ever written on the law and the gospel. Penned by Edward Fisher, a Scottish layman in the mid-1600's, it's written as a conversation between four main characters who each represent different kinds of people: Nomista is a legalist, Antinomista is an antinomian, Neophytus is a new Christian, and Evangelist is a minister of the gospel. The book begins with the new Christian, the legalist, and the antinomian, all coming to the minister for help relating to a particular question. And the question is this: Are believers under the Law, or not? Are believers bound to keep the Law, or are they no longer under its authority? As you might guess, the legalist claimed that believers were bound to keep the Law, the antinomian claimed that believers were free from having to keep the Law, and the young Christian was troubled and confused.

Now, we talked earlier about the three categories of the Mosaic Law: the Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil; and we showed there that the Ceremonial and Civil Laws were given to a particular people (the Jews) for a particular time (until the coming of Christ), and thus served only a temporary purpose. We concluded that new covenant Christians are no longer under the Ceremonial and Civil Laws in the same way that God's people were in the old covenant. But the question that was being asked in The Marrow didn't have to do with the Ceremonial or Civil Laws—it had to do with the Moral Law. Has the Moral Law been abrogated for Christians along with the Ceremonial and Civil laws? Are new covenant believers under any of the Law, or have we been released from all of it? Are Christians under the Ten Commandments?

Most of us would shutter to hear someone say that the Ten Commandments were just for Old Testament believers and we don't need to keep them anymore. Not only did Jesus himself tell us plainly: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law” (Matthew 5:17), but His entire ministry is characterized by opening up the true meaning of the Law and then calling His disciples to radical obedience in doing what it says. For instance, in Matthew 5-7, Christ didn't do away with the 6th and 7th Commandments (to not murder or commit adultery) by telling His followers that if they believed in Him they no longer needed to keep these commands. He rather expounded what these commands truly meant and then called His disciples to live and walk accordingly. In another place, Jesus criticizes the scribes and Pharisees for creating man-made rules that in effect nullified the 5th Commandment, “Honor your father and your mother.” He tells them: “Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” (Mark 7:8). Jesus' problem with the scribes and Pharisees, in other words, wasn't that they were too zealous for the Law, but that they didn't actually follow what the Law said at all. And in Matthew 23:23, Jesus says: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.” Again, Jesus isn't condemning them because they made the Law too central—but because they had neglected the most central teachings of the Law. And when Jesus is asked what commandment is the foremost of all, He not only quotes two passages from the Law, but in doing so gives a wonderful summary of the Law, when He answers that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength (a summary of Commandments 1-4), and our neighbor as ourselves (a summary of Commandments 5-10). And so, when Jesus tells His disciples in Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law”, it must be that He tells them this because He knew that some of them would begin to think that He came to do exactly that—but they would be wrong.

62 Calvin makes this observation in his Institutes: “[The Lord] would not have refuted the notion that he would abolish the law (Matthew 5:17) if this opinion had not been prevalent among the Jews. But since without some pretext the idea could not have arisen by chance, it may be supposed to have arisen from a false interpretation of his teaching, just as almost all errors have commonly taken their occasion from truth.” (2.7.14). This error of saying that the Law on the whole has been abrogated for Christians (not just the Ceremonial or Civil aspects) is called Antinomianism. Calvin describes it in this way: “Certain ignorant persons, not understanding this distinction, rashly cast out the whole of Moses, and bid farewell to the two Tables of the Law. . .Banish this wicked thought from our minds!” (Institutes, 2.7.13). And again: “many persons, wishing to express such liberation from that curse [of the Law], say that for believers the law—I am still speaking of the moral law—has been abrogated.” (2.7.14). As an example of this teaching, Kevan cites John Eaten, who makes the statement: “The Law. . .terrifies the conscience. . .therefore let us not suffer the Law in any case to bear rule in our conscience. . .let the godly learn therefore, that the Law and Christ are two contrary things. . .when Christ is present, the Law may in no case rule, but must depart out of the conscience.” (quoted in Kevan, p147). Tobias Crisp was likewise said to hold that “a believer has no more to do with the Law of Moses than an Englishman has with the ‘Laws of Turkey.’” (Kevan, p147). And Robert Towne contended that “if
But if all this is true, what do we make of other passages that seem to tell us we're no longer under the Law? Paul says in Romans 6:14, “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” He writes a little later in Romans 7:4 that we *were* made to die to the Law through the body of Christ and that “we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound” (v6). And Paul testifies of himself in Galatians 2:19 when he writes: “For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.” Again, it would resolve a lot of difficulty to just say that Paul is speaking here of the Ceremonial and Civil Laws of the Mosaic Covenant, and that believers in the new covenant are no longer under those laws in the same way that Old Testament believers were. But it's clear from the context of these passages that Paul is here speaking of something more; he's talking about the Law in a much more general sense. In these Scriptures, Paul isn't speaking about the Ceremonial or Civil Laws but the Moral Law. What do we make of this? What does Paul mean when he tells us that believers are no longer under the Law? Are Christians no longer bound to keep the Law after all?

1. CLARIFYING THE MEANING: In *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, the way in which the minister begins to answer the question is by asking a question of his own. When Nomista, Antinomista, and Neophytus come to ask him whether or not believers were bound to keep the Law, the minister responds by asking: “What law do you mean?” Being baffled by his question, the minister began to explain how the same Moral Law—the Ten Commandments—is actually used in Scripture *in three different ways*. The minister then went on to distinguish between what he called the Law of Works and the Law of Christ, and later returned to refer to a third category called the Law of Nature.

2. SURVEYING THE SCRIPTURE: It might be helpful to give an illustration here, even if it seems simplistic. We might think of the Moral Law—the will of God for man as revealed especially in the Ten Commandments—as the chemical compound $\text{H}_2\text{O}$. This compound, $\text{H}_2\text{O}$, is the chemical formula for water. But it's also the chemical formula for ice and vapor. That's because the exact same chemical formula, $\text{H}_2\text{O}$, can actually take on three different forms: in its solid form, $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ is ice; but in its liquid form, $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ is water; and in its gas form, $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ is vapor. It's the same chemical formula, but it can take on three different forms. Someone might ask: Can you walk on $\text{H}_2\text{O}$? But to answer the question, you have to ask: What *form* of $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ are you speaking of? Because you can't walk on it in its water or vapor forms—but you can when it's ice. Well, we can think of the Moral Law in a similar way. Just like with $\text{H}_2\text{O}$, the Moral Law—though always itself unchanging—is actually revealed in Scripture in three different forms: As *1) the Law of Nature, 2) the Law of Works, and 3) the Law of Christ*. And so, in order to answer the question: “Are believers under the Law?”, the first thing we have to do is ask, “What law do you mean?”

A) The Law of Nature: In the context of speaking about the Law, Paul makes this statement in his letter to the Romans: “For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts. . .” (2:14-15). Scripture here teaches that the same Law that God wrote on tablets at Sinai has also been written, in a certain measure, on the hearts of every man. And we can trace it all the way back to creation. As the Westminster Confession states: “After God had made all other creatures, He created believers are not under the Law in its damnatory aspect, they cannot be under it in the mandatory.” (Kevan, p148).

63 *The Marrow*, p22.
64 *The Marrow* has the minister initially describe three laws which he calls “the law of works, the law of faith, and the law of Christ” (p22). Going on to describe them, Boston notes: “The law of works is the law to be done that one may be saved; the law of faith is the law to be believed, that one may be saved; the law of Christ is the law of the Savior, binding his saved people to all the duties of obedience, Gal. 3:12; Acts 16:31.” (p23). This is also a wonderful way of thinking about it. For our purposes though, only the “law of works” and the “law of Christ” relate to our discussion regarding the authority of the Moral Law. And since both Fisher and Boston speak later in *The Marrow* (see pp26,31,108-109) of the Law of Nature, recognizing it to be rightly included as a third aspect of the Moral Law as well as the Law of Works and the Law of Christ, we've tried our best to shorten and summarize what's most important for our discussion.

65 Colquhoun, p7.
66 Haldane notes on Romans 2:15: “This is an allusion to the law written by the finger of God upon tables of stone, and afterwards recorded in the Scriptures. The great principles of this law were communicated to man in his creation, and much
man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image, having the law of God written in their hearts. . .” In other words, Adam was created with the Moral Law—essentially, the Ten Commandments—written on his heart. And this form of the Moral Law, which God wrote on the heart of man at creation, is normally called the Law of Nature. In turn, man was called upon to keep this Law—to love the Lord his God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength—from the very beginning. But the point of most significance here, is that when the Moral Law was first given to Adam at creation, there were no threats of death for disobedience, nor promises of life for obedience. The content of the Moral Law was the same. But it was originally given entirely free of eternal reward or punishment. It was not: “Do and live”; nor: “Do or die”; but simply, “Do.” Simply: “Obey Me; serve Me; love Me, Adam, with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.”

### The Law of Nature: A Summary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>THE LAW OF NATURE</th>
<th>ITS ESSENCE</th>
<th>WHEN IT WAS GIVEN</th>
<th>HOW IT WAS GIVEN</th>
<th>WHAT IT SAID</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Moral Law</td>
<td></td>
<td>At Creation</td>
<td>Written on Adam’s Heart</td>
<td>“Do; Obey”</td>
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</table>

...of it remains with him in his fallen state.” (p91). And Murray also says of Romans 2:15: “The Law referred to is definite and can be none other than the law of God specified in the preceding verses as the law which the Gentiles in view did not have, the law the Jews did have and under which they were, the law by which men will be condemned in the day of judgment. It is not therefore a different law that confronts the Gentiles without the law but the same law brought to bear upon them by a different method of revelation.” (p74). Roberts says that the Moral Law proclaimed at Sinai is “conform and answerable to the Law of Nature written in Adam's heart at his creation.” (p685). And again: “for Sum and Substance the Moral Law and the Law of Nature are the same” (Roberts, p680). Fisher likewise affirms: “the Ten Commandments were not in their perfection engraved on the heart of man, in his creation” (in his notes in The Marrow, p177). Kevan likewise notes: “It was commonly held among the Puritans that the Law enshrined in the Mosaic Covenant was identical with the Law of Nature. . .John Flavel takes it as generally understood that 'the very matter of the Law of Nature' is found in the Ten Commandments, and Richard Baxter likewise teaches that the Mosaic Law contains the 'preceptive and directive part of the Law of Nature.'” (pp117-18). If this is so, why was there any need to declare this same Law again at Sinai? The answer to this is found in the Puritan belief that the Law of Nature was so 'expugned' that the special revelation of the Moral Law became necessary in order to renew fallen man in the knowledge of it. Men of all points of view concurred in this opinion.” (Kevan, p118). As Roberts also explains: “The fall of Adam and of all mankind in him did miserably deface and obliterate the Law of Nature. . .Sin disrobed man of God's image, dimmed the light, and defaced the Law of Nature so extremely in him, that very few and small sparks thereof remained. . .God therefore published his Moral Law, which for Sum and Substance is the same with the Law of Nature, that the expugned Law of Nature might be perfectly restored. . .” (p714). See also Calvin, 2.8.1-2. We might also give the same answer to the question: If this is so, why then does the Moral Law of the Ten Commandments seem to require more than we inherently know by nature? Do we know by nature we ought to keep the Sabbath? And does not Paul tell us he would not have known coveting (the 10th Commandment) was a sin if he had not read in the Law, “You shall not covet” (Romans 7:7)? It seems that the answer here is the same: What the Fall had defaced, Sinai again has renewed.

67 WCF 4.2. Burgess distinguishes this from regeneration in this way: “There is . . .a two-fold writing in the hearts of men: the first, of knowledge and judgement, whereby they apprehend what is good and bad; the second is in the will and affections, by giving a propensity and delight, with some measure of strength, to do this upon good grounds. This later is spoken of by the Prophet in the Covenant of Grace, and the former is to be understood here [IE, of the Law of Nature].” (Burgess, p60).

68 It's referred to by other names as well, which Colquhoun explains beautifully: “The law, as written on the heart of the first man, is often styled the law of creation; because it was the will of the sovereign Creator, revealed to the reasonable creature; by impressing or engraving it, on his mind and heart. To this law, so inlaid in the mind and heart in creation, as to the natural instinct, and moral rectitude, of the rational creature, every person, as a reasonable creature, is indispensably bound. It obliges to perfect and perpetual obedience. . .The same law, is also denominated the law of nature; because it was founded in the holy and righteous nature of God, and was interwoven with the nature of the first man. . .It is sometimes called the moral law; and it is so called, because it was a revelation of the will of God as his moral Governor, to the first man, and was the standard and rule of all the man's moral qualities and actions. . .and because, it is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments, which are usually styled the moral law. The ten commandments, are the sum and substance of it.” (Colquhoun, pp9-11).

69 As Colquhoun notes: “The law of God is to be taken, either material or, as having received the form of a covenant of works. Now it is the law, not formally, but materially considered, that was inscribed on the heart of man in his creation. Man, therefore, as the creature of God, would have been obliged to perform perfect obedience to the law, in this view of it, though a covenant of works had never been made with him. This law, and sufficient power to obey it, were included in the image of God, according to which he created man.” (pp7-8). Explaining the reason for this, Colquhoun later writes: “The obligation of the natural law upon mankind . . .as resulting from the nature of God, and from the relations between God and man, is such, that even God himself cannot dispense with it. It cannot cease to bind, so long as God continues to be God, and man to be man. . .Since the authority of that law is Divine, the obligation flowing from it, is eternal and immutable. It must continue forever, without the smallest diminution; and that, upon all men, whether saints or sinners; at all times from the moment of man's creation; before the covenant of works, under the covenant of works, under the covenant of grace, and even through all eternity.” (p11).
B) The Law of Works: That all changed in Genesis 2:16-17. It's in these verses that the Lord forbids Adam from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and telling him, “for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” Now, there are several things that are absolutely vital for us to understand about these words to Adam. The first thing we need to see is that the command which the Lord gives Adam here in Genesis 2:16-17 is something both subsequent to and distinct from creation. Again, as the Westminster Confession states: “After God had made all other creatures, He created man. . .having the law of God written in their hearts. . .Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” At creation, God had endowed Adam with the Law of Nature. Later, as something separate and distinct, the Lord also gave him this specific command.

The next thing that's important for us to understand about Genesis 2:16-17 is that this was so much more than simply a command. It was a covenant. Prior to this, God had created Adam—but here, with these words, the Lord enters into a covenant with him. This is what the Westminster Confession is speaking of when, referring to Genesis 2:16-17, it states: “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.” To summarize then: God had, in the very beginning, at creation, engraved the Moral Law on Adam's heart. Later, here in Genesis 2:16-17, the Lord entered into the Covenant of Works with Adam.

Now, the last thing that we need to see helps us to connect it all together: The content of the Covenant of Works, which God gave to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, was the Moral Law. Or to put it another way, in Genesis 2:16-17, the Moral Law took on the form of the Covenant of Works. Consider the words of the Westminster Confession once more: “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 tablets. . .” The Confession is telling us that the very Law that God gave to Adam as a Covenant of Works is the same Law that was written on two tablets at Mount Sinai. In other words, it was actually the Ten Commandments, the Moral Law, that was being given to Adam as the Covenant of Works in Genesis 2:16-17. How could this be? Because all the commandments were rolled together into one in that single command. Earlier, the Confession had

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70 WCF 4.2.
71 WCF 19.1.
72 As Boston explains in his notes in The Marrow, “The law of the ten commandments, being the natural law, was written on Adam's heart on his creation; while as yet it was neither the law of works, nor the law of Christ, in the sense wherein these terms are used in Scripture, and by our author. But after man was created, and put into the garden, this natural law, having made man liable to fall away from God, a threatening of eternal death in case of disobedience, had also a promise of eternal life annexed to it in case of obedience; in virtue of which he, having done his work, might thereupon plead and demand the reward of eternal life. Thus it became the law of works, whereof the ten commandments were, and are still the matter.” (p26). And again, “the promise of life, and threatening of death, superadded to the law of the Creator, made it a covenant of works to our first parents. . .the law of nature was turned into a covenant by the addition of a promise of life and threatening of death. Of the same mind is Burgess and the London ministers. . .” (p350). Shaw says of WCF 19:1 in his commentary on the Westminster Confession, “The law, as thus inscribed on the heart of the first man, is often styled the law of creation, because it was the will of the sovereign Creator, revealed to the reasonable creature, by impressing it upon his mind and heart at his creation. It is also called the moral law, because it was a revelation of the will of God, as his moral governor, and was the standard and rule of man's moral actions. Adam was originally placed under this law in its natural form, as merely directing and obliging him to perfect obedience. He was brought under it in a covenant form, when an express threatening of death, and a gracious promise of life, was annexed to it. . .The law, as invested with a covenant form, is called, by the Apostle Paul, 'the law of works' (Rom.3:27); that is, the law as a covenant of works. In this form, the law is to be viewed as not only prescribing duty, but as promising life as the reward of obedience, and denouncing death as the punishment of transgression.”
73 In The Marrow, Fisher explains this in a way that's both clear and helpful: “Nomista: But sir. . .it seems to me, you hold that the Law of the Ten Commandments was the matter of the Covenant of Works, which God made with all mankind in Adam before his fall. Evangelist: That is a truth agreed upon by all authors and interpreters that I know. . .Nomista: But sir, how could the law of the Ten Commandments be the matter of this Covenant of Works, when they were not written, as you know, till the time of Moses? Evangelist: Though they were not written in tables of stone until the time of Moses, yet were they written in the tables of man's heart in the time of Adam. . .And indeed, in that one commandment [IE, Genesis 2:16-17] the whole worship of God did consist. . .so that, as a learned writer says, Adam heard as much (of the law) in the garden, as Israel did at Sinai; but only in fewer words, and without thunder. . .Nomista: Did he break all the Ten Commandments, say you? Sir, I beseech you show me wherein. Evangelist: 1) He chose himself another God when he followed the devil. 2) He
told us that the Moral Law was originally written on man's heart at creation. Here it's telling us that this same Moral Law—which was originally given at creation—took on the form of the Covenant of Works in Genesis 2:16-17. At the beginning, the Moral Law was given to Adam as the Law of Nature. But that same Moral Law, originally given to Adam at creation, here in Genesis 2:16-17 took on the form of the Covenant of Works. At Genesis 2:16-17, the command to “Do” took on the form of, “Do and live.”

So then, in Genesis 2:16-17, the Moral Law took on covenant form. And the Law of Nature became the Law of Works. Adam was still called to love the Lord his God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength; that didn't change (for this love would be proven in and through his obedience to that single command). The difference was that beginning with Genesis 2:16-17, there was now a promise of eternal life added to the command should Adam obey, as well as a threatening of eternal death should he disobey. With this annexing of life and death to the command, the Law of Nature was turned into the Law of Works.

Now, we should note here that the Moral Law is often presented in Scripture in this form. Whenever the Moral Law is set forth as promising life in case of obedience, or on the contrary, threatening death for disobedience, it is being presented in its covenant form—as the Law of Works. And the Law in this form, as the Law of Works, is also identical to what we referred to earlier as the Law “strictly taken.” It's this form of the Law that is spoken of in Scriptures such as Galatians 3:10-12 and Romans 10:5-6, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them” (Galatians 3:10), and, “He who practices them shall live [IE, be justified] by them.” (Galatians 3:12; Romans 10:5).

Colquhoun helps to summarize: “The law of creation, or of the Ten Commandments, was, in the form of a covenant of works, given to the first Adam, after he had been put into the garden of Eden; and it was given him, as the first parent, and the federal representative, of all his posterity by ordinary generation. An express threatening of death, and a gracious promise of life, annexed to the law of creation, made it to Adam, a covenant of works. . .As formed into a covenant of works, it is called by the apostle Paul, ‘the law of works’ (Romans 3:27), that is, the law as a covenant of works. It requires works or perfect obedience, on pain of death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal; and it promises to the man who performs perfect and personal obedience, life, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. The law of creation, requires man to perform perfect obedience, and says ‘Do’, but the law as a covenant of works, requires him to ‘Do and live’; to do, as the condition of life; to do, in order to acquire by his obedience, a title to life eternal. The command, to perform perfect obedience merely, is not the covenant of works; for man was, and is, immutably and eternally bound to yield perfect obedience to the law of creation, though a covenant of works had never been made with him; but the form of the command, in the covenant of works, is, perfect obedience as the condition of life. The law in this form, comprised, not only all the commandments peculiar to it as the law of nature; but also a positive precept, which depended entirely on the will of God [Genesis 2:16-17]. This positive precept [Genesis 2:16-17] was, in effect, a summary of all the commands of the natural or moral law; obedience to it, included obedience to them all, and disobedience to it, was a transgression of them all at once. The covenant of works, accordingly, could not have been broken otherwise, than by transgressing that positive precept. . .The natural law, given in the form of a covenant of works, to Adam and all his natural descendants, required them to believe whatever the Lord should reveal or promise, and to do whatever he should command. All Divine precepts, therefore, are virtually and really comprehended in it.” (pp15-17). And again: “Seeing the natural law was promulgated to Adam, who though a holy, was yet a mutable creature, liable to fall away from God; not only was a promise of eternal life, in case of obedience, but a threatening of eternal death, in case of disobedience, superadded to it. Thus, it was turned into a covenant or law of works, of which, the law of the Ten Commandments was, and is still, the matter. Accordingly, in its covenant form, it not only says to every man who is under it, ‘Do and live,’ but, ‘Do or die’. . .This law of works has a twofold power; a power to justify persons, if they yield perfect obedience, and a power to condemn them, if in the smallest instance they disobey. . .It is evident, then, that the promise of life in case of obedience, and the denunciation of death in the event of disobedience, annexed to the law of creation, made it to Adam, a covenant of works.” (pp26-28). Roberts also connects the Law of Nature with the Law of Works in a profound way when he writes: “According to the general Sum and Substance of the Moral Law, it seems to be the same with the Law of Nature written in Adam's heart in innocency. For. . .The same Law for Substance which the first Adam broke, to the ruin of all his natural posterity; did Christ the last Adam perfectly keep and fulfill, enduring the curse and penalty thereof, to the recovery of his elected supernatural posterity. Otherwise the remedy had not been full, proper, and pertinent to the malady. But the first Adam broke the Law of Nature, in violating that positive Law about the forbidden fruit; and Christ the last Adam kept the charge, and endured the curse of the Moral Law, death. Therefore the Moral Law, and the Law of Nature were the same, for Sum and Substance.” (pp686-87).

75 As Colquhoun says, “the moral law, in the revelation which is given of it in Scripture, is almost constantly set forth to us, in its covenant form, as proposed to the first Adam.” (p31). We see it in this form both in the Old and New Testaments.

76 See the second Objection: How do you explain what Scripture says about the Requirement of the Mosaic Covenant?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Law of Nature</th>
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C) The Law of Christ: The last way in which the Moral Law is given in Scripture is in the form of what has been called the Law of Christ. Now, we need to begin here by remembering what we saw earlier in our study: far from abolishing the Moral Law, Christ rather opened up to His disciples its true meaning, and called them to radical obedience in living out what it said. So again, Jesus never abolished the Moral Law for New Testament believers. In fact, the Moral Law is put forth as God’s will for His new covenant people—not only in the gospels—but throughout Scripture. The Lord had prophesied through Jeremiah about the days of the new covenant church, saying: “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it. . .” (31:33). Here, the Lord is neither saying that He would give His people a new Law, nor that He would abolish the old one, but rather that He would take that same Law He had written on stone tablets—the Moral Law—and write it on the hearts of His people. And if we turn to the New Testament epistles, we can find exhortations addressed to God’s new covenant people that bring us back to each of the Ten Commandments. All this is summarized, once again, by the Westminster Confession when it states: “The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Neither doth Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.” So then, the Moral Law continues to be the rule of life for God’s new covenant people.

But though the same Moral Law is expressed in the Law of Christ that is expressed in the Law of Works, still, there is a vital difference between the two: the content of the Law of Christ is still the Moral Law, but now in Christ, it’s no longer given to God’s people in its covenant form. In the fullness of time, God sent His Son into the world, as the second Adam. In becoming a curse for us, Christ redeemed us from the curse pronounced in the Law of Works; and in obeying the Law perfectly for us, He merited the blessing promised in the Law of Works. And as a result, all who believe in Jesus, “are, through his obedience and satisfaction imputed to them, freed from eternal death, and become heirs of everlasting life; so that the law of works being fully satisfied, expires as to them, as it would have done. . .in the case of Adam’s having stood the time of his trial. . .” In other words, because of the work of Christ the second Adam, believers now “are in the very same state. . .in which they [would] have been, had the first Adam fulfilled himself and his posterity, the condition of life in the covenant of works.” Precious truths indeed.

77 “The Law which God promises here to write in their hearts [Jeremiah 31:33], is God’s Moral Law formerly written upon tables of stone. . .So that Jesus Christ, and the Moral Law are not (as some weakly imagine), inconsistent, incompatible and irreconcilable; but most consistent, suitable and sweetly agreeable one to another. . .Had God intended by His New Covenant to have abolished His Moral Law, He would not have new written it, but utterly have expunged it. But in that God undertakes to write His Laws again, and to write them more durably and indelibly than they were written before, not in the long-lasting tables of stone, but in the everlasting tables of mind and heart; hereby He eminently confirms and establishes the Moral Law, as that which shall never be reversed or repealed till the end of this world. . .” (Roberts, pp1392-93).

78 For example: 1 John 2:15 says, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world”, which hearkens back to the 1st Commandment. “You shall have no other gods before Me.” And 1 John 5:21 says, “Little children, guard yourselves from idols”, recalling the 2nd Commandment, “You shall not make for yourself an idol.” When James tells us: “prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (1:22), he’s calling us back to the 3rd Commandment, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.” When the author of Hebrews exhorts us to not forsake assembling together (10:25), he’s hearkening back to the 4th Commandment, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” In Ephesians 6:1-2, Paul writes: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord”, bringing us back to the 6th Commandment. The author of Hebrews tells us that, “the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge”, bringing us back to the 7th Commandment. Paul says in Ephesians 4:28, “He who steals must steal no longer”, binding us to the 8th Commandment. Paul says in Colossians 3:9, “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices”, recalling the 9th Commandment. And in 1 Peter 2:1-2, we’re exhorted to put away envy, hearkening back to the 10th Commandment. (See The Marrow, pp179-80). These are just a few examples, but they show well how the New Testament epistles uphold the Moral Law for new covenant believers.

79 WCF 19.5.

80 Boston’s notes in Fisher’s, The Marrow, p26.

81 Colquhoun’s entire passage is well worth quoting at length: “since Christ the second Adam performed perfectly all that,
The Law of Works, then, being fulfilled by Christ, expires to us. This doesn't mean that believers are no longer bound to the Moral Law; but it does mean that believers are no longer bound to the Moral Law in its covenant form—as the Law of Works. God's Law is, “from the moment the law of works expires as to believers, issued forth to them. . .in the channel of the covenant of grace. . .”82 What this means is that the Moral Law no longer comes to us from an exacting God as to those outside Christ—but rather from an appeased God who has been reconciled to us in Christ.83 Under the Law of Christ, believers are still bound to keep the Moral Law—only now, not as a law of works, but rather as a rule of life.84 We are still commanded to “Do”, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. But the command is no longer, “Do and live”, but rather, “Live and do.” There’s no more threatening of eternal death for disobedience or promise of life for obedience, for in Christ, we’ve already passed out of death and into life. We’re still called to keep God’s Law, only not in order to obtain life and salvation, but as according to the covenant of works, was to have been done by man himself, to entitle him to life, and that, seeing all that he did and suffered, is imputed to sinners who believe, believers therefore are justified in the sight of God. They are in the very same state, with respect to righteousness entitling them to life, in which they should have been, had the first Adam fulfilled for himself and his posterity, the condition of life in the covenant of works. Accordingly we read that, ‘the just by faith,’ are entitled to the same life, to which, man, by his fulfillment of that condition, would have been entitled (Hab.2:4; Rom.10:5). If Adam had continued to yield perfect obedience, until the time appointed for his trial had elapsed, he as the representative of his descendants, would have entered upon a state of confirmation in holiness and happiness, or in the begun possession of eternal life; and the covenant of works, as a contract fulfilled on his part, would henceforth have continued to be an everlasting security to him, for his own, and his posterity’s enjoyment of the eternal life promised him for himself and them. But, in his state of confirmation, the law as a covenant, could not have continued to be the rule of his obedience; because to subject him still to the law in its federal form, as the rule of his duty, would have been, to reduce him again to a state of trial, and to require him to work over again, for that life to which he was already entitled, by his having performed the condition of the covenant. At the same time, as man could, in no state whatever, be released from his obligation to obey his Creator, he must have had a rule of obedience. And, as the law as a covenant could not, for the reason now mentioned, have been a rule to him; it follows that, in his state of confirmation, the law of nature, divested of its covenant form, or of its promise of life and threatening of death, would have been the immutable rule of his obedience, both in time and in eternity. As the first Adam, then, upon his having fulfilled the condition of the covenant of works, for himself and his posterity, would have been released from the obligation of the law in that form; so they, to whom, the righteousness of the second Adam, is imputed for the justification of life, are delivered from the law in its federal form, and, at the same time, they continue under it as the law of Christ, and as divested of that form.” (Colquhoun, pp218-219; cf. Boston's notes in The Marrow, pp108-09, which are nearly identical).

82 Boston's notes in The Marrow, p26.

83 As Colquhoun explains it: “Considered as the law of Christ's justified, sanctified, and peculiar people, it is not the law of an absolute God, or of God out of Christ, but the law of God in Christ.” (p30). More on this also in the footnote below.

84 Burgess says: “The Law may be considered as it is a Covenant, or as it is an absolute Rule, requiring conformity unto it. Now it may be truly granted, that the Law is abolished in the former notion, though not in the latter.” (p213). Colquhoun also: “No sooner does the law as a covenant, urge men to Christ, for deliverance from the dominion of it in that form; than Christ leads them back to the law as a rule, for the regulation of their heart and conduct; in order that they may express their gratitude to him, for his perfect obedience to it as a covenant, in their stead, by their sincere obedience to it as a rule.” (pp46-47). And again: “The command of the law as a rule, is materially the same, as that of the law as a covenant. . .And as the command is materially the same, so the authority which enjoins obedience, is originally the same, and yet vastly distinct; for the commandment of the law as a covenant, is, the command of God out of Christ; but the command of the law as a rule, is, the precept of God in Christ. . .” (p208). Kevan also notes this distinction: “The inquiry into the subject of the abrogation of the Law calls, first, for the separation of the two ideas of commandment and covenant. . .There can be commandment without covenant, and there can be covenant without commandment. . .they are not only distinguishable, but separable.” (p148).
those who have already obtained it in Christ. So, we still obey; but we obey from life rather than for life. In a sense, it’s as if believers in Jesus return to that state of Adam in the garden under the Law of Nature, before it had taken on the form of the Law of Works. The difference is that under the Law of Christ, we have even greater reason to keep God's commands: whereas Adam's motive for obedience was to serve the God who had created him; the believer makes it his aim to serve the God who has redeemed him.

A SUMMARY OF THE MORAL LAW IN ITS DIFFERENT FORMS IN SCRIPTURE

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<td>Adam at creation</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Law of Christ</td>
<td>Throughout Scripture</td>
<td>As a Rule of Life</td>
<td>Obey from life</td>
<td>All those who are in Christ</td>
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3. RESOLVING THE QUESTION: We began this section by asking whether or not believers are still under the Law. After surveying the three distinct ways that Scripture speaks of the Moral Law, we’re finally ready to give an answer. And we can do so by returning again to our beloved book, The Marrow of Modern Divinity, for our response is the same as the one that the minister gave to his friends Nomista and Antinomista. When they came to him asking whether or not believers were under the Law, he had asked them in return: “What law do you mean?” In effect he was asking them: “under the Law in what sense?” Well, Nomista claimed that believers were under the Law, but that the Law they were under was the Law of Works. Antinomista, on the other hand, claimed that believers were by no means under the Law, but the Law from which they had been set free was the Law of Christ. As it turned out, the minister indeed had to correct both of them. He explained and showed them from Scripture three truths: 1) Believers are most certainly not under the Law of Works as a covenant. Nomista had said that they were, and he was wrong. But also: 2) Believers most certainly are under the Law of Christ as a rule. Antinomista had claimed that they were not, and he was also wrong. The truth is: 3) Though believers have been set free from the Law of Works as a covenant, still they continue to be bound to the Law of Christ as a rule.

This breadth of motive for obedience does seem to be one of the greatest differences between the Law of Nature and the Law of Christ. Adam was to obey the Lord in the context of creation; we are to obey the Lord in the context of redemption. There may be a hint of this in the diversity of expression used in the motive provided for the 4th Commandment. In Exodus 20, the command to keep the Sabbath is grounded in creation; but in Deuteronomy 5, it is grounded in redemption. And though these things are spoken only of the command to keep the Sabbath in particular, still perhaps this serves to represent this very truth. In the garden, Adam was to keep the Moral Law because God had created him; but now, under the Law of Christ, we have all the more reason to obey; we keep the Moral Law because God has redeemed us. Colquhoun compares the two when he says: “as the same law is called, the law of nature, because in his creation, it was inlaid in the nature of the first man; so it may be styled, the law of renewed nature, because, in the hand of Christ, and as standing under the covenant of grace, it is interwoven with the new nature of all, who are created again in him to good works.” (p36). To summarize and quote others regarding the truths in this section: Boston says: “under this covenant [the covenant of grace] there is much to do; a law to be performed and obeyed, though not for life and salvation, but from life and salvation received. . .” (Marrow, p117). And Fisher: “But yet. . .though. . .the law of Christ, in regard of substance and matter, be all one with the law of works, yet their forms do differ. . .both these laws agree in saying, Do this. 'But here is the difference; the one saith, Do this and live; and the other saith, Live, and do this; the one saith, 'Do this for life'; the other saith, 'Do this from life'. . .The one is to be delivered by God as he is Creator out of Christ, only to such as are out of Christ; the other is to be delivered by God, as he is a Redeemer in Christ, only to such as are in Christ.” (pp172-74). And Colquhoun: “The law as a rule of life to believers, . . is very different from the law as a covenant of works. The precept of the law as a covenant, is, ‘Do and live;’ but the command of the law as a rule, is, ‘Live and do;’ the law of works says, ‘Do, or thou shalt be condemned to die;’ but the law, in the hand of Christ, says, ‘Thou art delivered from condemnation, therefore do;’ the command of the former, is, ‘Do perfectly, that thou mayest have a right to eternal life;’ but that of the latter is, ‘Thou already hast the begun possession of eternal life, as well as the promise of the complete possession of it, therefore do in such a manner, as to advance daily toward perfection;’ by that, a man is commanded to do, in his own strength; but by this, he is required to do, in the strength that is in Christ Jesus.” (pp88-90).

The minister tells them: “the law of the Ten Commandments, or Moral Law may be either said to be the matter of the law of works, or the matter of the law of Christ; and therefore I pray you to tell me, in whether of these senses you conceive it ought to be a rule of life to a believer?” (p24). After they give their replies, the minister says to Nomista: “The truth is, Nomista, the law of the Ten Commandments, as it is the matter of the law of works, ought not to be a rule of life to a believer. But in thus saying, you have affirmed that it ought; and therefore therein you have erred from the truth.” (p25). And to Antinomista, he says: “But the truth is, the law of the Ten Commandments, as it is the matter of the law of Christ, ought to be a rule of life to a believer; and therefore you having affirmed the contrary, have therein also erred from the truth.” (p26).

As Fisher later says in The Marrow: “Now, as it is the law of works, it may be truly said, that a believer is not under the law, but is delivered from it, according to that of the apostle, Romans 6:14. Ye are not under the law, but under grace;’ and Romans 7:6, ’But now we are delivered from the law.’ And if believers be not under the law, but are delivered from the law, as it is a law of works, then, though they sin, yet do they not transgress the law of works; for ’where no law is, there is no
And this is exactly what Scripture is telling us in those passages we quoted at the beginning of this section. When Paul writes to believers in Romans 6:14, telling them, “you are not under law but under grace”, this is exactly what he's speaking of. Paul isn't saying that the believers in Rome don't need to keep God's commandments any more. He's not talking about the Moral Law in general, but the Moral Law as it is expressed in the form of the Law of Works. And it's the same thing in Romans 7:4-6, where Paul tells us that we “were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ” (v4), and again, that “we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound” (v6). Paul isn't saying that believers have died to the authority of the Law and are now released from any obligation to keep it. He's speaking of the Law in a specific sense—as the Law of Works. He draws a parallel with marriage, telling us that the Law of Works was our first husband, to whom we were bound by covenant. This Law promised life if we obeyed its precepts perfectly, and pronounced damnation on us for the least failing. But now, because of what Christ has done for us as the second Adam, we have been released from this Law. Just as when one spouse dies, the other is released from the marriage covenant—so too, through Christ—we have also been released from the Law in its covenant form, as the Law of Works. It can no longer make any claim on us.

It's the same truth in Galatians 2:19, where Paul writes: "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that the commandment of the law might be fulfilled in me, that I may live to God." (Romans 4:5). But if you consider the law, as it is the law of Christ, then...it may be truly said, that a believer is under the law, and not delivered from it; according to that of the apostle, 1 Corinthians 9:21, 'Being now without law to God, but under the law to Christ,' and according to that of the same apostle, Romans 3:31, 'Do we then make void the law through faith?' God forbid! Yea, (by faith) we establish the law. (pp218-20). And Colquhoun explains: "There are two errors, respecting the deliverance of believers from the law, which are equally contrary to the Oracles of truth. The one, is that of the Legalist, who maintains that, believers are still under the moral law as a covenant of works; the other, is that of the Antinomian, who affirms that, believers are not under it even as a rule of life. These errors are as contrary to the Scriptures of truth, as they are to each other; and they are equally subversive of that evangelical holiness, which is a principal part of eternal life, and which is so requisite, that without it, no man shall see the Lord. The plain doctrine of Scripture, is this; that, while true believers are dead to, or delivered from, the law, as a law or covenant of works, they are under it, and account it their high privilege, to be under the infinite obligation of it, as a rule of life. Indeed, to be freed from the law in its federal form, is nothing more than, to be delivered from the covenant of works, and from an inclination to cleave to that covenant; and our affiriming, according to the Scriptures, that believers are delivered from the law as a covenant of works, necessarily implies that, they are under the law, in some other respect. Accordingly, the apostle Paul informs us that, they 'are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ' (1 Corinthians 9:21); that is, they are under the law of the ten commandments, as the law of Christ, or as the law in the hand of Christ the Mediator. No man can live to God, in point of sanctification, till after he become dead to the law as a covenant, in justification; neither can he otherwise live to God, than by holy conformity of heart and of life, to the law as a rule of duty. The death of legal hope in him, is necessary to a life of evangelical obedience." (pp224-225). And again he says: "The obligation to 'Do', or to obey the law, is eternally binding on all believers; but, from the obligation to 'Do and live', to do, in order to procure a title to eternal life, they are delivered. They are under immutable and eternal obligations, to yield perfect obedience to the law of the ten commandments, as a rule of life; but they are delivered from the obligation, and in a great measure from the desire, to yield, in their own persons, perfect obedience to it as a covenant of life. Eternal life is, by the perfect obedience of their adorable Surety, already merited for them; and therefore, though they are under every obligation to obey from life, they are under no obligation to obey for life." (Colquhoun, pp229-230).

88 Haldane says of Romans 6:14: "A great variety of interpretations are given of this declaration. But the meaning cannot be a matter of doubt to those who are well instructed in the nature of salvation by grace. It is quite obvious that the law which believers are here said not to be under, is the moral law, as a covenant of works, and not the legal dispensation—to distinguish it from which is the reason why the article is here omitted [in the Greek]. To affirm that the law here is the legal dispensation, is to say that all who lived under the law of Moses were under the dominion of sin. In the sense in which law is here understood, the Old Testament saints were not under it. They had the Gospel in figure. They trusted int he promised Savior, and sought not to justify themselves by their obedience to the law. . .Believers are not under the law as a covenant, because they have endured its curse and obeyed its precept in the person of their great Head, by whom the righteousness of the law has been fulfilled in them (Rom.8:4). But every man, till he is united to Christ, is under the law, which condemns him. When united to Him, the believer is no longer under the law either to be condemned or to be justified. . .Believers are not under the covenant of works, but under the covenant of grace, by which they enjoy all the blessings of that gracious covenant in which all that is required of them is promised to them. The great principle of evangelical obedience is taught in this passage. Holiness is not the result of the law, but of the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free." Colquhoun says: "It is the peculiar privilege of them, who are in a state of union with Christ, and of justification in him, to be wholly delivered from the covenant of works. They 'are not under the law, but under grace' [Rom. 6:14]." (p222). Again: "believers 'are not under the law but under grace' [Rom. 6:14] and therefore, the law in its federal form, can say nothing to them." (p281).

89 Haldane says of Romans 7:4: "Dead to the law means freedom from the power of the law, as having endured its curse and satisfied its demands. It has ceased to have a claim on the obedience of believers in order to life, although it still remains their rule of duty. All men are by nature placed under the law, as the covenant of works made with the first man, who, as the Apostle had been teaching in the fifth chapter, was the federal or covenant head of all his posterity; and it is only when they are united to Christ that they are freed from this covenant. . .The language, accordingly, of the law, as the covenant of works, is, 'Do and live;' or, 'if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;' and 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.' It thus requires perfect obedience as the condition of life, and pronounces a curse on the smallest failure. This law is here represented as being man's original or first husband. But it is now
that I might live to God.” Again, Paul isn't saying that he's not obligated to keep God's Law anymore as a Christian. It's not the Moral Law itself that he's died to—but the Moral Law in the form of a covenant; the Law of Works. And notice the connection: It was his dying to the Law of Works that enabled him to begin living to God. It was dying to the Law as a covenant that set him free to truly live to it as a rule.

It's clear from these Scriptures that, as believers in Christ, we have died to the Law in its covenant form, as it is the Law of Works. But as we've seen from other Scriptures, the Moral Law is still to be our rule for life as Christian pilgrims passing through this world. These two truths are expressed beautifully in comparing together two Scriptures in particular. We've already looked at Romans 6:14, where Paul tells us that we are not under law. Now, if we turn to 1 Corinthians 9:21, we find Paul describing his evangelistic ministry to the Gentiles in this way: “to those who are without law, [I became] as without law, a broken law, and therefore all men are by nature under its curse. It's curse must be executed on every one of the human race, either personally on all who remain under it, or in Christ, who was made under the law, and who, according also to the fifth chapter of this Epistle, is the covenant head or representative of all believers who are united to Him and born of God. For them He has born its curse, under which He died, and fulfilled all its demands, and they are consequently dead to it, that is, no longer under it as a covenant.” And Colquhoun: “By the law, in these passages, our Apostle evidently means, not so much the ceremonial, as the moral law, under the form of a covenant of works. This, then, is the law which he had in view, when he affirmed to those believers, that they were become dead to, or were delivered from, the law, and that the law in which they had been held, was dead to them. But lest they should imagine, that it was the law of creation, and the law as a rule of life, to which they were dead; he compared the law of which he was speaking, to the law of a husband (Romans 7:2-3), which is a covenant or contract between him and his spouse, and which establishes her relation to him, as long as they both live. By this comparison, he plainly hinted to them, that it was the moral law, not as a rule of life, but as a covenant of works only, to which they were dead. The believers at Rome, then, were dead to the law in its covenant form, or were delivered from it, and it was dead to them; so that, it could no longer hold them, in subjection to its precept of perfect obedience as the condition of life, nor to its sentence of condemnation for sin. so it is the privilege of all true Christians, in every place, and in every age, that they are dead to the law as a covenant of works, and that the law in that form, is dead to them. . .The righteousness of the second Adam, by which he fully answered, in their stead, all the requirements of it as a covenant, is graciously imputed to them; and therefore, in that form, it has nothing more to demand from them. Its demands of perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life, and of complete satisfaction for sin, have, by their Divine Surety, been fully answered for them. His surety-righteousness, received by faith, and imputed by God to them, is their righteousness for the justification of life; their complete answer to all the demands of the law, as a covenant of works. The consequence is, that though the law in that form, is not, with regard to them, abrogated; yet it is fulfilled and satisfied; and, being fully satisfied by them in their Surety and Representative, it will not, in cannot, oblige them in their own persons, to answer the same demands a second time.” (p124-17). And again: “Here [in Romans 7:6,] the Apostle affirms that, believers are delivered from the law, not indeed as a rule of duty, but only as a covenant of works” (Colquhoun, p252). As Walter Cradock put it: “I am dead to the law, as it is a Covenant of Works, the law has no more to do with me then the Laws of men have to do with a man that is in debt when he is dead, when he is dead he is free from it...The meaning is not as though the substance and matter of law were not eternal. . .but the law as it is...a Covenant of Works...is perfectly fulfilled by Christ; and we are dead to it.” (quoted in Kevan, p159).

As Kevan notes: “The understanding of the relation of the believer to the Law is closely bound up with the interpretation of such phrases as 'dead to the law' (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 2:19), and 'not under the law' (Rom. 6:14-15). The general view among the Puritans was that these expressions were almost synonymous, and that they meant that the believer was free from the Law as a Covenant of Works.” (Kevan, p159). What does Paul mean by saying that it was through the Law that he died to the Law? Perkins says of this clause: “I take the true meaning of the words to be this: By the law of Moses, I am dead to the law of Moses...Though the law be not a cause of this death to the law, and so to sin, yet it is an occasion thereof. For it accuses, and terrifies, and condemns us, and therefore it occasions or urges us to flee unto Christ, who is the cause that we die unto the law, as a covenant, and so to sin.” (p159).

As Colquhoun notes: “According to these words of the inspired Apostle, a believer's living unto God, is the native consequence and fruit, of his being dead to the law as a covenant of works. As long as a man continues alive to the law, he is dead to God; but when he becomes dead to the law in point of justification, he begins to live unto God in respect of sanctification. The death of his legal hope, is, in order to his life of evangelical obedience. . .his living unto God, then, is the necessary fruit, the sure consequence, of his having become dead to the law in its covenant form.” (pp240-41). We see the same truth in Romans 7:4-6. On that Scripture, Colquhoun likewise notes: “Now the main design, of their deliverance from their first husband, and of their conjugal relation to Christ, is, as our Apostle expresses it, 'that they may bring forth fruit unto God.' It is not, that they may be left at liberty, to live as they please 'without law to God;' but that, by union and communion with Christ, their Head of spiritual influences, they may bring forth 'fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.' As children begotten and born in marriage, are legitimate, and all before marriage, are illegitimate; so
though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ...” Between these two verses, Paul expresses three truths about the relationship of the believer to the Law. They are the same three truths we noted above: 1) Believers are not “under [the] Law” (Romans 6:14); that is, they are not under the Law as it is the Law of Works. This corrects the error of legalism. At the same time: 2) Believers are also not “without the Law of God” (1 Corinthians 9:21a); that is, they are still under the binding authority of God’s Law in a very real and important sense. This corrects the error of Antinomianism. In what sense are they still under the Law? 3) Believers are “under the Law of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:21b). Not under the Law of Works, nor free to live however they please, but under the Law of Christ.\textsuperscript{92}

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Comparing Romans 6:14 with 1 Corinthians 9:21

Returning one last time to the Westminster Confession, we have a beautiful summary of everything we’ve been affirming in this clause: “Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it 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 nature, 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.”\textsuperscript{93} This statement not only confirms what we’ve been learning about the relationship of believers to the Law, but it also gives us extremely practical counsel for how to read such passages in Scripture. When the precepts of Scripture call us to obey the Lord with all our hearts, the first thing we remember is that this commandment comes to us not in the form of the Law of Works, but as the Law of Christ. We seek to obey the command, but we do it \textit{from} life rather than \textit{for} life, knowing that Christ, through His sufferings and perfect obedience, has redeemed us from the curses of the Law and merited for us its blessings. This, in turn, gives us the freedom to be completely honest before the Lord about the ways we’ve failed to live up to His command as a rule of life; and brings us to renewed praise and thanksgiving for Jesus’ finished work on our behalf.

I’m so thankful for all the things that the Lord has taught me personally through this study. My prayer is that He would use it in powerful ways to continue strengthening His people and extending His kingdom throughout the world and among all the nations. I hope you have been encouraged. Our God is a holy God, as He has revealed in His Law. But His heart also bursts with mercies towards His people. For He did not simply give us a Law from heaven; but when that Law was shattered, He gave us His Son. And He did it all for this singular purpose: “to grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.” (Luke 1:74-75).

\textsuperscript{92} Kevan draws out the nuances of the original Greek as well as the rich heritage of reformed thought when he writes: “The Puritan view of the relation of believers to the Law of God is well expressed by Thomas Taylor, who argues that the regenerate are never \textit{sine lege}, nor are they \textit{sub lege} in respect of justification, but they are nevertheless \textit{in lege}, that is, within the compass of the Law for instruction, for subjection, and in so far as it is written within their hearts. Anthony Burgess, too, compares the expressions, ‘of the law’, ‘without the law’, ‘under the law’ and ‘in the law’, and affirms that in 1 Corinthians 9:21 the apostle ‘calleth himself excellently, \textit{ennomos} to \textit{Kristos} within the Law’; and when Francis Roberts grapples with this expression of the apostle, he writes, ‘No Christian believer is said to be \textit{upo nomon}, under the Law, nor is he \textit{anomos}, without Law to God; but he is \textit{ennomos}, in the Law, or within the Law to Christ.’ [cf. p729]. The same interpretation is given also by Thomas Manton in his commentary on James. . .There is no doubt that the Puritans rightly grasped Paul’s meaning here.” (p183).

\textsuperscript{93} WCF 19.6.
The Covenant with David
The Davidic Covenant

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The Davidic Covenant

I. The Background of the Davidic Covenant

1. The Journey of ISRAEL: The Book of Numbers

   A) Israel's PATH: For the last two lessons, we've been talking about the Law that God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai; and in doing so, we've been focusing mostly on passages of Scripture from Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. But there's one book remaining that we haven't quite dealt with yet: How do we understand the book of Numbers? In short, while the other three books of Moses deal with the content of God's Law, the book of Numbers deals mostly with the journey of God's people.¹

   God had set His people free from slavery in Egypt. He had redeemed them. But the goal wasn't just to get them out of Egypt! That was just the beginning. The whole reason the Lord brought them out of Egypt was to bring them into the land He had promised to give them. As Moses reminded Israel in Deuteronomy 6:23, “He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.” God had redeemed His people; but He had also promised to give them an inheritance. They had passed through the Red Sea. But one day they would also cross through the Jordan River. And as we meditate on these things, we realize that Israel's story is our story. We too, as God's people, have been redeemed. We look back to the cross as Israel looked back to their redemption from Egypt. And in the same way, we look forward to the promise of a future inheritance, just as they did. The day is coming soon when we too will cross over the Jordan.

   But for Israel, there was quite a distance between the Red Sea and the Jordan River. To make it to the promised land, they had to travel through the wilderness. And it was a dangerous journey. The path that led to Canaan was full of trials and temptations. There were pitfalls lurking at every step along the way. It's the book of Numbers that covers this hazardous forty-year journey. And though Numbers may have been written about them, it's no less significant for us. Israel's story is our story: Just as they had to make it through the wilderness to arrive safely home at the promised land, so do we. Israel's time in the wilderness is meant to teach us about our sojourning as Christians in this life.²

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   B) Israel's POSITION: There's something that's important for us to clarify at this point. It's true that Israel's redemption from Egypt is a picture for us of the redemption we have in Christ. And it's true that Israel's inheritance in Canaan is a picture of the eternal inheritance reserved for us in glory. We see that God was pleased to teach His people eternal truths using earthly pictures in the time of the

¹ We could more particularly categorize the five books of the Pentateuch in this way: Genesis gives us an introduction to God's Covenant; Exodus provides us with a history of God's Redemption; Leviticus is essentially a manual for God's Worship; Numbers records for us the sojourning of God's People; and Deuteronomy contains an exposition of God's Law.

² See Hebrews 3-4 and 1 Corinthians 10, where Israel's time in the wilderness is compared with our present life in this world. Pink says: “[Numbers] treats of the practical side of the spiritual life, tracing the history of the believer in the world... It records at greater length than Exodus the history of Israel's journeyings and sojournings. It's theme then is the walk and wanderings of the believer during this life, depicting his testings and trials in the world... it represents the experiences we encounter in this scene of sin and suffering, our repeated and excuseless failures and God's long-sufferings. It reveals God maintaining His holy government and yet dealing in grace with His own, destroying unbelieving rebels yet preserving the faithful.” (Joshua). As the Reformation Heritage Study Bible notes: “[The Book of Numbers] is an inspired history that teaches more than simple facts; it is replete with spiritual lessons and applications.” (1 Corinthians 10). The ESV Study Bible notes: “[Numbers] deliberately sets out to record what happened on the journey from Mount Sinai to the Jordan River. It does this to instruct future generations of readers with the lessons to be learned from the wilderness experience. It is saying in effect to the reader, ‘Your forefathers made many mistakes on their journey to Canaan; make sure you do not repeat them.’”
Old Testament, much as a Sunday school teacher uses arts and crafts to teach children. But though God was pleased to use pictures and types to teach His people eternal truths under Moses—what we need to understand is that they were still His people. When the Lord first appeared to Moses, He referred to Israel in this way: “I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.” (Exodus 3:10). And even with all their failings in the wilderness, the Lord continued to tell them: “I am the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the Lord your God.” (Numbers 15:41). So then, the Lord is Israel’s God and they are His people. God doesn’t tell Israel that they are, in a way, like His people—but that they are His people. He doesn’t tell them that He is, in many ways, like their God—but that He is their God.4

Here’s the point: Some say that the people God was leading through the wilderness was just a picture of God’s people. But they were more than that—they were God’s people. Some say Israel was just a type of the church; but they were more—they were the church. Israel was the Old Testament people of God—but they were no less the people of God. They were God’s church in the Old Testament—but they were no less the church of the living God. After all, what does it mean to be the church, but to be God’s chosen people; a people among whom God dwells; a people set apart; who are blessed because they sit under the teaching of the gospel; and who confess their faith by also partaking of the sacraments God has instituted? And this is Israel. Moses tells them God had chosen them “to be a people for His own possession” (Deuteronomy 7:6). God dwells in their midst (Numbers 5:3; 14:14; 33:34). Israel is “a people who dwells apart, and will not be reckoned among the nations.” (25:9). God himself tells Balaam not to curse them, “for they are blessed” (Numbers 22:12); and Hebrews 4 tells us that Israel sat under the teaching of the gospel, for they had the same “good news” preached to them as we do as well (v2,6). They even partook of the sacraments, for Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10: “all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.” (vv1-4).5 What we see as we read through the Scriptures is that Israel wasn’t just a picture of God’s people—they were God’s people. It’s for this reason that in Acts chapter 7, when Stephen refers to Israel in the time of Moses, he speaks of them as “the church [ekklesia] in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38; KJV). So, Israel wasn’t just a type of the church—they were the church.6

C) Israel’s PROBATION: So then, Israel under Moses was the church. They were God’s redeemed people. Israel was the church then, just as we are now. But this is what makes Paul’s words all the

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3 We’ve spoken about this in much more detail in earlier lessons; see Sinai Lesson 1 (V.1-7); and Sinai Lesson 2 (II.1-7).
4 Remember, this is the very essence of the Covenant of Grace. The Lord used the same language in speaking to Abraham, when He had promised him in Genesis 17:7-8: “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” So if we ask what it means exactly that the Lord was Israel’s God, we must say He was their God in the same way that He was Abraham’s God. Further, this is no different than what God had promised concerning the New Testament people of God (Jeremiah 32:38). What we have in the new covenant is no different than what they had in the old.
5 Notice, Paul doesn’t say: They ate physical food, but now we eat the spiritual; they indeed drank physical drink, but we the spiritual. No—the food and drink they consumed was spiritual. Further, Paul clarifies for us not only that it was spiritual food and drink they partook of—but that it was the same spiritual food and spiritual drink that we partake of; namely, that of Christ. Indeed, the whole thrust of Paul’s argument here to the Corinthians is: Watch yourselves—for you are no different than them. Calvin explains the passage thus: “Paul promises, that there is no such dissimilarity between us and the Israelites, as to make our condition different from theirs. . .For they were favored with the same benefits as we at this day enjoy; there was a Church of God among them, as there is at this day among us; they had the same sacraments, to be tokens to them of the grace of God; and they were no less the people of God. But though they were no less the people of God—but they were no less the church of the living God. After all, what does it mean to be the church, but to be God’s chosen people; a people among whom God dwells; a people set apart; who are blessed because they sit under the teaching of the gospel; and who confess their faith by also partaking of the sacraments God has instituted? And this is Israel. Moses tells them God had chosen them “to be a people for His own possession” (Deuteronomy 7:6). God dwells in their midst (Numbers 5:3; 14:14; 33:34). Israel is “a people who dwells apart, and will not be reckoned among the nations.” (25:9). God himself tells Balaam not to curse them, “for they are blessed” (Numbers 22:12); and Hebrews 4 tells us that Israel sat under the teaching of the gospel, for they had the same “good news” preached to them as we do as well (v2,6). They even partook of the sacraments, for Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10: “all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.” (vv1-4). What we see as we read through the Scriptures is that Israel wasn’t just a picture of God’s people—they were God’s people. It’s for this reason that in Acts chapter 7, when Stephen refers to Israel in the time of Moses, he speaks of them as “the church [ekklesia] in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38; KJV). So, Israel wasn’t just a type of the church—they were the church.

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more shocking, when he says: “Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.” (1 Corinthians 10:5). They were the church, but what kind of church were they? In Numbers 14, the Lord refers to them twice as an evil congregation (vv27,35). They were witnesses of God’s power; and they sat daily under His teaching. But ultimately, as Psalm 78:21 says, the great majority of them “did not believe in God and did not trust in His salvation.” In other words, they sat in the pews in the wilderness—but most of them never truly had saving faith in the Lord. They were in the covenant, but many of them were never truly of the covenant. They were the people of God on the outside, but most of them had never come to know and experience Him on the inside. And so, they all came out of Egypt. But many of them never made it to Canaan.

Scripture draws this out for us in an unmistakable way: As we read the book of Numbers, and then on through Deuteronomy and Joshua, we read of two generations: the first generation failed to enter into Canaan. The Lord refers to them as an “evil generation” (Deuteronomy 1:35); “a stubborn and rebellious generation”; “a generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God” (Psalm 78:8). God says: “For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways.” (Psalm 95:10). It was the second generation under Joshua that entered the land. But the first generation never made it; they fell in the wilderness.

What are the lessons for us? Paul tells us: “Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were. . .Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord. . .Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.” (1 Corinthians 10:6-10). In other words: Watch yourselves, because you are no different than them. They sat in the pews, just like you do now (10:1). They partook of the sacraments, same as you (vv2-3). They heard gospel teaching (Hebrews 4:2,6) week in and week out. But it never did them any good, “because it was not united by faith in those who heard.” (Hebrews 4:2). There’s a very solemn warning here for us: Being part of God’s people doesn’t guarantee you’re destined for Canaan. Being a member in the church doesn’t guarantee access to eternal glory. It’s a wonderful privilege to be part of God’s people, but the question for each one of us is this: Which kind of His people are you going to be? Are you going to be like the first generation of His people in the wilderness? Or will you be like the second?7

2. The Conquest of CANAAN: The Book of Joshua

At Joshua and the RESURRECTION: When Israel had crossed the Red Sea, they entered into the wilderness. But when they crossed the Jordan, they left their time in the wilderness behind them and stepped into a new world. Canaan was the land that God had been promising to give His people as

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7 A similar account to 1 Corinthians 10:6-10 of Israel’s sin and God’s judgments is found in Psalm 106:13-33. Paul may have had this passage in mind when he penned 1 Corinthians. We should note here that though the first generation on the whole failed to enter into Canaan because of unbelief, there were exceptions. Moses, Aaron, and Miriam all died in the wilderness, and though they all had their personal failings (as all of us do), no one in their right mind would question their salvation. It doesn’t seem prudent then to draw the conclusion that Caleb and Joshua were the only ones who were truly saved among that whole generation. Some or even many of them may have repented along the way. We simply don’t know. The main point is that the first generation in the wilderness on the whole rejected the Lord. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:5, “with most of them God was not well-pleased. . .” This helps to interpret the passages quoted above about the first generation. As Calvin says of Hebrews 3:16-17: “the whole people were justly condemned for unbelief; when the body was torn and mutilated by the defect of the greatest part.” And again: “It may be further asked, whether Moses, and Aaron, and those like them, were included in this number? To this I answer, that the Apostle speaks of the whole community rather than of individuals.” On the other side, some might seek to limit those with whom God was displeased to those only who experienced the divine judgments of plague, fire, serpent bites, and the like. Owen distinguishes between Special Provocations (the egregious sins in the wilderness that required special divine judgment) and General Sins (cf. Hebrews 3). And Calvin and Gill interpret (rightly, it seems) those with whom “God was not well-pleased” and thus “lain low in the wilderness” (1 Corinthians 10:5) as referring to those who experienced these kinds of special judgments, which Paul then goes on to describe in verses 6-10. So a question arises: Was God also displeased with those who died of natural death—or only with those who perished by means of direct divine judgment? We can’t say for sure. What we can say is that whatever kind of death they experienced, the great majority of that first generation proved rebellious, for however they met their end, the fact remains: “with most of them God was not well-pleased.” (10:5). That’s the main lesson: “Neither the blessing of the exodus from Egypt nor the privilege of hearing God’s voice guaranteed the generation that died in the desert entry into God’s rest in the promised land. . .Their rebellion (v16), sin (v17) and disobedience (v18; 4:6) were rooted in unbelief—they failed to cling persistently to God’s promise (v19; 4:2-3) and proved by their actions that they were not truly redeemed.” (Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible, Hebrews 3:16-19).
an inheritance from the very beginning. But though it had been a promise for so long, it was only now under Joshua that it finally became a reality. Joshua 21:43-45 is a fitting summary: “So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the Lord made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.”

So then, God gave His people their inheritance, just as He had promised them. But He also did so in a certain way. God tells Joshua in 1:6, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.” So, how would the Lord give His people possession of their inheritance? Through Joshua. God had promised them an inheritance, but it would be Joshua who would actually give it to them. What’s the significance? Well, Joshua’s name means either, “Jehovah saves” or “Jehovah is salvation.” This may sound familiar, because the name Joshua is actually the Hebrew equivalent of the name Jesus (in Greek). It’s the same name. In the Hebrew it’s Joshua; in the Greek it’s Jesus; but the meaning of both is: “the Lord is salvation.” And the reason the name is the same is that Joshua is being set forth for us as a type of Christ: Just like with Israel, God has promised us an inheritance—and He gives it to us through Jesus our Savior.

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When we put it all together, we see that the book of Joshua is here to teach us about the eternal land of rest that God has promised to us in Christ. We’re currently trudging as best as we can through the wilderness. Right now, eternal glory is a future promise. But the day is coming soon when we’ll cross that Jordan, and on that day it will become a reality. Just like Israel, we’ll leave the wilderness behind us and we’ll step into a new world—the inheritance that God has promised us and that Jesus died and rose to give to us. Joshua is here to teach us about the final resurrection. But there’s a flip side to it as well. The day that Israel set foot in Canaan was a wonderful day for God’s people. But it was also a terrifying day for the Canaanites. The day that Israel stepped into their inheritance was the day the Canaanites lost theirs. The day that God’s people were rewarded was the day the Canaanites were judged. The day that the people of God were leaving their sorrows behind them was the day that the sorrows of God’s enemies were just beginning. The day that Israel settled into the land was the day the Canaanites were cut off from it. It’s not a popular truth, but we’re confronted here with what Scripture plainly teaches everywhere: The resurrection will bring joy for some, but terror for others.

8 Joshua 11:23 emphasizes the same truth: “So Joshua took the whole land. . . and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel”.
9 As the Reformation Heritage Study Bible says: “Joshua’s name means either Jehovah saves or Jehovah is salvation.” it is the Hebrew equivalent to the Greek Jesus.” And again, on the note under Matthew 1:21: “Jesus. The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Joshua, meaning the Lord is salvation.” On joshua as a type of Christ: “The great agreement there is between the history of Joshua and the things said of him in Scripture, and the things said of the Messiah in the Old Testament, strongly argues Joshua to be a type of the Messiah. [a] There is a great agreement between the names by which he is called in Scripture and the names and things attributed to the Messiah in the Old Testament. His first name was [H]oshea (Numbers 8:8-10), which signifies Savior. . . . This name [H]oshea was by Moses changed into Jehoshua. . . . IE, the Lord the Savior or Jehovah our Savior, which makes his name still more agreeable to the name and nature of the Messiah. . . [b] Joshua was God’s elect; he was called to his office and exalted to his high dignity by God’s election and special designation, agreeably to what is said of the Messiah in the prophets. . . [c] Joshua was a man in whom was the Spirit in an eminent manner (Numbers 27:18). . . [d] Joshua was the captain of the host of Israel, that fought their battles for them, and subdued their enemies, though many and mighty. . . [e] Joshua brought the children of Israel out of the wilderness and out of Bashan, and out of great waters, into Canaan a land of rest flowing with milk and honey. . . . [f] Joshua was a most glorious conqueror, as the Messiah is everywhere represented to be in the prophecies. Joshua entered Canaan, conquered his enemies, and brought in his people to their rest and inheritance, by his righteousness or strict obedience to God’s commands (Joshua 1:2). . . . [g] Joshua divided unto Israel their inheritance, as one that God had appointed to be judge, what portion belonged to every tribe.” (Edwards, Types of the Messiah, p1826ff). So it seems that both Moses and Joshua are set forth as types of Christ, but in different ways: Moses is more set forth as a type of Christ in his humiliation and 1st coming; whereas Joshua is set forth more as a type of Christ in his exaltation and 2nd coming.
10 On Canaan as a type of glory: “Israel’s entrance into Canaan occurred at the end of their trials in the wilderness. Taking that alone, by itself, we have a foreshadowing of our entrance into Heaven at the close of this life (Revelation 14:13). . . .” (Pink, Joshua). “God’s bringing His people into Canaan, to a state of rest and happiness there, is spoken of as a resemblance of what God would do for his people through the Messiah.” (Edwards, Works V2, p1808). On Christ as the giver of the inheritance:
B) Joshua and THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: There's a question that arises here: If it's true that the land of Canaan represents the inheritance we'll receive in glory, then why is there so much fighting all the time? Isn't heaven supposed to be a place of rest? If Israel entering into the land of promise is here to teach us about the day we too will enter into our eternal inheritance, why do they continue to have to battle it out with the Canaanites? Well, traditionally it's been understood that Israel entering into the land actually represents a few different truths. On the one hand, crossing the Jordan into Canaan teaches us about the end of our time here on earth; but it also serves to teach us about the beginning of our new life in Jesus Christ. Entering into Canaan teaches us about the rest that we'll one day experience in heaven; but it also teaches us about the rest we experience now in salvation. Crossing the Jordan teaches us important truths about glorification; but it also serves to teach us important lessons about sanctification. In other words, Joshua is also here to teach us about the Christian life. And one of the most fundamental truths about the Christian life is that it is a fight. Living a holy life isn't easy. Every day we're fighting battles, just like Joshua and Israel in the land of Canaan. There is rest; we enter into the Sabbath rest of Christ. But there is also war, because now we're doing battle with the world on the outside, our own flesh on the inside, and all the threats and lies of the Enemy.11

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"As the Israelites of old obtained an inheritance in the promised land, so those in Christ become partakers of that heavenly inheritance which he has secured for them." (Hodge on Ephesians 1:10-11). “As the second portion of [the book of Joshua] focuses on the allotment of Israel's inheritance to every tribe as God had designed, the New Testament explains that Christ gives his people their inheritance. In his resurrection and ascension, Christ received many blessings from God that he distributes to his people in the gifts of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:4-13). Thus the Spirit is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance to come (Ephesians 1:13-14). When Christ returns in glory, he will grant his people their full and eternal inheritance: to reign with him eternally over the new heavens and the new earth (Revelation 5:10; 22:5),” (Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible). On grappling with the destruction of the Canaanites: “The doom of Canaan must be compared to the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah: an anticipation in history of God’s final judgment. . .Israel was not free to spare those whom God had doomed. . .We may find the concept of a holy war difficult to accept. . .Yet God's commission to Israel was grounded in His righteous judgment against sin. . .The New Testament recognizes the God-given right of the state to use the sword (Romans 13:4), but God has not appointed the state to be the executor of His total justice. That final judgment is given to Jesus Christ, and awaits His return (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).” (Clowney, The Unfolding Mystery, pp137-39). The truth that Jesus will pass judgment on the ungodly on the day of the final resurrection seems to be set forth in Joshua in a few different passages in particular: In Joshua 6, the people blow trumpets for six days and the walls fall down on day seven. The people of Jericho might have thought: “They've been blowing these trumpets for six days—nothing's happened and nothing's going to happen”—but they would have been greatly mistaken. In the same way, now is the six days when the church is being called to blow the gospel trumpet before the unbelieving world; the seventh and final day is fast approaching when the final trumpet will sound, judgment will come upon the unbelieving in a moment, and the earth and all its works will be burned up (cf. 6:24). In Joshua 10, the five kings of the Amorites go up to make war with the Gibeonites, who had made peace with Israel. Israel then defends them, and the Amorites are routed before them. The five kings flee and hide in a certain cave (v16); where they are then guarded until Joshua was able to deal with them. At the end of the battle they bring the kings out of the cave; Joshua passes judgment on them and they are executed. So too, the wicked who die in their sins await to stand before the judgment of the greater Joshua. On the day of the final resurrection, the enemies of God will likewise be brought out to face King Jesus. [11] It seems to be this aspect that the Reformation Heritage Study Bible refers to when it says: “The Promised Land symbolizes the inheritance and spiritual rest that belongs to God's people in the experience and enjoyment of His presence (Hebrews 4:8-11).” And A.W. Pink writes: “This book may be contemplated from two distinct but closely related standpoints: first as the end of Israel's trials and wanderings in the wilderness, and second as the beginning of their new life in the land.” (Gleanings in Joshua). We've seen many Scriptures that set forth Canaan as a type of eternal glory; but other Scriptures set forth Canaan as a picture of the rest of salvation. This seems to be the meaning in Hebrews 4:3: “For we who have believed enter that rest . . .” and again in verse 10: “For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works.” In Psalm 37, we see the land of Canaan being set forth as both the rest of salvation and the rest of glory. Most of the Psalm focuses on the land as our future inheritance (verse 9: “But those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land”), but David also speaks of enjoying the land in the present tense in verse 3: “Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.” While this is the main answer to the question asked above (IE, Why all the fighting?), there is a second answer as well: We also see the Church fighting in Canaan because Scripture elsewhere tells us that God's people will actually have a role in judging the wicked at the final resurrection. This is drawn out in Scriptures such as Psalm 149:6-9 and Revelation 2:26-27, where we see God judging the wicked—but doing so through His people. The ESV Study Bible draws this out when it notes: “In ways that are not entirely clear, the faithful will participate with God in carrying out the final judgment (1 Corinthians 6:2; cf. Psalm 149:6-7), and Israel's bringing of judgment on the Canaanites foreshadows that great responsibility as well. . .” (Introduction to Joshua).
When the Lord had given instructions to His people about taking the land of Canaan, He gave them two separate sets of directions for what to do. For the cities and peoples who were living outside the land, they were to offer terms of peace (Deuteronomy 20:10-15). This is to signify the mission of the church: We go to the unbelieving world announcing God's coming judgment and offering His terms of peace—the message of the gospel. But as for the cities and peoples living inside the land, the Lord commanded: “you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. But you shall utterly destroy them...” (Deuteronomy 20:16-17). There were no peace treaties for the Canaanites living inside the land; and this is meant to teach us about how God wants us to live as Christians: Just as Israel was to offer no terms of peace to the Canaanites in the land, we are not permitted to make peace with any sin in our life as Christians. As Israel was to show no mercy to the Canaanites, we are to show no mercy to our sin. As Christians, we’re not allowed to pick and choose which sinful habits and tendencies need to go and which ones we’d like to keep. God is calling us to do away with any and every kind of sin that we find in our life. What are the things in your life right now that you need to be putting to death?\(^\text{12}\)

The last thing we could mention here is that Israel wasn’t able to just conquer the land overnight; they had to do battle with the Canaanites for years. Joshua 11:18 says: “Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings.” In the same way, the Christian life is a war that doesn’t end until the day Jesus calls us home. Sanctification doesn’t just happen overnight; growing in holiness is a process that takes our entire life. For Israel, conquering one city led to doing battle against another; there were always more Canaanites to fight. It’s the same with us: As soon as we see victory in one area of our life, the Lord begins to show us other areas that still need His grace as well. Seeing more of our sin may sound like something bad or discouraging, but it’s actually the only path for our growth in Christ. Think about it: Joshua and Israel probably didn’t want to keep finding those Canaanites—they might have thought: This is bad! But it was the only way they would possess the land, because it was impossible to defeat the Canaanites without first discovering where they were! So, for Israel, possessing the land actually took place through the process of finding more and more of the Canaanites. And in the same way, our sanctification in Christ actually takes place through the process of seeing more and more of our sin. Growth in grace happens as we allow the Lord to reveal the hidden idols of our hearts. It’s only then that we can confess them, turn from them, and receive Jesus’ cleansing once again.\(^\text{13}\) So, we

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\(^{12}\) In speaking of these two distinct aspects in Joshua, Pink says: “As the inheritance which the Lord appointed, promised and gave to Israel, Canaan has rightly been regarded as a type of Heaven, unto which the Church is journeying through this wilderness-world. But Canaan was the scene of fierce battles, and that presents a serious difficulty unto many, though it should not. They point out that Heaven will not be the place of fighting, but of eternal rest and felicity, and then ask, ‘How could Israel’s history in Canaan prefigure our experience on High?’ It did not, but it strikingly and accurately foreshadowed what Christians must accomplish if they are to enter and enjoy ‘the purchased possession.’ The book of Joshua not only exhibits the sovereign grace of God, His covenant-faithfulness, His mighty power put forth on behalf of His people, but it also reveals what was required from them in the discharge of their responsibility: formidable obstacles had to be surmounted, a protracted warfare had to be engaged in, fierce foes overcome, before they entered into the actual enjoyment of the land. Salvation is indeed by grace, and grace alone, for human merit has no place therein; yet good works are necessary, because it was to fit us for them that grace is given. In Joshua we have a striking and blessed exemplification of the two-foldness of Truth and the perfect balance of its essential parts. The sovereign grace of God and the discharge of His peoples’ responsibility run side by side therein. Canaan was God’s free gift unto Israel, yet they had to fight for possession of it.” (Gleanings in Joshua). The Reformation Heritage Study Bible puts it this way: “God dispossessed the Canaanites and gave the land to Israel as their possession. Nonetheless, Israel had to fight to expel the Canaanites. So spiritually, Christ has conquered sin so that it no longer has dominion over us (Romans 6:14), yet we must actively be engaged in fighting against sin (Romans 6:12-13).” Joshua 6:21 records of Jericho: “They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey with the edge of the sword.” Scripture is emphatically telling us that each and every kind of sin is to be put to death; not only the ones we think could do a lot of damage (IE, the men and oxen), but the ones we might otherwise see as harmless (IE, the women, sheep and donkeys). We’re to put to death new sins (IE, young), as well as recurring ones (IE, old).

\(^{13}\) If it’s true that sanctification is a lifetime process then it’s going to be pretty important for us to learn how to live out our very imperfect Christian lives in light of the finished work of Christ. Many of us get excessively discouraged by our sin and end up feeling defeated. I call it the downward spiral: As soon as we mess up, we’re pulled into a downward cycle of discouragement and despair. But there’s a word of hope for us here. In Joshua 8:1 we read: “Now the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not fear or be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.’” The reason this is so life-giving is the context of these words. In their first battle at Jericho (Chapter 6), Israel had conquered. But in their second battle at Ai (Chapter 7), they fell flat on their faces: They failed; they sinned; they completely blew it. And in that moment, the temptation would have been to give in to the downward spiral. But God tells them here to get back up and go back to Ai. They didn’t have to pout or feel defeated after they blew it. In fact, that was the very thing God was specifically commanded them not to do. He was going to send them right back into the game. Just like Israel, God wants us to find new strength and grace, even right after we’ve blown it. We don’t have to give in to
shouldn't get disheartened as the Lord shows us the ways we still need to grow. Just like with Israel, the Lord is subduing our enemies, but He's doing it one city at a time. Growth in Christ can be slow; but if you've been a Christian long enough, you can look back on your life and praise God for the ways He has changed you. As one put it: “I am not the man I ought to be, I am not the man I wish to be, and I am not the man I hope to be, but by the grace of God, I am not the man I used to be.”

A) The Plight of Israel: Many of us have gone through times in our life that we're not proud of as we look back on them. We may not have realized just how bad those dark seasons were at the time, but we blush as we think of them now. That's sort of what the time of the judges was like for Israel. They may not have realized it at the time, but this 350 year span was a dark period in their history. After Joshua dies, things start to get bad, and they only continue to get worse.

15 The spiritual decline of these days followed a specific pattern: 1) The sons of Israel would do evil in the sight of the Lord (2:11ff; 3:7); 2) The Lord gave them into the hands of their enemies (2:14-15; 3:8); 3) The sons of Israel cried out to the Lord to save them (3:9,15); and 4) The Lord would raise up a leader to deliver them (2:16; 3:9,15). These leaders were the judges (2:16); but don't let that name confuse you, the downward spiral; we don't have to stay defeated. The good news of the gospel is that even in the midst of our failures, we can live a victorious Christian life because Jesus is our victory. And because of Him, we can get right back up and move forward in the power of the Spirit, even right after we've blown it, claiming the finished work of Christ for all our failures, and saying with Paul: “One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.” (Philippians 3:13).

16 The Reformation Heritage Study Bible says: “That Israel conquered the land in increments vividly pictures the progressive nature of sanctification. . .Victory over one city led to another city to conquer. So we must die more and more to sin and live more and more to righteousness. Sanctification progresses until glorification.” Octavius Winslow adds these thoughts on the significance of the fact that Israel wasn't able to drive out the Canaanites completely: “Dear reader, it will be nothing new for you to be informed, that the Canaanites still dwell in the land. You will recollect, that when the children of Israel took possession of Canaan, although they conquered its inhabitants, and took supreme possession and government of the country, yet the former occupants of the soil they could not entirely dispossess. The circumstance is thus recorded: 'The children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.' (Josh. 17:12). Now what these Canaanites, these heathenish idolaters, were to the children of Israel, the natural corruptions of the heart are to the called children of God. After all that Divine and sovereign mercy has done for the soul—though the inhabitants of the land have been conquered, and the heart has yielded to the power of omnipotent grace, and the 'strong man armed' has been defeated, and Jesus has taken the throne—yet the Canaanites will dwell in the land, and we cannot expel them thence. These are the natural corrupts of our fallen nature, the evils of a heart that is but partially renewed, the heathenish lusts, and passions, and infirmities that formerly were the sole occupants of the soil, and still dwell there, and which we shall never, in the present state, entirely dispossess. But what did the children of Israel do to these Canaanites, whom they could not drive out of the cities, but who would dwell in the land? We read in the 13th verse: 'Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxing strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute: but did not utterly drive them out.' Now this is what the children of God must do with the spiritual Canaanites that yet dwell in the renewed heart: they cannot be driven out, but they may be put to tribute; they cannot be entirely extirpated, yet they may be brought into complete subjection, and even made to contribute to the spiritual advance of the soul, and to the glory of God. Yes, even these very indwelling and powerful Canaanites, these strong corruptions that war and fight in the renewed soul, may be made subservient to the spiritual benefit of a child of God. If it will not be so, if they lead him to put no confidence in himself, to draw largely from the fullness of grace in Jesus, to repair often to the throne of mercy, to deal much and closely with the atoning blood, to cultivate a watchful, prayerful, tender spirit and daily and hourly to rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh? And yet all this may be the result, when the believer has waxen strong in the Divine life, and has learned to put his indwelling corruptions to tribute, though he may not utterly expel them from his bosom. Thus God turned the curse of Balaam into a blessing,” (Neh. 13:2) and thus, too, may the renewed soul—often led to exclaim, 'O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'—through a supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus, and becoming more thoroughly versed in the ways of the holy war, be able to turn the risings of his indwelling sins into occasions of more holy and humble walk with God.” (The Fruitless and Fruitful Professor). The quote is from John Newton, taken from The Christian Pioneer (1856; edited by Joseph Winks, p84). It may have originally been more of a reference to the truth of regeneration, but it's no less true as we think about our growth in grace as Christians.

17 The enemies that came against Israel included both the remaining peoples living within the land of Canaan that Israel had...
Samson is probably the most famous of the judges. And he's also one of the most baffling and controversial figures in all of Scripture. We don't know what to make of him: “Why should so much attention be given to a judge who squandered his endowment and ignored his calling? Is the history of Samson given for its entertainment value? Is Samson an Israeli Rambo, a Superman for a biblical comic strip?”

What do we do with Samson? Why is he in Scripture and what is his life meant to teach us? Believe it or not, the first reason he's in Scripture is that his life sets forth for us a beautiful prefiguring of the life of Jesus. Think about it: He was born to deliver God's people, but they didn't understand. So much so that he was bound by his own people and handed over to the Gentiles, who in turn mocked and ridiculed him as he suffered. But in the end he was vindicated; and though he had delivered God's people many times over the course of his life, it was actually his death that would accomplish for them the greatest deliverance of all (cf. 16:30). Gideon had delivered God's people with 300 men; but with Samson, God was showing He didn't even need that many—He could deliver His people with One. And so, in Samson's life, we see Jesus. But his life is also a warning to us. His character is so marred by sin and vice that if his name hadn't been listed among the faithful in Hebrews 11:32, we would have serious doubts that he really knew the Lord. In this, Samson shows us just how far we as believers can fall into sin, if we're not careful. In Samson we're also confronted with the truth that we can be extremely gifted and yet far from God. Samson was incredibly gifted. I think that's how we can view his great strength. Yet he's a man driven by lust and revenge. How can this be? Here's the scary truth: We can do amazing things for Jesus while being distant from Him. We can be far from God and preach powerful sermons. A lot of us wish for the gifts that Samson had. Careful what you wish for. It was Samson's great strength that led to his downfall in the end.

failed to conquer (cf. the Philistines in 3:1-3; chapters 13-16; Jabin in chapter 4) as well as enemies who attacked from outside the land of Canaan (cf. Mesopotamia in 3:9-11; Moab/Midian in 3:12-14 and again in chapters 6-8; Ammon in chapter 11). This is the theme of Judges (cf. 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). It wasn't all bad. Often with the deliverance of the judge came spiritual renewal as well. But the judges themselves, though at times commended, are often also overcome with their own flaws; and in the end the spiritual renewal doesn't last, and Israel falls back into doing evil. So that overall, whereas the book of Joshua is marked by conquering, the book of Judges is marked by failure and defeat. The Reformation Heritage Study Bible leaves us with this assessment: “There is a remarkable yet pathetic pattern of rebellion, retribution, repentance, and restoration... With each cycle of apostasy the nation plummeted to greater depths...” The lesson? “The message of Judges is clear. When sin isn't just a pattern but a cycle. After the Lord had raised up the judge and rescued His people, they quickly forgot Him, and returned to doing evil in His sight (back to step one). In attempting to explain these dark days in Israel’s past, the author of Judges seems at a loss for words, except to say: “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.” (17:6).

What do we do with Samson? Why is he in Scripture and what is his life meant to teach us? Believe it or not, the first reason he's in Scripture is that his life sets forth for us a beautiful prefiguring of the life of Jesus. Think about it: He was born to deliver God's people, but they didn't understand. So much so that he was bound by his own people and handed over to the Gentiles, who in turn mocked and ridiculed him as he suffered. But in the end he was vindicated; and though he had delivered God's people many times over the course of his life, it was actually his death that would accomplish for them the greatest deliverance of all (cf. 16:30). Gideon had delivered God's people with 300 men; but with Samson, God was showing He didn't even need that many—He could deliver His people with One. And so, in Samson's life, we see Jesus. But his life is also a warning to us. His character is so marred by sin and vice that if his name hadn't been listed among the faithful in Hebrews 11:32, we would have serious doubts that he really knew the Lord. In this, Samson shows us just how far we as believers can fall into sin, if we're not careful. In Samson we're also confronted with the truth that we can be extremely gifted and yet far from God. Samson was incredibly gifted. I think that's how we can view his great strength. Yet he's a man driven by lust and revenge. How can this be? Here's the scary truth: We can do amazing things for Jesus while being distant from Him. We can be far from God and preach powerful sermons. A lot of us wish for the gifts that Samson had. Careful what you wish for. It was Samson's great strength that led to his downfall in the end.
The time of the judges started off bad. And it only got worse. So that as the author of Judges dipped his pen into the ink for the last time, to etch out the final sentence of his volume, he’s forced to write what he had already written many times before. The last verse of Judges reads: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (21:25). But even in these words there’s hope. If the author is writing about “those days”, he must be living in days that were different. Newer days. Days when there was a king in Israel. Days when God’s people refused to do what was right in their own eyes and sought to do what was right in His. Yes, the time of the judges was a total train-wreck. We cringe and blush and weep as we read of this dark season in our past. But we can talk about it now as being in our past. And we can do that because God didn’t turn on His people when they turned on Him. You’d think at this point God would have thrown in the towel. But that’s not what He did. The bride of Christ had torn up her marriage certificate and stormed out the door. What did God do? He bent down, picked up the pieces, and began putting them back together. He would renew His vows with her. He would renew His covenant. There had been no king in Israel, and His people were a mess. He would fix it. He would make it better. He would give them a king in Israel. The time of the judges was about to come to a close. God was ushering in the monarchy.

B) The Story of NAOMI: And so, even as the days of the judges continued, God started putting into motion His plan to raise up a king in Israel. It’s in the days of the judges that the book of Ruth takes place (Ruth 1:1); and it’s the book of Ruth that records the very first preparations the Lord makes for establishing the monarchy. But don’t let the title fool you, because the book of Ruth is really about Naomi. In Hebrew, Naomi means “pleasant”, and that was a great way to describe her life. She lived in Bethlehem, which means “house of bread.” And her husband’s name was Elimelech, which means “My God is king.” She had two boys; and her friends loved her dearly. But when a famine struck the land, Naomi and her family were compelled to sojourn in the land of Moab in search of food. While they were living there, Naomi’s husband died; and she was left with her two boys. They later married Moabite women; one of them was Ruth. Life went on for ten years. But while Naomi was anxiously awaiting word of grandchildren in the sunset years of her life, she was forced to hear news of a very different kind: Her two boys had been taken away from her just as her husband had. Naomi was a broken woman. She had left Bethlehem with her husband and her sons. When she came back (Ruth 1:6), the only one with her was her daughter-in-law, Ruth. She had lost everything. When the women in town see her, she responds: “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara [Hebrew: “bitter”], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since . . the Almighty has afflicted me?” (1:20-21).

Much of the book focuses on the courtship between Boaz and Ruth, but in and through and behind their story, we see the Lord re-entering into another kind of courtship with Naomi. 23 The Hebrew

23 We might contrast Naomi’s experience with Jacob, who went out as one man and returned as two companies (Gen. 32:10). Some believe that Naomi and her family should never have left Canaan, even though there was a famine. It’s hard to say if this is true or not. Genesis records a few different famines during the time of the patriarchs. When Abraham faces a famine, he leaves (12:10); no commentary is given, but it doesn’t turn out well. When there’s a famine in Isaac’s time (26:1), the Lord tells him not to leave, so he stays in Gerar (which is part of Canaan). But in the famine at the end of Genesis, the Lord explicitly tells Jacob to go down to Joseph in Egypt. It does seem, though, that this was a unique instance. At the end of the day, I don’t think we can say with certainty that Naomi shouldn’t have left the land; but that’s probably the case. And if it’s true she shouldn’t have left, it just serves to highlight God’s grace to her all the more. It seems there was a lot in these first four verses that this family shouldn’t have done—but God pursues them in grace (see the last footnote in this section on Naomi for more).

24 The story of Boaz and Ruth is a beautiful study that we unfortunately don’t have the time to study here. One item of note is that according to Matthew 1:5, the mother of Boaz was actually Rahab, the former Gentile from Jericho. Which explains a lot about Boaz and his courtship of Ruth. His own mother had been a Gentile outsider too, who had left her people and gods in order to join the people of God and worship the Lord. Boaz could empathize with a Ruth in a way few Israelite men could (cf. 2:11). Also, Boaz and Ruth are set forth as a beautiful picture of Christ and the church: Boaz is set before us as a picture of Christ: 1) in his name; which means, “in him is strength” (Ex.15:2; Ps.18:1; 28:7; 31:4); 2) in his position: he was a kinsman able and willing to redeem his people (Lev.25:23ff; Num.3:40ff; Deut.25:5-10); 3) in his sympathy; he could sympathize with Ruth because of his own history (2:11; Matt.1:5; cf. Heb.4:15); and 4) in his dealings: his gracious dealings towards Ruth (the foreigner) are wholly unmerited. And Ruth is set before us as a picture of the Church: 1) in her place of origin; starting out as a foreigner, excluded from God and His people; 2) in her surrender of all: leaving her people and their gods to join herself to the Lord and His people; and 3) in her poverty of spirit: characterized by poverty of Spirit, amazed at the kindness of Boaz.
On the passage in Deuteronomy 25:6, Ainsworth says: "Though physically and properly it belongs only to Him—just as with adoption—His righteousness is legally reckoned as ours.

Matthew Poole likewise affirms: "the seed of the dead man, not of the living. . .Thus Obed, whom Boaz begat of Ruth, is said to be the 'son of Naomi,' (Ruth 4:10), though physically he was actually the child from the new union (in this case Mahlon; 4:10). The language is quite intentional: Naomi had been made to walk through a season of death. But her story wouldn't end there. No, it would end with resurrection. Naomi got just a tiny glimpse of God's faithfulness to her in the birth of her grandson: In and through this child, the Lord would preserve her covenant line after all.25 Ruth 4:16-17 says: “Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi!' So they named him Obed. . ." But what Naomi saw was just the beginning. Those were just the first drops of blessing in her cup. Verse 17 goes on to tell us something more about Obed that Naomi would never have known at the time: “. . .He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.” That's right: “Little Obed, the gurgling baby on Naomi's knee, was the grandfather of David, the most famous king of Israel. . .Naomi doesn't have a clue about the full value of her story. She has no idea as she feeds Obed mashed up carrots [as he] sat on her knee that one day—one day—he would go on to be the grandfather of David, David the great king of Israel.” See, Naomi had thought herself forsaken of God; barren and desolate. But all the while, God was planning to make her more fruitful than she could ever imagine. And that wasn't even the best part. In and through this baby on

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<td>SHUB</td>
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<td>God brought me back EMPTY (1:21)</td>
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<td>REQAM</td>
<td>&quot;Bring back&quot;</td>
<td>God BROUGHT me BACK empty (1:21)</td>
<td>May he BRING BACK life to you (4:15)</td>
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Sometimes the Lord has to empty us of everything we have. But the reason He does it is to fill our empty cups with blessings far beyond our wildest dreams. Naomi had been emptied. She had lost her husband; and she had lost her sons. But in her grandson, the Lord was beginning to restore life (4:15). The language is quite intentional: Naomi had been made to walk through a season of death. But her story wouldn't end there. No, it would end with resurrection. Naomi got just a tiny glimpse of God's faithfulness to her in the birth of her grandson: In and through this child, the Lord would preserve her covenant line after all.26 Ruth 4:16-17 says: “Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi!' So they named him Obed. . .” But what Naomi saw was just the beginning. Those were just the first drops of blessing in her cup. Verse 17 goes on to tell us something more about Obed that Naomi would never have known at the time: “. . .He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.” That's right: “Little Obed, the gurgling baby on Naomi's knee, was the grandfather of David, the most famous king of Israel. . .Naomi doesn't have a clue about the full value of her story. She has no idea as she feeds Obed mashed up carrots [as he] sat on her knee that one day—one day—he would go on to be the grandfather of David, David the great king of Israel.” See, Naomi had thought herself forsaken of God; barren and desolate. But all the while, God was planning to make her more fruitful than she could ever imagine. And that wasn't even the best part. In and through this baby on

25 See the second part of the last footnote in the Lesson on the Abrahamic Covenant. This is a beautiful text for so many reasons. Ultimately the concern here was the covenant. God had made promises to believers and to their children, and to the entire covenant line that would continue from them. So when a husband died without having any children, this was not only a massive emotional and economic blow; it made it seem as though God's promises weren't true; or more accurately, that this individual and his covenant line had been completely cut off from them. And so it was not only to heal the emotional and economic fracture, but to make a provision for fulfilling His promises—in a different but no less of a real way—that the Lord made provision in the duty of the brother of the deceased. This is also a wonderful example of the doctrine of imputation. This was, in effect, one of the common forms of adoption in the Old Testament. The child from the new union (in this case Obed) was reckoned as belonging to/being the child of the deceased man (Mahlon; 4:10), though physically he was actually the child of Boaz and Ruth. This is how justification works. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us—it is reckoned as ours. Though physically and properly it belongs only to Him—just as with adoption—His righteousness is legally reckoned as ours. On the passage in Deuteronomy 25:6, Ainsworth says: "Stand up in the name of his brother: That is, he be counted and called the seed of the dead man, not of the living. . .Thus Obed, whom Boaz begat of Ruth, is said to be the 'son of Naomi.' (Ruth 4:17)," Matthew Poole likewise affirms: "In the name of his brother: Shall be called and reputed his son." And Matthew Henry draws the same conclusion: "the first-born child, which the brother or next kinsman should have by the widow, should be denounced from him that was dead, and entered in the genealogy as his child (v3-6)." (Henry on Deuteronomy 25:6). In what Boaz does for Ruth and Naomi we are given other glimpses of the gospel as well. First, in redeeming the land and acquiring Ruth as his wife, Boaz does this legally, at the city gate, and according to the letter of the law. So too, Christ didn't go around justice to redeem us, but fully satisfied justice at the cross. Also, it seems that Boaz is seeking to buy from Naomi her land for the express purpose of giving it to Naomi's future adopted grandson. So too, Jesus has paid the full price to purchase our inheritance, and He has done so in order to give it to us as a free gift. Lastly, as Boaz is set forth as a picture of Christ in many ways, he also seems to be set forth as a picture of God the Father. Think of it: this was an immense sacrifice for him. Boaz wasn't just making a financial sacrifice; he was committing to part with his first-born son. Such was his love that he was willing to give up his first-born (and at the time, only begotten) son in order to restore life to the otherwise perishing (Naomi). 26 See the previous footnote. The greater part of Naomi's sorrows would have had to do with God's covenant in Genesis 17.
4. The Rise of the MONARCHY: The Book of 1 Samuel

A) Samuel: Samuel was the last of the judges (7:15), and the book of 1 Samuel provides an account of the transition between the judges and the monarchy. God had raised up Samuel when Eli's sons proved themselves to be worthless men (2:29,34; 3:13, 28). Samuel's ministry as a judge seems to have mostly consisted in instructing Israel in God's Word and devoting himself to prayer for them (3:21; 12:23; cf. Acts 6:4). Samuel was faithful to his calling, and when he became old, he appointed his sons to be judges after him. But when it was clear that his sons didn't walk in his ways, all the elders of Israel approached Samuel and asked him to appoint a king over them to be their judge (8:1-5). Samuel brings the matter to God in prayer, and the Lord tells Samuel to listen to their voice; but the Lord also tells Samuel that in asking for a king, “they have rejected Me from being king over them.” (8:7). God was not against the monarchy per se; indeed, He's the One who had been orchestrating it. He had promised Abraham that kings would come forth from him (Genesis 17:6,16; cf. 35:11). He had given specific instructions for establishing the monarchy in Deuteronomy 17. And, as we've seen, the whole book of Judges is devoted to showing that what Israel needed most was a king. So, it seems, the problem wasn't so much with what Israel wanted—but why is it they wanted it: They were asking Samuel for a king, “that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.” (8:20). They wanted a king to be more (not less) like the pagan nations around them. And they wanted a king that they could see with their eyes when they went to Bethlehem. Which is why all this is so important: If tragedy had never struck, what would have happened? They would have stayed in Moab. And had the Lord given grandchildren to Naomi in Moab, the roots would have gone down yet deeper still. Which means that when the Lord's appointed time had arrived to send Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint the one He had chosen as king, David wouldn't have been there. Jesse and his family would have been nowhere to be found. They'd still be in Moab. It's in this way that I think we can see how Naomi's sorrows seemed necessary in coming before the glory. Which serves to highlight both God's providence and grace all the more: God's providence in that He simply will not allow this family to stay in Moab despite the fact that they seem to have every intention to do so. And God's grace in the fact that the reason He is allowing all the pain wasn't to get back at Naomi and punish her for her sins. Probably they should have never left the land in the first place (v1). And after they evaded the famine, they should have gone back to Bethlehem right away instead of settling down in Moab (remaining, v2). Clearly, Naomi's sons had no business marrying Moabite women (Deuteronomy 22:3-6). And as the disobedience mounted up, so did the tragedy. So, on the outside it would very much seem as though God was punishing Naomi and her family for their sins. Indeed, this seems to be what Naomi had assumed (1:13,21). But by the end of the book what we realize is that God wasn't punishing Naomi—He was rescuing her. In some ways, she had become like a prodigal daughter; she had run away and had no plans to return. So the Lord came after her—not to take vengeance—but to bring her safely back home. God didn't orchestrate all this to punish Naomi, but to save her; not to curse her, but to bless her. It's noteworthy that it wasn't just El's sons who went astray. Later we come to learn that Samuel's sons turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.” (1 Samuel 8:3). Later still, we find David's sons Absalom and Amnon turning away from the Lord; even Solomon falls into idolatry. Why is this such a pattern? It may be that all these men allowed their ministries to become idols. Perhaps they elevated their work to a place it was never meant to hold at the expense of their families. These were also men in prominent positions; so even greater care is needed to shepherd our families in such cases.
battle. God had been their king. But I guess having a king they could see was easier than trusting the One they couldn't. Israel wanted a king for all the wrong reasons. And God would give them a king. But He would do it for His own purposes: God would use the monarchy to bless and renew them.29

B) Saul: Israel wanted a king who would look good and fight their battles for them. So, that's exactly what God gave them when He hand-picked their first king, Saul. This seems to be implied even in the meaning of his name. In the Hebrew, Saul means “asked for.” Things didn't go well under Saul. And it's as though God was saying: “This is what you asked for.” Saul was exactly what Israel wanted in a king: he was “a choice and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people.” (1 Samuel 9:2). Saul was a natural-born leader; he checked all the boxes. But it wasn't long before he stopped listening to God. Saul “rejected the word of the Lord”, and the Lord rejected him as king (15:23). Turns out, God wanted to teach His people some lessons about leadership, and they would have to learn the hard way. Because the fact was, Israel never needed a natural-born leader. And they didn't need a king who was handsome, mighty, and tall. Other nations may have sought for kings by these standards. But God's people were to be different; and as such they needed a different sort of king. Saul had the face and build of a Hollywood star and he knew how to lead an army. But what Israel needed wasn't a military expert or a celebrity superstar. They needed a man after God's own heart.30

29 Howard Jr. says: “Early in 1 Samuel, the elders of Israel came together to ask Samuel to appoint a king over Israel (1 Samuel 8:7). The problem with this request was not that God was against the kingship per se. The opposite was actually the case: God was for it. He had promised kings to Abraham from the beginning (Genesis 17:6; 15:3-11), and He had spoken of kings as His blessings upon the people several times since (see especially Genesis 49:28-29; Numbers 24:17).” The problem with the request for kingship in 1 Samuel 8 was the motivations behind it. The people wanted a king to rule over them ‘like all the nations’ (1 Samuel 8:20). First Samuel 8:20 goes beyond this and reveals the Israelites' true agenda in asking for this king: ‘Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles’ (italics added). This desire flew in the face of the injunctions in Deuteronomy 17:14-20...and it was couched in terms of the common ancient Near Eastern conception of a king as one who would fight the nation's battles and receive the glory for it. In effect, this desire served to ‘depose’ the Lord as Israel's king, for He had been the one who had delivered Israel time and again. Thus, the problem with Israel’s request for a king was not that God did not ever want Israel to have a human king. Indeed, kingship was part of His plan from the beginning. However, a proper kingship, in which God retained His supreme place over Israel as its God and its warrior, was not what Israel actually asked for when it requested a king, and that was the reason for the verdicts about its sinfulness.” (An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books, pp.159-60).

30 It's clear from 1 Samuel 8:20 (see above) that Israel wanted their king to be a qualified military expert. It's not as clear as Israel was asking for their king to be strong and tall, since the statement in 1 Samuel 9:2 is more of a description of Saul than a demand of the people. But if we compare the other Scriptures, I believe we find that this was simply an assumed qualification of the king. This is hinted at in 1 Samuel 10:23-24; but we see it most clearly when Samuel is called upon to go to Bethlehem to anoint the new king. When Samuel began to look at Jesse's sons, we read: “When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, ‘Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him.’ But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” (1 Samuel 16:6-7). It's implied here that the assumption was the king should look a certain way. One common question that arises as we talk about God's rejection of Saul's kingship is: How can it be that God “regretted” (ESV) or “repented” (KJV) of making Saul king in 1 Samuel 15:11? The Hebrew word here is nakham, and it's translated in three different ways in Scripture: 1) “relent’ or ‘change one's mind’...2) or ‘have pity or compassion’...3) as well as 'be sorry' or 'have regret.’” (ESV Study Bible, 1 Samuel 15:29). Here it's used in the third sense: the Lord is sorry; saddened; grieved: “[In 15:11], as in Genesis 6:6, the Lord 'regrets' a decision. This means that God feels genuine sorrow when contemplating Saul's sin. But it does not mean that God thinks his decision to make Saul king was a mistake in the overall course of His plans for history (cf. Isaiah 46:9-10).” (ESV Study Bible, 1 Samuel 15:11). And again: “The Hebrew word can mean repenting of one's own sins (impossible for God); finding comfort (inappropriate in this context); or here, God feeling sorrow over man's sins (Isaiah 63:10) and reversing His former course of action (2 Samuel 24:16; Jonah 4:2) in appointing Saul as king, just as He had grieved over the sin of mankind and reversed His act of creating them by destroying them with the flood (Genesis 6:5-7).” (Reformation Heritage Study Bible). Another question is how do we understand this in light of the fact that 1 Samuel 15:29 uses the same word in saying that the Lord “will not...change His mind”? How can verse 11 tell us God “repented” but verse 29 tells us that God does not “repent”? Again, the same Hebrew word can be used in different ways in Scripture: “the term as used in 1 Samuel 15:11,33 describes God's own feeling of sorrow or regret that Saul had turned out as he did...while in verse 29 God will not regret or change his mind concerning a decision once he has made it.” (ESV Study Bible). And again: “There is no contradiction between this statement and the notices in verses 11 and 35 that the Lord was 'grieved' for having made Saul king, even though 'grieved' translates the same Hebrew word as is here rendered 'change his mind.' The point in this verse, as in Numbers 23:19, is that when the Lord makes a pronouncement intended to be final, he cannot, like a human being, be talked out of it.” (Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible on 15:29). A third question that arises as we think about Saul is: What happened to him? How did a man who seemed so humble at the beginning end up so arrogant and self-seeking in the end? And what are we to make of him? This is a great question, and an important one. We'll come back to answer it in more depth later in this lesson. But in general, we must understand Saul's life as a warning. He does seem to have such a promising start (we see this especially in 1 Samuel 10); and that's the very thing that makes his sudden decline so shocking. He
5. The Context of the COVENANT: 2 Samuel 1-7

A) God's PLAN (2 Samuel 1-2): David is anointed king as a young man in 1 Samuel 16, and he kills Goliath the giant in the next chapter. But for the rest of the book of 1 Samuel, David is running for his life. After Saul tries to kill him twice, David knows he has to leave town; and he spends the next several years of his life either hiding in the wilderness (Chapters 22-26) or living as a refugee among the Philistines (Chapters 27-31). It was during this time that David penned some of the Psalms (see 1 Peter 5:4). But no one had expected the one God had chosen as king: “When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, ‘Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him.' But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” (1 Samuel 16:6-7).

Jesse had brought seven sons, but God had chosen the one left behind to babysit the sheep. When David is brought in, the Lord tells Samuel to anoint him. And when he does, “the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.” (1 Samuel 16:13). Significantly, we’re also told in the next verse that “the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul . . .” In this we see that God's special anointing for leading His people had been taken away from Saul and given to David. 32 But though David was now anointed as the new king, it would be years before he’d actually reign. And though he had been entrusted with a unique privilege, that also meant he’d have to undergo unique preparation. David would have had no way of knowing it at the time, but his path to the throne would be one of hardships, tears, and trials. He would have to spend the next several years of his life in exile, running from Saul in the wilderness. For David, suffering would come before glory; a cross before the crown.

There’s so much we learn from David, the man after God's heart: his life is an example for us; his sin is a warning to us; his sufferings are an encouragement to us. But most of all, as we'll see, David's life and kingship are meant to point us to another King who would come after him and through his line. It's true, as we said, that many years before David, God had done wonderful things in the little town of Bethlehem. But many years after David, the Lord would do wonders there once again. Another king would arise from Bethlehem. God had sent Samuel, the last of the judges, to anoint Israel's new king. But later, He would send John, the last of the prophets, to anoint Israel's true and everlasting King. David reigned for a time as king over Israel; but the Lord Jesus is the One God has appointed to reign over all as King of kings forever. But Jesus' kingship would also be patterned after David's: Before glory there would have to be suffering; before the crown there would have to be the cross. 33

32 It's important that we don't misunderstand or misinterpret the events of 1 Samuel 16:13-14. The ESV Study Bible rightly notes on verse 14: “The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul as soon as the Lord's Spirit came upon David to anoint him for kingship (see v13). This statement is not relevant to the issue of whether people can lose their salvation; it is not describing the Holy Spirit’s role in individual regeneration in a NT sense. Rather, in light of verse 13, it should be seen as being about gaining or losing the Spirit's empowering for the role of king (see 28:1-6,10; 11:6; 16:13; and perhaps Psalm 51:11). From this point to the end of his life, Saul will continually make futile attempts to govern without the empowering of the Holy Spirit.”

33 There are indeed several similarities between the lives and ministries of Samuel and John the Baptist. Another similarity is that just like Samuel's mother, Hannah, John's mother Elizabeth was also barren until the Lord opened up her womb to give her a very special son whom He had set apart for a very special task. Also, just as Samuel had not expected whom it was that God had chosen of Jesse's sons, so John the Baptist tells us twice that he at first “did not recognize” Jesus as the Messiah until the Lord revealed it to him (John 1:28,33). And just as the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David after being anointed by Samuel, so too the heavens opened and the Spirit descended upon Christ after being baptized by John (Matthew 3:16-17).
In some of these Psalms, we find David asking God to judge his enemies. At first, this may seem cruel or vengeful; but the whole point is that David is refusing to take vengeance himself. He’s calling upon God to do what’s right rather than taking things into his own hands. During the course of his time in the wilderness, David actually had two opportunities to kill Saul and take over as king (Chapters 24 and 26). Twice, he had the chance to take a short-cut to the throne; to take what was promised to him without having to wait on God’s timing. But he refused to do it. David knew there was a difference between the easiest way to the throne and the right way. And the waiting was worth it: Saul is killed in battle, and in 2 Samuel 2:4, David is crowned king.

**B) God’s PRINCE (2 Samuel 2-5):** In 2 Samuel 2:4, David is made king over the tribe and territory of Judah. But at the same time, another king is anointed over the other tribes of Israel: Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul. Ish-bosheth means “man of shame”, and this seems to be Scripture’s way of telling us that it was wrong of Israel to anoint another as king when God had made it so clear the next king was to be David. 2 Samuel 3:1 gives us a description of the ensuing years: “Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David grew steadily stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker continually.” David’s kingship would come in stages. He’s anointed in 1 Samuel 16; he’s made king of Judah in 2 Samuel 2; but it’s only later still that he reigns over all Israel (5:4-5):

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>David is Anointed as King</td>
<td>1 Samuel 16:13</td>
<td>Bethlehem</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Reigns over Judah</td>
<td>2 Samuel 2:4</td>
<td>Hebron</td>
<td>7 1/2 years</td>
<td>Reigning partially over some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Reigns over all Israel</td>
<td>2 Samuel 3:1-5</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>33 years</td>
<td>Reigning fully over all</td>
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**C) God’s PRODIGALS (2 Samuel 5:1):** After he had reigned seven years over Judah, and following the death of Ish-bosheth, all Israel came to David, asking him to reign over them as well. We read in 2 Samuel 5:1, “Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, ‘Behold, we are your bone and your flesh’. . .” It was a beautiful thing to say. In some ways, it was also a confession. The language of “bone and flesh” echoes back to Genesis 2:23. When the Lord had brought the woman to the man, Adam had said: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. . .” Israel was to David as Eve was to Adam. They belonged to him, as a wife belongs to her husband; but they had deserted him. Now they came to their senses. For seven years they had rejected their true king; now they’re coming back to him like the prodigal to his father. How would David respond? We’re given more details of the account in 1 Chronicles 12:39, where we read, “They were there with David three days, eating and drinking. . .” Turns out, David was ready to receive them with a feast of his own.

**D) God’s PURPOSE (2 Samuel 5:12):** After David had been crowned king over all Israel, we read in 2 Samuel 5:12, “And David realized that the Lord had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel.” God had done amazing things for David; He took him from the sheepfolds and had made him to reign as king over all Israel. But what was God’s purpose behind it all? The Lord had done these things “for the sake of His people Israel.” Thing is, as much as the Lord loved David, He wasn’t primarily doing this for David’s sake—He was doing it for the sake of His people Israel. The whole reason the Lord raised up a shepherd was for the purpose of protecting and nourishing His lambs. This is what we see in Psalm 78:70-72: “He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. . .” David realized there was a greater purpose for his rising to the throne than his own exaltation. The very reason David had been made the shepherd of Israel was the Lord’s care and concern for His sheep.

**E) God’s PLACE (2 Samuel 5):** When David had ruled seven years over Judah, he had ruled from Hebron, which was a southern city in the tribe of Judah. Now that he had been anointed king over all Israel, David chose Jerusalem as the new and permanent location for his throne. Jerusalem was more centrally located to all the tribes of Israel than Hebron. In fact, we might think of Jerusalem as being the city that connects the tribe of Judah with the rest of the tribes of Israel, since it’s reckoned as being both the most northern city of Judah (Joshua 15:8) as well as the most southern city of
**Benjamin** (Joshua 18:28). **God was bringing all His people together at Jerusalem.** It would take some work through; the city was still inhabited by the Jebusites. But David and his men go up and take the city; and afterwards, “David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David.” (2 Samuel 3:9).

**F) God’s PRESENCE** (2 Samuel 6): But it wasn’t just David who would now dwell in Jerusalem. In 2 Samuel 6, we witness the king bringing the **ark of the covenant** into the city of David. The ark was associated with the presence of the Lord; so when the ark came into Jerusalem it signified that this is the place where the Living God himself would dwell. God was associating His presence with a very particular place. And since Jerusalem had become the capital city of David’s reign, the Lord was also associating His presence with a very particular kingship. This is why 1 Chronicles 29:23 describes the beginning of Solomon’s reign by saying: “Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king. . .” David’s throne had become the throne of the Lord. David’s reign now represented the reign of God. Not only would God’s presence be found in David’s city; God’s reign would be administered in and through David’s throne. It was God himself who would reign on the throne of David at Jerusalem.34

**G) God’s PEACE** (2 Samuel 7:1): It was after all these things that 2 Samuel 7:1 tells us; “. . .the king lived in his house, and the Lord had given him rest on every side from all his enemies. . .” For years, Israel had been ravaged by the attacks of their enemies. But now, under David, the Lord was giving His people a measure of peace. God had truly done wonderful things for His people Israel: He had chosen and anointed their new king, a man after His own heart. He had appointed a place; He had endowed it with His presence; and He had given peace. The stage was set for the Davidic covenant.

II. An Overview of the Davidic Covenant

*So far in our study of the Covenant of Grace, we’ve covered God’s first promise in Genesis 3:15, God’s covenant with Noah, His covenant with Abraham, and His covenant with Israel at Sinai. God’s covenant with David is the next stage, and the last, of the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace:*

I. The Covenant of Works with Adam

II. The Genesis 3:15 promise of a Redeemer:

A) The Noahic Covenant

B) The Abrahamic Covenant

C) The Mosaic Covenant

D) The Davidic Covenant

E) The New Covenant

*Being the next manifestation of the Covenant of Grace, the Davidic Covenant shares fundamental unity with both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.35 It’s through the covenant with David that many of the promises made to Abraham find their fulfillment: God had promised that kings would come forth from Abraham (Genesis 17:6); now we finally see the fulfillment. By the end of David’s reign, we’re also told that, “Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore”, which was in fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham as well (Genesis 22:17; 1 Kings 4:20).36 The requirements given at Sinai also

34 As Robertson says: “Under David the kingdom arrives. God formally establishes the manner by which he shall rule among his people. Prior to this point, God certainly had manifested himself as the Lord of the covenant. But now God openly situates his throne in a single locality. Rather than ruling from a mobile sanctuary, God reigns from Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. The ark is brought triumphantly to Jerusalem. God himself associates his kingship with the throne of David.” (p229).

35 As Edwards notes: “This was the fifth solemn establishment of the covenant of grace which the church after the fall. . .The first was with Adam; the second with Noah; the third with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the fourth was in the wilderness by Moses; and now the fifth is made to David.” (History of Redemption). Wright says: “The covenant with David is thus presented in the historical record, not as something utterly new or as a break with the past, but as an extension of God’s covenant relationship with his people to the line of David who would now reign over them.” (Knowing Jesus, pp89-90).

36 Rhodes draws this out for us: “Abraham had been promised that some of his descendants would be kings (Genesis 17:6), but so far we’ve not seen any sign of them. Here, God continues to undo the damage of the fall, by appointing David and his descendants as covenant kings. The missing piece of the covenant jigsaw is in place. . .David’s son Solomon takes to the throne, and initially all is well. Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt.”
continue to apply in the Davidic Covenant: The kings of Israel were commanded to write out a copy of God's Law personally, read it daily, and conform their lives to it (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). Even David's last words to his son Solomon hearken back to Sinai. He says: "Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do" (1 Kings 2:3). 17

*There are several passages associated with the Davidic Covenant, but the two most primary Scriptures are 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89. The passage in 2 Samuel 7 records the actual promises God had made to David, while Psalm 89 is written as a later reflection upon those promises. The word “covenant” doesn't actually appear in 2 Samuel 7, but Psalm 89 makes it clear that this was indeed a covenant (vv3,28,34,39).

*There are both temporal and eternal components in God's covenant with David. We've seen this in our study of the other Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace; and it's the same here in the Davidic Covenant. There are temporal promises God makes to David; promises about David's throne, David's city (Jerusalem), and David's lineage. But behind these temporal promises are eternal realities. Just like with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Israel, this covenant is here to teach us truths about the gospel.

*God's covenant with David sets the stage for the coming of Christ in the gospels. The Davidic Covenant is the covenant of the kingdom. And as it's the last stage of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament, it shouldn't surprise us that this is the same language our Savior used to preach the gospel. Jesus' message of the kingdom of God wasn't a new teaching—He was simply picking up where the Old Testament had left off. In and through Christ, God was bringing to fulfillment everything that He had spoken to David.

So, God's covenant with David is about Christ and the gospel. What are the truths we learn in particular?

1. The FOUNDATION of the Covenant of Grace: We learn what is the only basis of our hope
2. The NATURE of the Covenant of Grace: We learn how it is that God's blessings flow to His people
3. The WARNINGS and COMFORTS of the Covenant of Grace: We learn what this all means for us

### III. What we learn from the Davidic Covenant

1. The FOUNDATION of the Covenant of Grace: We learn what is the only basis of our hope

We mentioned above that there are both temporal and eternal components in God's covenant with David. It's always been this way. 39 All the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace are about Christ

37 The Law of Moses is also an explicit requirement annexed to the Davidic Covenant in Psalm 89:30-33. Referencing this passage, as well as Scriptures such as Psalm 132:11-12 and 1 Chronicles 28:7-8, Francis Roberts says: "As [the Lord] performs Covenant Mercy, so they must perform Covenant Duty...the covenant duties and conditions required of David and his seed in this covenant, are the same with those imposed upon Israel and their posterity in the Sinai covenant...[So] This covenant with David did not void or annul the Sinai covenant or the duties thereof...[So] This covenant with David necessarily integrated the temple at Jerusalem with the Mosaic tabernacle or temple, just as God promised Abraham in Genesis 15." (Covenants Made Simple). Williams likewise concludes: "Thus to no small extent, the kingship of David represents a marked fulfillment of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant." (Far As the Curse is Found, p183). Further, the New Testament also affirms the unity between the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants in Zacharias' prophecy in Luke 1:68-74 as well as in Paul's connection between the two in Romans 4:1-8. Lastly, in Ezekiel 37:24-28, the new covenant is put forth as the fulfillment of both the Abrahamic (v25) and Davidic (v24) Covenants.

38 Aside from 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89, other important passages are 2 Samuel 23:1-7; as well as Psalms 2, 72, 110 and 132.

39 On the Noahic Covenant: "the story of [Noah] and his waters or flood, and God's covenant with him. . .though in the letter the semblance they bear was but of the temporal salvation and deliverance from the flood, yet in the mystery thereof they were. . .intended as figures of God's eternal covenant and mercies unto his elect church, which were to come out of Noah's and his sons loins" (Goodwin, Works, V9, p43). On the Abrahamic Covenant: "The covenant with Abraham. . .had a double side, one that had in view temporal benefits—like the promise of the land of Canaan, numerous descendants, protection against earthly enemies—and one that had in view spiritual benefits. Nevertheless, this is to be so understood that the earthly and temporal were not for their own sake, but rather so that they would provide a type of the spiritual and heavenly..." (Vos, V2, p128). On the Mosaic Covenant: "Jesus Christ was the very principal scope and soul of the Law, or Sinai Covenant, in all the doctrines, commands, and promises thereof. . .so that in this whole Sinai Covenant Jesus Christ was primarily intended. . .Christ was the true ark, having the covenant and Law of God fully in his heart and bowels; Christ was the true
and the gospel—but they're wrapped with an outer husk. Eternal truths are wrapped with a temporal shell. In the Noahic Covenant, God delivered Noah and his family from the waters of the flood. But the temporal salvation that Noah and his household found in the ark was always meant to point us forward to the eternal salvation God would provide in and through Jesus Christ. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God made promises to Abraham of a land, a seed, and blessing. But though at first glance these were only temporal things, we learned that ultimately these promises had to do with Christ. In His Covenant with Israel at Sinai, God gave His people all kinds of instructions about the tabernacle, the priesthood, certain feasts, and animal sacrifices. On the surface these things were only temporal and earthly; but they were always meant to teach us eternal truths—to point us to Jesus and the gospel.

**The Temporal and Eternal Aspects in the OT Manifestations of the Covenant of Grace:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Covenant</th>
<th>Temporal Aspects (the husk)</th>
<th>Eternal Significance (the kernel)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>Noah and his family are saved from the flood in the ark</td>
<td>We are pointed to Jesus and the Gospel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Abraham is promised a land, a seed, and blessing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinai</td>
<td>The tabernacle, the sacrifices, the feasts and priesthood</td>
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We're going to see the same thing in God's covenant with David. The Lord makes several wonderful promises to David here in 2 Samuel 7, and we're going to see that each one of them is ultimately and most fully accomplished in Jesus. God's covenant promises to David are about Christ and the gospel. But they're also wrapped in an outer shell of the temporal and earthly. Let's take them one by one:

**A) Preeminence (2 Samuel 7:8-9):** In 2 Samuel 7, the prophet Nathan comes to David with a message from the Lord. In verses 8-9, Nathan, speaking for God, declares: “Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth.’” There are a few different elements we can see here, which are in turn expanded upon in other places of Scripture. In these two verses, the Lord rehearses His dealings with David and makes promises to him concerning his rule, his enemies, and his name.

1) David's rule has been established: We see this in verse 8 in particular. The Lord tells David: “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel.” We see the same truth expanded upon in Psalm 89:19-21, which says: “Once You spoke in vision to Your godly ones, and said, ‘I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found David My servant; with My holy oil I have anointed him, with whom My hand will be established; My arm also will strengthen him.” The Lord had chosen David, and established his rule.

2) David's enemies are subdued: We see this in verse 9: “I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you, . . .” The Lord also tells David in verse 11, “I will give you rest from all your enemies.” Again, there is a parallel passage as we continue to read in Psalm 89:22-23: “The enemy will not deceive him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him. But I shall crush his adversaries before him, and strike those who hate him.” God will subdue David's enemies.

3) David's name shall be enlarged: God tells David later in verse 9: “. . . and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth.” Again, we're told in Psalm 89:24, “My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him, and in My name his horn will be exalted.”

All these things the Lord did for David. But in these declarations and promises, we're also pointed to the Greater David; the One who would come forth from David; of whom David was but a type. It's ultimately in Christ that these things find their greatest fulfillment: David's rule had been established, but only as a picture of the future rule of the Son of David: The author of Hebrews tells us just this mercy-seat, covering the curse of the Law; Christ was the true sacrifice, purging away sin, and making atonement by his own blood; Christ was the true table of show-bread, whereon all his Israel are daily presented as acceptable before the Lord. Christ was the true veil, by which, rent, we have open entrance made into the Holy of Holies, heaven itself. . .” (Roberts, pp763,67).
when he quotes Psalm 45:7: “You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above your companions.” (1:9). Here, he cites a passage that uses the same kind of language as in Psalm 89:20-21—but he tells us explicitly that it's speaking of the rule of Christ (1:8). Further, David's enemies were subdued in order to teach us that the same will be true for the enemies of Christ: The Royal Psalms are filled with the imagery of the Messiah ruling over His enemies (Psalm 2; 21:8-11; 45:5; 110:1-2); and Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:25 that Christ “must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.” Lastly, David's name would be enlarged to a degree, but this promise would find its greatest fulfillment in Jesus: Solomon couldn't have been speaking of any other, lesser king, when he invoked this blessing in Psalm 72:17: “May his name endure forever; may his name increase as long as the sun shines; and let men bless themselves by him; let all nations call him blessed.” And Paul tells us that Christ has been given “the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow. . .and. . .every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:9-11). David's preeminence is meant to point us to the preeminence of Jesus: “He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.” (Colossians 1:18, ESV): 

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PROMISE</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Speaking of DAVID</td>
<td>Speaking of CHRIST</td>
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B) SHELTER (2 Samuel 7:10-11a): After the declarations and promises about David, the Lord goes on to make some promises about His people Israel in 2 Samuel 7:10-11. In these verses we read: “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. . .” In these two verses, we see three promises in particular: The Lord will place His people; He will plant them; and give them peace. 

1) PLACEMENT: We see this in verse 10, where the Lord tells David: “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel. . .” The place the Lord was referring to was Canaan in general, and Jerusalem in particular. And since God himself also had His dwelling in Jerusalem, as represented by the ark, we see that the place God had appointed for Israel was the same place He himself would dwell. This wasn't by accident! The Lord's desire was to dwell with His people. As Psalm 132:13-16 says: “For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy with bread. Her priests also I will clothe with salvation, and her godly ones will sing aloud for joy.”

2) PLANTING: We see this as we continue with verse 10: “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again. . .” Back

40 “[II] This promise of subduing all David's enemies had reference, Immediately and literally to the enemies of David and his seed in the Kingdom of Israel; Mediatly, typically and spiritually to the enemies of Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of his Church. . .[and so] this mercy promised was performed and accomplished two ways: 1) Literally and immediately to David himself. . . 2) Spiritually, mystically and mediatly. . .to Jesus Christ the true David, typified by David. . .[III] This promised establishment and strengthening [of David's rule] had its accomplishment also: 1) In David himself. . . 2) In Jesus Christ the primary seed of David. . .” [III] God's increasing and enlargement of David's glory. . . had its accomplishment, much in David, more in Solomon, most of all in Jesus Christ, the chief Son of David. . .who is. . .Lord of Lord's, and King of Kings, and shall reign for evermore.” (Roberts, pp1016-20). A.W. Pink, writing on the promises of Psalm 89:19 and following, which were directed to David, even declares: “one has only to weigh the things here said to perceive that they go far beyond the typical David; yea, some of them could scarcely apply to him at all, but receive their fulfillment in Christ and His spiritual seed.” (Pink, p245).

41 As Roberts notes: “This blessing has in it many branches. For herein God promises touching his people Israel: 1) To appoint (or ordain) a place for them. . . 2) To plant Israel, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more. . . 3) Finally, that the children of wickedness should not afflict them (or waste them) any more, as before-time, . . .” (pp1048-50).

42 Roberts says of Psalm 132: “God promised His presence and residence there, not for any merit or worthiness in Zion; but of His own mere election, grace and affection to Zion. God fetches all arguments and motives from himself, for his favors to his Church. He will dwell in her, because He loves her; and he loves her, because he has chosen her and set his love upon her [Deuteronomy 7:7-8],” (p1046). He also deals with an objection: “But had not God done this already, promising Canaan to Abraham and his seed. . .and giving them possession thereof in the days of Joshua [Joshua 15:1, etc]? But here. . .God promises more plentiful influences of heaven, and more ample blessings, both in regard of the fruitfulness of the fields and firmness of the kingdom, then formerly. So that the words are to be taken comparatively; not absolutely. Besides, till David's days Canaan was not in the complete possession of Israel, for till then the Jebusites possessed the fort or castle of Zion, which David took, and called it the city of David; but afterwards they should have the complete possession of it.” (pp1048-1049).
in Exodus 15:17, Moses had prophesied that God would do this very thing for Israel: “You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, the place, O Lord, which you have made for Your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.” And later, Scripture tells us in Psalm 80:8, “You removed a vine from Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it.” Even before David’s reign, Israel had been dwelling in the land; but they still had to move about at times when they were put to flight by outside forces. In a way they were like potted plants, staying in one place for a time but never putting down roots. Now, God would plant His people under David.

3) PEACE: We read in verses 10-11: “...nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel...” In the past, Israel hadn’t just been unsettled; they had been oppressed and afflicted. The Lord was saying that would change now under David. And, in a very real sense, it would change now because of David. Protecting God’s people from their oppressors was a major part of what Israel’s king was called upon to do. Solomon realized this; and so he prayed in Psalm 72:1-4: “Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king’s son. May he judge Your people with righteousness and Your afflicted with justice. Let the mountains bring peace to the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he vindicate the afflicted of the people, save the children of the needy and crush the oppressor.”

All these things the Lord did for His people, and especially during the reigns of David and Solomon. But just as we saw in the preceding verses, the promises of verses 10-11 have their greatest fulfillment in gospel realities. Ultimately, all these things point us forward to what God would do for His people in Christ. The prophets picked up these same promises and applied them to what the Lord would do for His people in the new covenant. God spoke through Ezekiel: “I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever.” (37:26). And in describing the result of Jesus’ earthly ministry, Isaiah tells us that God’s people “will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:3). Similarly, the Lord says through Jeremiah: “I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.” (Jeremiah 32:41). And again, Ezekiel prophesied saying: “They will no longer be a prey to the nations...but they will live securely; and no one will make them afraid. I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore.” (34:28-29). So, God would do these things to a degree for Israel in a physical and temporal sense, but only as a picture of what He would do for His Church in a lasting and eternal sense. In Christ, we have eternal security. Jesus did say, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted” (Matthew 15:13), but it’s also true that no plant which has been planted by Him shall ever be removed. God’s people are like His garden, and He says: “I, the Lord, am its keeper; I water it every moment. So that no one will damage it, I guard it night and day.” (Isaiah 27:3). The Lord knows how to keep His people. When He brings us into His kingdom, He plants us there forever. Israel was planted in the earthly Jerusalem. But in Christ, we have come to “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Hebrews 12:22), to “receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken” (12:28). Israel was planted in the Jerusalem below. But the Lord did this in order to help us understand that, in Christ, we have been planted in a lasting and eternal city, the Jerusalem above.

43 This happened often in the days of the judges as well as in Saul’s reign. See for instance Judges 6:1-2 and 1 Samuel 13:6.
44 As Roberts notes: “This metaphor of planting them, imports their firm and secure settlement in Canaan. What is planted (says Peter Martyr) is not easily plucked up by the roots. . .Israel in Egypt were in a strange land, none of their own; and in the wilderness they were in their pilgrimage, not in their heritage; and in Canaan itself they were scarce yet throughly rooted, being often disturbed with many sorts of enemies; but they should now take deeper roots, and more no more.” (Roberts, p1049).
45 As Roberts says: “By children of wickedness understand the pagan idolaters and persecutors, who lived without God in the world, in all wickedness, as Egyptians, Idolmeans, Philistines, Amalekites, etc. These should no more afflict and waste them in their persons and States, as formerly from the beginning: As Egyptians afflicted them in Egypt, as the Amalekites, Edomites, Amorites, Moabites, etc afflicted them in their journey towards Canaan; as the Canaanites, Phillistines, and other enemies wasted them in time of the Judges, and under the reign of King Saul. God had now given rest to David from all his enemies, and in comparison of former times, his subjects Israel should not be under any more such afflictions.” (Roberts, p1050).
46 For the language of Jerusalem below and above, see Galatians 4:25-26. The truth of this section might be more particularly divided into two aspects: the Lord promises His people eternal security here on earth, as well as an eternal home with Him in the new heavens and the new earth. Life in the Jerusalem above begins here; but it continues forever in the new heavens and the new earth. Indeed, though we have complete eternal security in this life, yet, we still are afflicted and oppressed. It seems, then, that this promise will have its fullest and grandest fulfillment in glory. It’s this latter truth that seems to be emphasized in other Scriptures: Isaiah 25:6-8 says: “The Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain. . .He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of
And so there is a play on words going on here. David says 'Lord, I want to build you a house of cedar, but it is not right for me to be in a house,' meaning a palace, 'and You dwell in a tent.' And he felt it only fitting to build a more permanent dwelling place for the Lord. That's where Nathan's next words to David come in. We read in 2 Samuel 7:11: “The Lord also declares to you that the Lord will make a house for you.” There is a play-on-words here. David had wanted to build a house for God. But the Lord comes back to David through Nathan and tells him it's going to be the other way around: God is going to build a house for him. In these verses, the same word is being used, but in different ways. David lived in a house (meaning palace). And he wanted to build a house for God (meaning temple). But in response to that, the Lord declares that He is going to instead build a house for David (meaning dynasty). David had expressed the desire to build a temple for the Lord. The Lord comes back promising instead to build a dynasty for David.17

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<td>SHELTER</td>
<td>To plant Israel in a safe place</td>
<td>Jerusalem BELOW</td>
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C) DYNASTY (2 Samuel 7:11c-12): The whole context of the word that Nathan has been speaking to David was the desire that David had earlier expressed to Nathan. We're told in 2 Samuel 7:1-2: “Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the Lord had given him rest on every side from all his enemies, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains.” This didn't feel right to David. Why should he live in a palace while God dwelt in a tent? He felt it only fitting to build a more permanent dwelling place for the Lord. That's where Nathan's next words to David come in. We read in 2 Samuel 7:11: “The Lord also declares to you that the Lord will make a house for you.” There is a play-on-words here. David had wanted to build a house for God. But the Lord comes back to David through Nathan and tells him it's going to be the other way around: God is going to build a house for him. In these verses, the same word is being used, but in different ways. David lived in a house (meaning palace). And he wanted to build a house for God (meaning temple). But in response to that, the Lord declares that He is going to instead build a house for David (meaning dynasty). David had expressed the desire to build a temple for the Lord. The Lord comes back promising instead to build a dynasty for David.17

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<td>GOD'S PROMISE</td>
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But what did it mean exactly that the Lord would build a dynasty for David? What would that look like? The Lord himself goes on to clarify and explain. We read in 2 Samuel 7:12, “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.” There are primarily two promises here in verse 12. God is promising: 1) to raise up for David a particular heir; and 2) establish his kingdom.

His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken.” And Isaiah 60:20-21 says: “Your sun will no longer set, nor will your moon wane; for you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, and the days of your mourning will be over. Then all your people will be righteous forever; they will possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.” And Isaiah 65:17-19 says: “Forwelove, I create new heavens and a new ear; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness. I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; and there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying.” Psalm 37:9-11, 29 says: “For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord, the Lord will inherit the land. Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; and you will look carefully for his place and he will not be there. But the humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity. . .The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.” Roberts again deals with a similar objection at this point: “But how did they move no more, when after this the ten tribes were carried away captive into Assyria, and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were often times grievously shaken by sundry enemies, and at last shamefully carried captive into Babylon? . . .The phrase being taken absolutely and simply, as without condition, so this promise was fulfilled: Literally, in the days of David and Solomon, the two chief royal types of Christ; for, in their days Israel moved no more out of Canaan their inheritance. [Also]: Mystically, this promise had and has its chief accomplishment in the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ, who shall reign upon the throne of his father David over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end, it shall never be destroyed, removed or shaken [Luke 1:32-33]. Whereupon the Apostle styles it, ‘An unshaken Kingdom, an unmoved kingdom’ [Hebrews 12:28].” (p1049). And the Westminster Annotations say of 2 Samuel 7:10: “These promises, though in part taken absolutely and simply, as without condition, so this promise was fulfilled: ‘The Lord makes known to you that he, the Lord himself, will make for you a house’. . .David shall not build God's 'house,' but God shall build David's 'house.' The inversion of phrases interchanges 'dwelling-place' with 'dynasty.' In both cases, perpetuity is the point of emphasis. David wishes to establish for God a permanent dwelling-place in Israel. God declares that he shall establish the perpetual dynasty of David.” (Christ of the Covenants, p232). And Duncan says: “David had begun this passage by saying, that he wanted to build a house for the Lord. Of course, by that, he meant a temple. Now as you know, the word for house, means palace. And the word for temple, or house, means temple, and the word for dynasty are all the same word in Hebrew. And so there is a play on words going on here. David says 'Lord, I want to build you a house,' meaning a temple, 'because it is not right for me to be in a house,' meaning a palace, 'and You dwell in a tent.' And God comes back and He says, 'David, will you build Me a house,' meaning a temple? 'No. I will build you a house,' meaning a dynasty. The Lord was not speaking of building David a house of cedar. He was speaking of building David a dynasty.”
The HEIR of 2 Samuel 7:12: This is the first promise; “I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you.” (verse 12). Who is this heir that the Lord would raise up from David, whose kingdom the Lord would establish in such a remarkable way? Well, at first glance, Solomon seems to be the easy answer. David had lots of sons, but we know that Solomon was the one who would reign in the place of his father. And the Lord established his kingdom in a powerful way. Scripture describes the grandeur of his reign in the book of 1 Kings: “Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance. . .Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt.” (4:20-21). And again: “King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. . .The king made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland.” (10:23,27).

Further, the passage goes on to tell us that this same descendant would be the one to build the house of the Lord (verse 13). And we know that though David had desired to build a house for God, it was Solomon who would build the temple. Besides, Scripture tells us plainly that Solomon was indeed the heir being spoken of here. In 1 Chronicles 22:7-10, David says to his son Solomon, “My son, I had intended to build a house to the name of the Lord my God. But the word of the Lord came to me, saying. . .you shall not build a house to My name, because you have shed so much blood on the earth before Me. Behold, a son will be born to you. . .and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon. . .He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.”

So, in 2 Samuel 7:12, the Lord was speaking of Solomon. But what we find out elsewhere is that He was never speaking only of Solomon. In fact, a great number of Scriptures force us to conclude that the Lord was speaking primarily of someone else. We get our first hint of this in David’s subsequent prayer. As he recalls the promises God had just made to him, he responds in prayer, saying: “You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future.” (7:19). The question arises: Was the time of Solomon really what we would call the distant future? Well, distant or not, Solomon’s reign came; he ascended the throne and built the temple. But soon he too was replaced and others sat on the throne. And yet, the astonishing thing is that hundreds of years after Solomon had lived and died, the prophets continued to speak of the mighty reign of this particular descendant of David as an event still yet to come. Even 200 years after Solomon’s time, Isaiah was still looking to the future as he wrote: “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. . .The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him. . .and He will not judge by what His eyes see. . .But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth. . .” (11:1-4). Jeremiah prophesied, saying: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, ‘When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land.’” (23:5; cf. 30:9; 33:14-16). And Zechariah prophesied, saying: “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne.’” (6:12-13). The prophets had used the imagery of a branch. Psalm 132:17 uses different language: “I will cause the horn of David to spring forth. . .” The horn of an animal denoted its strength; the imagery is different but the truth is the same: Scripture’s telling us that Solomon was just the beginning of the fulfillment; his life was meant to serve as a picture or type of another and Greater Son of David who was still yet to come.48


48 The Jews understood this, which is why “son of David” was a common name for the Messiah in Jesus’ day (Mark 12:35ff; Matthew 12:23; 21:9). In Zechariah 6:12-13, Joshua the high priest is the one being crowned (verse 11); but—like Solomon—it is only as a type of the Messiah yet to come. As Calvin says: “The vision is now explained. . .God here shows that what he has meant to serve as a picture or type of another and Greater Son of David who was still yet to come. Thus it is not surprising that the term [‘Branch’] refers to the Messiah as well (see 3:8). Isaiah used it (4:2), as did Jeremiah (23:3-6; 33:15-16), as a title for the Davideic descendant who would rule on David’s throne. Early Jewish interpreters also saw the word ‘Branch’ as a Messianic title. The work of Joshua (as well as that of Zerubbabel) foreshadowed the work of Christ, our High Priest. . .and our King.”
When Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, had learned that the Lord was sending to Israel the long-awaited Messiah, he spoke of Jesus’ birth in this way: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant. . .” (Luke 1:68-69). Jesus is the horn. In Revelation 22:16, we read: “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David. . .” Jesus is the branch. And Matthew’s gospel begins in this way: “The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David.” Jesus is David’s true son. All this is confirmed by what Scripture tells us in Acts 2:25-36. Taking his stand on the day of Pentecost, Peter referred back to this same verse—2 Samuel 7:12—and this is what he said about it: “because [David] was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ. . .” (vv30-31). According to Peter, 2 Samuel 7:12 is ultimately about Christ. So, this promise was partially fulfilled in Solomon; but fully realized only in Jesus, the Greater Solomon, and true branch, horn, and Son of David.

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<td>SOLOMON</td>
<td>CHRIST</td>
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2) KINGDOM: This is the second promise in 2 Samuel 7:12: “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.” Again, at first glance, this is speaking of Solomon’s kingdom. We saw above that God had established Solomon’s kingdom in a powerful way. But we mentioned even earlier, if you remember, the fuller significance of what God was planning to do in and through Israel’s throne.50 When the ark had come to Jerusalem, the Lord wasn’t just associating His presence with a particular place; He was associating His presence with a particular kingship. God was binding together His reign with David’s reign; His rule with David’s rule; His kingdom with David’s kingdom. And it’s for this reason that when Solomon ascends to the throne, 1 Chronicles 29:23 tells us: “Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father. . .” The throne of David had become the throne of God himself. God wouldn’t just bless Solomon’s throne; His own reign would actually be administered in and through Solomon’s throne. God had set His king upon His own throne. Solomon no longer represented only Jerusalem; He now represented God. When he spoke, he no longer spoke only for Jerusalem; He spoke for God. When he exercised authority, he no longer did so as the king appointed by Israel—but as the king who had been appointed by God. And when his enemies rose up against him, they were rising up against God himself. To reject his authority was to reject God’s; to refuse His word was to refuse God’s; to make yourself his enemy was to make yourself the enemy of God; to rebel against his rule was to rebel against the rule of God.51

And of course, all this was always meant to point us to the rule and reign of the Greater Solomon that was yet to come. It’s in Jesus that these things find their true and ultimate fulfillment. For when the

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50 Roberts says: “God’s building of David a house, did primarily imply God’s raising up of David’s seed from his own loins to sit upon his throne and succeed in his kingdom forever.” (p1025). In explaining 2 Samuel 7:12, Roberts notes: “David’s seed was: 1) Immediate and less principal; as Solomon. . . 2) Mediate and most principal, as Christ Jesus who according to the flesh came from David’s loins.” (pp1005). And again: “This covenanted blessing was accomplished: 1) More Immediately and less principal; in David’s ordinary natural seed. For, his natural posterity did in lawful government sit upon his kingly throne till the Babylonian Captivity, which was about 450 years. . . 2) More Mediate and principally this is fulfilled in David’s extraordinary natural seed according to the flesh, Jesus Christ. . .” (p1026). He concludes: “God’s covenant of building David a house, chiefly intended Christ, and had its fullest accomplishment in him” (p1027). And: “Thus, in this great promise of building David a house, by raising up a royal Seed to sit upon his throne forever, God principally intended the building of David’s house and kingdom in Jesus Christ for evermore. . .” (p1030). Calvin also calls Christ the “true Solomon” or son in the promise of Psalm 89:30-33 (4.1.27).

51 Ligon Duncan puts it this way: “The ark represented the throne of God, the presence of God, the rule of God, amongst His people. And to bring the ark into the capital, to the same location, was to emphasize that David’s reign in Israel was reflective of the rule of God in Israel. The king of Israel would rule under the direct command of God, whose presence was symbolized in the form of the ark.” Wright says: “the Psalmists . . . saw that behind the throne of David stood the throne of Yahweh himself (this is clearest in Psalm 2). . .” (Knowing Jesus, pp90-91). Robertson notes: “Under David. . . God formally establishes the manner by which he shall rule among his people. . .now God openly situates his throne in a single locality. . .
angel Gabriel came to Mary, he told her: “behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. . .and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever.” (Luke 1:31-33). It’s Christ who would sit on the throne of David. It’s true that Solomon would reign as God’s king for a time; but Jesus is the one that God has appointed to reign as His king over the house of Jacob forever. It’s the reign of Jesus that the Father is speaking of when He declares in Psalm 2:6, “But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.” And it’s to the Christ that God the Father says in Psalm 110:1, “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” We’re told in Acts that David himself knew that the promise to seat one of his descendants on his throne (in 2 Samuel 7:12) was referring to “the resurrection of the Christ” (2:30-31). And it’s Jesus who “has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2). So, it’s the kingdom of Christ that God had to promise to establish. What this also means, of course, is that our position before God is totally contingent on our posture towards Jesus: To submit to Him is to submit to the rule and reign of God. But to rebel against His authority is to rebel against God’s; to refuse His word is to refuse God’s; to reject His rule is to reject the rule of God. There’s a vital question here: Have you submitted your life to Jesus?

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\text{Promise} & \text{What God Declared to David} & \text{Near Fulfillment} & \text{Ultimate Fulfillment} \\
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\text{Kingdom} & \text{To establish the kingdom of David’s heir} & \text{The Reign of SOLOMON} & \text{The Reign of CHRIST} \\
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D) House (2 Samuel 7:13): Having promised to raise up a descendant of David and establish His kingdom, the Lord continues His word to David in 2 Samuel 7:13: “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” The second part of this verse is largely a repetition of the promise we just dealt with in verse 12. But what about the first part? What is the Lord referring to when He says of David’s heir “He shall build a house for My name”? Well, just as we’ve seen with everything else in this passage, this promise has both a near and partial fulfillment as well as a distant and ultimate fulfillment. In one sense, this was fulfilled in Solomon, since he was the one who built the temple of the Lord. Indeed, Solomon recalls this very promise as he dedicates the temple in 1 Kings 8:17-20: “Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. But the Lord said to my father David, ‘Because it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who will be born to you, he will build the house for My name.’ Now the Lord has fulfilled His word which He spoke; for I have risen in place of my father David and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built the house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel.” Clearly from this passage, this promise was fulfilled when Solomon built the temple.

But only partially. The New Testament clarifies that this promise of David’s heir building a house for the Lord finds its greatest fulfillment in Christ’s building of the Church. Paul tells us that the Church is the temple of God. He says in Ephesians 2:19-22: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” And Peter tells us the same thing when he

God reigns from Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. . .The ark is brought triumphantly to Jerusalem. God himself associates his kingship with the throne of David.” (p229). And speaking of 1 Chronicles 29:22-23, Robertson says: “Notice that the Chronicler is not content to indicate that Solomon in David’s line functions as ‘ruler for the Lord.’ This affirmation would have been striking enough in itself. But the assertion goes even further. Solomon sits ‘on the throne of Yahweh as king!’ The throne of David’s descendants is nothing less than the throne of God itself.” (Christ of the Covenants, p250). Which means, in turn: “God is to rule among His covenant people by a Messianic king in the flesh. . .Rather than ruling by the thunderous voice from Sinai, God is going to rule in the flesh via His appointed representative” (cf. Robertson’s audio lecture on the Davidic Covenant).

32 Roberts says of 2 Samuel 7:12-13: “This had its immediate and secondary accomplishment in Solomon and the successive seed of David which continued forever, that is, for a long time, till the great year of Jubilee, the time of Jesus Christ; but its mediate and primary accomplishment is, in the person of Christ Jesus of the seed of David, who should reign over the Israel of God, the Church, forever and ever.” (p1008). And Robertson writes: “The fact that ‘the Christ,’ the anointed one of Israel, is seated at God’s right hand, has everything to do with David’s throne. Christ’s present reign represents the fulfillment of the Old Testament anticipations in this regard. This same perspective is found in New Testament evaluations of the significance of Christ’s exaltation. In Acts 2:30-36, Peter indicates specifically that because David knew that God would seat one of his descendants on his throne, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah.” (Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, pp251-52).

33 We will deal more with that last word, “forever”, when we get to verse 16, under the promise we will call Perpetuity.
writes to Gentile believers: “And coming to Him as to a living stone...you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house...” (1 Peter 2:4-5). The author of Hebrews draws out this truth as well, when he says: “Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—wherehouse we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope until the end.” (Hebrews 3:6). And Jesus himself uses this language when He tells Peter, “I will build My church...” (Matthew 16:18). So, while the promise of 2 Samuel 7:13 has a partial fulfillment in Solomon's building of the temple, the greatest fulfillment of the promise of David's heir building a house for God is realized in Christ's building of His Church.  

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E) FATHER (2 Samuel 7:14a): After the Lord had promised that David's heir would be the one to build a house for His name, the Lord continues to speak of this heir in 2 Samuel 7:14, saying, “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me...” What God is saying here is quite remarkable: Not only would this special heir be the son of David—he would be the son of God. The heir who would build the house of the Lord and whose kingdom God would establish—he would be known both as David's son and as God's son. He would have David for his father—but he would also have God for his father. The Lord is telling us here that this particular son of David would also be the son of God. Again, the partial fulfillment is in Solomon. We know this because David himself later recounts what the Lord had said to him, recalling in 1 Chronicles 28:6: “[God] said to me, Your son Solomon is the one who shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be a son to Me, and I will be a father to him.” According to this passage, the one whom God was speaking about was Solomon. But other Scriptures clarify that this promise of sonship in 2 Samuel 7:14 has its greatest and ultimate fulfillment in Christ. The first hint of this is the corollary passage in Psalm 89. In verses 26-27, we see a similar promise. Here, the Lord declares: “He will cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' I also shall make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.” But these verses in Psalm 89 are speaking of David. In 2 Samuel 7:14, Solomon was the one who would have God as his father; but in Psalm 89, it’s David. How do we reconcile these two passages? Psalm 89 is interpreting 2 Samuel 7, and helping us to understand that this promise would find it’s greatest fulfillment, not in Solomon himself, but in another who would come as the Greater David and the Greater Solomon. When the angel Gabriel was sent to the virgin Mary, he had this to say about the child she would conceive in her womb: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David...” (Luke 1:32). So, this promise of divine sonship is most fully realized in Christ. We see the same truth in Psalm 2. Here, in verses 7-9, the Messiah recounts the commission that God had given him in this way: “I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten you. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as...'

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54 Roberts says: “This was Immediately intended of Solomon, who should build the material and typical temple at Jerusalem, who was God’s son by gratuitous adoption; but Mediate and primarily of him that was greater than Solomon, Jesus Christ, who should build the true living temple of God, the Church, of living stones from among both Jews and Gentiles, who was God’s son by eternal generation. ...” (Mystery and Marrow of Divinity, p1008). And again, he writes: “This promise was fulfilled: 1) Literally and typically in David’s immediate seed Solomon. David found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But David built him a house. And [so] King Solomon had a special eye to the accomplishment of God’s promise to David. ... 2) Spiritually and anti-typically in David’s Mediate seed Jesus Christ, greater than Solomon. For he built, not the material and typical temple, but the spiritual and true temple, the Church, which is the temple and house of the living God [Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:4-5]. This the apostle shows evidently in his epistle to the Hebrews saying, Jesus Christ was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house, hath more honor than the house. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, but Christ as a son over his own house, whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end’ [Hebrews 3:2-6]. In which words these things are plain: 1) That believers are the house of Christ; 2) That this house of Christ is built by Christ. ... 3) That Christ has more honor, in that he is builder of this house, than Moses himself, who was only a part of this house a living stone in this building. Moses built the tabernacle; that was much honor; King Solomon built the material temple at Jerusalem, that was more honor; but Jesus builds the spiritual temple, the Church of the faithful; this was most honor of all” (Roberts, p1033-34). The Westminster Annotations likewise affirm: “He shall build a house for My name: This is literally to be understood in Solomon; for he it was who was appointed to build the temple. ... But this is to be understood spiritually of Christ, who was to build, to the glory of God’s name, a spiritual and everlasting house, that is, his Church, of which the temple was but a type (Luke 1:32-33; 1 Peter 2:5).” And Pink says: “Like the throne and kingdom mentioned in the same passage, this house is not material, earthly, and temporal, but a spiritual, heavenly, and eternal one...” (Pink, p270).
Your possession..." The Psalm ends by saying: "Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him." And significantly, the author of Hebrews quotes both 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2, telling us explicitly that both these Scriptures are referring to Jesus: "For to which of the angels did He ever say, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You?' And again, I will be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to Me?" (1:5). So, the New Testament clarifies even further that these Scriptures are speaking of Christ. It's Jesus that was born as "a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead..." (Romans 1:3-4). Solomon fulfilled these things in part. But he was only meant to point us to the Greater Solomon who was yet to come. This promise finds its full realization only in Jesus Christ, the son of David who is the Son of God.  

<table>
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<th>PROMISE</th>
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<th>ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>FATHER</td>
<td>God would be his father, and he would be God's son</td>
<td>SOLOMON</td>
<td>JESUS CHRIST</td>
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F) DISCIPLINE (2 Samuel 7:14b-15): In 2 Samuel 7:14b, the Lord continues His word to David, saying, "...when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you." Here in the context of verses 12-14, it's clear that the Lord is speaking of Solomon in particular. But what exactly is He saying? Essentially, the Lord is promising to extend His lovingkindness and His faithfulness not only to David, but also to his son, Solomon. Now, that's not what it seems like at first. When we read verse 14b, it sounds pretty bad: God is going to chasten him with a rod and strokes? But when we consider what the Lord is saying in the whole of verses 14-15, we get the full picture: The rod and strokes wouldn't be sent as punishment—but for correction. The whole point is that God wouldn't take away His lovingkindness from Solomon, as He had taken it away from Saul (verse 15). Saul went astray; and it seems one of the reasons he did so was that the

55 See also what we read in the gospels: Matthew 3:17, 11:27; John 5:17-18; 10:25-30. Roberts again helpfully notes: "David's seed was: 1) [immediate and less principal; as Solomon... 2) Mediate and most principal, as Christ Jesus who according to the flesh came from David's loins. God was a covenant Father to both these sorts of seeds: to his Immediate seed, a Father by adoption; to his Mediate seed, Christ, a Father by peculiar creation and generation of his human nature..." (p1006-06). And again: "This promise of paternal relation to David's seed was accomplished and fulfilled: 1) More Immediately and less principally upon David's ordinary seed. As upon Solomon, David himself being witness: And he said unto me, Solomon thy son shall build my house and my courts; for I have chosen him to be my son and I will be his Father" [1 Chronicles 28:6].

56 Though most of the promises of verses 12-14a are fulfilled both partially in Solomon and ultimately in Christ, verse 14b has no fulfillment in Christ, since He never committed iniquity. As the Westminster Annotations states: "This is to be understood of Solomon, not of Christ. For though our sins were imputed unto him, and he suffered and satisfied for them; in which regard the prophet says, 'He was wounded for our transgressions' (Isaiah 53:5), and the Apostle, 'He was made sin for us', (2 Corinthians 5:21), yet he himself did not commit any iniquity or sin, neither was there any guilt found in his mouth (Isaiah 53:9; 1 Peter 2:22; 1:19)." We will see below that this promise did also have an ultimate fulfillment, but not in Christ; rather: Whereas the partial fulfillment of verses 14b-15 is realized in God's dealings towards the physical son of David, the fuller and ultimate fulfillment is realized in God's dealings towards the spiritual sons of David. More on this in the paragraph below.
Lord never corrected him. When Saul forsook the right path, God allowed him to go astray. But it would be different with Solomon. The Lord would never take away His lovingkindness from David's treasured son. And one way He would demonstrate that lovingkindness would be through discipline. When Saul went astray, the Lord did nothing; but if Solomon would ever start going down the same path, the Lord would stand in his way. God will correct him with "the rod of men" and the "strokes of the sons of men." In other words, just as a loving earthly father corrects his beloved son, so the Lord would deal with Solomon. He will not deal with him as a judge deals with a guilty criminal—but rather as a father deals with his cherished son. In the first part of verse 14, God had promised to be a father to Solomon. Well, here in the second part of verse 14, He's promising to be a good father. A good father will discipline his son, and that's exactly what God is promising to do here for Solomon.  

And the Lord was faithful to do what He said. Solomon started out great, but it wasn't long before he began wandering away from the Lord. And when he did, God was right there to chaste him, just as He promised (1 Kings 11:1ff). The Lord loved him too much to do otherwise. So, 2 Samuel 7:14 recounts for us God's promise to do this for Solomon in particular. But whereas this passage focuses on a single individual, the corollary passage in Psalm 89 gives this promise a wider application. We read in Psalm 89:30-33: "If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they violate My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes. But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness." So then, in 2 Samuel 7, the promise of loving correction was for David's son; but here it's extended to David's sons. In the first passage, the promise is made to Solomon alone; but in the Psalm, it's extended to all of David's descendants. Why the change? What is Scripture trying to teach us? It seems the lesson is this: The way God dealt with Solomon is the way He will deal with us in the Covenant of Grace. Just as with Solomon, the Lord will chaste us, correct us, discipline us; and He will do it just as a father does for his son. The Lord will deal with all the true sons of David in the same way He dealt with Solomon. And isn't this the very thing we read in Hebrews 12:7-10? "God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness."  

Ligon Duncan says: "David's heir may experience punishment for sins, but he will not be cast off like Saul. We are likely to read verse 14, very negatively, . . . However, you need to understand that in the context of Saul's having been cut off, so that is actually a very positive thing that is being said there. If he stumbles, and he will, like Saul, I will not cut him off. I will discipline him, but I will not cut him off." Roberts says: "God was so resolved upon the perpetuity of David's seed and kingdom, that He resolved, their very sins should not disannul His covenant. . ." (p1037). And again: "Note how the iniquity of David's seed is presupposed. . . God will not break covenant with David's seed. . . yea though they become unfaithful to Him, yet He will remain faithful to them, for his covenant's sake with David." (p1037-38). And Ball notes of Psalm 89:30-33: "If his children forsake my Law, and walk not in my judgements, if they break my statutes and keep not my Commandments: Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with strokes; but my lovingkindness will I not take from him, neither will I falsify my truth.' True it is, the Lord did correct the posterity of David for their sin with moderate correction, and for their profit, that they might be partakers of holiness; but even when it did not bud or come on according to that which seemed to be promised, the Lord was most faithful in his promises. . . Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah, for David his servant's sake, as he had promised him, to give him a light, and to his children forever.' [2 Kings 8:19]' (Ball, p148). Roberts notes likewise: "This promised blessing had its accomplishment. . . upon Solomon himself, for his paganish idolatries, wherewith he gratified all his strange wives; wherupon God threatened to rend all the kingdom save one tribe, out of his sons hand and to give it to Jeroboam the servant of Solomon; also God stirred up adversaries against Solomon. . . and yet] The promised qualification and mitigation of this chastisement was also accomplished as truly, in that God, in [the] midst of all his judgements upon them for their sins, yet still reserved the kingdom of Judah to David's seed, and raised him up a seed as a lamp or a light to sit upon the throne in Jerusalem, as the story diverse times observes, and the series thereof does plainly evidence. . ." (pp1040-42). On the meaning of the rod of men, The Westminster Annotations affirm: "Either by temporal corrections, using men as rods and instruments, so he corrected Solomon in the latter end of his reign, when he fell to idolatry (1 Kings 11:9,14,23,26) and the people of Israel (Isaiah 10:5). Or else the meaning is, that He would correct him for his sins as a loving father his beloved son, with fatherly chastisements for his amendment, and not in wrath to his perdition. For as when He speaks of his destroying punishments inflicted on His enemies, He says, He will not meet them as a man, but as a God, who is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29; Isaiah 33:14). So when He says He will correct them as a loving father, He thus expresses it, that He will draw them unto Him with the cords of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; IE, not in rigor, but with a gentle and fatherly hand, with much pity and moderation (Jeremiah 30:11)." (cf. also Francis Roberts, Mystery and Marrow, p1038).  

In comparing 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 89:30-33, Roberts concludes: "This passage in Samuel seems peculiarly to be intended of Solomon that should build God's house, but the Psalm shows it is also to be extended indefinitely to any of
David's dynasty is unparalleled in ancient history. After Solomon's reign, the tribes in northern Israel revolted against the Davidic kingdom, and they began appointing their own kings. But the kings who reigned in Israel never had any significant lines of natural succession. The longest successive dynasty for any of the kings in Israel was a few generations at most. David's royal line obviously far outlasted these kings. But how did it compare to other dynasties? What about the great dynasties of Egypt? The average length of royal succession in Egypt during their prime was about 100 years. The longest successive Egyptian dynasty was the famed eighteenth dynasty; it lasted for an incredible 250 years. But the succession of David's royal line endured for over 400 years. David's dynasty ruled far longer than even the greatest of Egyptian dynasties. There's no comparison: "there has never been a longer reign of a single dynasty in any land in the history of the world than David's 400 year dynastic reign."59

Never was there another dynasty like David's dynasty. But we're still left with unanswered questions: Didn't God promise that his kingdom would last forever? Clearly, 400 years is impressive. But 400 years isn't the same thing as forever. When the Babylonians came up against Jerusalem in 586 B.C, the temple was burned with fire, the people were exiled from their land, and the Davidic king, whom God had promised would reign forever, was deposed from his throne, made to watch the death of his own sons, blinded, and then cast away into prison in a foreign land. It was a living nightmare. God's people were completely and utterly broken. But the most painful part wasn't being exiled from their land or losing loved ones. It was the implication of what this all meant: Did God break His promise?

The answer is No. And the reason God didn't break His promise is that the promise itself was never ultimately about an earthly, temporal kingdom. The promises God made to David were never really

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**Table: Perpetuity**

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<tr>
<td><strong>DISCIPLINE</strong></td>
<td>God will lovingly correct David's offspring</td>
<td>David's PHYSICAL son</td>
<td>David's SPIRITUAL sons</td>
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**G) PERPETUITY (2 Samuel 7:16):** The Lord closes with these final words in 2 Samuel 7:16: “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” Earlier, the Lord had declared a similar truth. In verse 13, the Lord had said of David's heir: “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” And we read in Psalm 89:4, “I will establish your seed forever and build up your throne to all generations.” What's being emphasized in these passages is the perpetuity of God's promises. That is, God isn't just promising to do these things for David. He's not just promising to establish David's kingdom and throne; He's promising to establish them forever.

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59 As Robertson says: “the line of David and the capital of Jerusalem had developed a truly remarkable record. From David's accession somewhere around 1000 B.C. to the fall of Jerusalem, over 400 years had transpired. The average dynasty in Egypt and Mesopotamia during their days of greatest stability was something less than 100 years. David's successors even outlasted the long-lived eighteenth dynasty of Egypt, which endured for about 250 years.” (Christ of the Covenants, p239). And Duncan likewise: “It is worth noting that David’s dynasty is without parallel in the ancient near east in length of duration. His house ruled Judah for over four hundred years, for longer than the greatest Egyptian dynasty, and in stark contrast, to the numerous ruling families in the Northern kingdom. I am told that there has never been a longer reign of a single dynasty in any land in the history of the world than David’s four hundred year dynastic reign.” (From his written lecture on the Davidic Covenant).
fulfilled in Solomon; they were never primarily about Jerusalem; and they were never fully realized in the establishment of David's earthly royal throne. These were the husk; the shell. But the kernel of God's promises in 2 Samuel 7 looked past these things. It's true: David's earthly reign wouldn't last. But the perpetuity God was promising would be realized in another way. Look again at our passage: *God tells David* in verse 16: “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever, . . .” But back in verse 13, it was of *David's heir* that God had said: “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” Whose kingdom is it that the Lord will establish forever? Is it the kingdom of David or the kingdom of his heir? It's both, in this way: God would establish the kingdom of David forever. But how would He do it? He would establish David's kingdom *in and through* the kingdom of his heir.60

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERPETUITY</td>
<td>David's kingdom will endure forever</td>
<td>An EARTHLY kingdom</td>
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These promises all find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He alone is the true son of David; and He alone is the eternal Son of God. It is He who would build the Church, which is the temple of the Living God. And it's His kingdom and throne that God would establish forever. Isaiah lived long after David and long before Jesus. But as he reflected on the promises God had made to David in 2 Samuel 7, he looked forward and spoke of the Messiah: “There will be no end to the increase of

60 In asking how the Davidic kingdom could have come to an end at the exile (in light of God's promise), Calvin says: “In short, whenever the Prophets declare that the kingdom of David would be perpetual, they do not promise that there would be a succession without interruption; but this ought to be referred to that perpetuity which was at length manifested in Christ alone.” (Jeremiah 33:17). Roberts says: “This promised perpetuity of God's covenant with David, was made good and fulfilled, *Partly*, to David's posterity, successively raised up to sit upon his throne, for a long time together; [but] *Principally* to Jesus Christ, his primary seed, to whom the Lord God gave the throne of his father David [Luke 1:32-33; Acts 13:34-37].” (p1031). And again: “This promised mercy of the perpetuity of David's seed and kingdom, was performed: 1) *More Immediately* and literally to the seed of David, from Solomon till the Babylonian Captivity, in the succession of twenty kings of David's race that sat upon his throne in Jerusalem. . . 2) *More Medially* and spiritually to Jesus Christ, of the seed of David according to the flesh, whose spiritual and everlasting kingdom over the Church swallowed up the earthly kingdom of David. Of Christ, the angel said to the virgin Mary his mother: 'The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end' [Luke 1:31-33].” (p1037). Edwards notes: “the glorious promises of the covenant of grace... [are] especially contained in these words, 2 Samuel 7:16; 'And thy house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever.' Which promise has respect to Christ, the seed of David, and is fulfilled in him only; for the kingdom of David has long since ceased, any otherwise than as it is upheld in Christ.” (History of Redemption). Pink says: “The thrice occurrence of 'forever' in 2 Samuel 7:13,16 obliges us to look beyond the natural posterity of David for the ultimate accomplishment of those promises. God did indeed set the carnal seed of David upon the throne of Israel, and establish his kingdom, though certainly not unto all generations.” (p230). Matthew Henry writes: “The throne of Israel was overturned in the captivity; the crown had fallen from their head; there was not a man to sit on the throne of Israel. And after their return the house of David made a figure again; but it [is] in the Messiah that this promise is performed that David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of Israel, and that David shall have always a son to reign upon his throne. For as long as the man Christ Jesus sits on the right hand of the throne of God, rules the world, and rules it for the good of the church. . .David does not want a successor, nor is the covenant with him broken.” (Jeremiah 33:17). Gill notes: “this is not to be understood of the temporal kingdom of David, which has been at an end long ago, . . .this is only true of the man Christ Jesus, of the seed of David, and is his son, to whom has been given the throne of his father David; and who reigns over the house of Jacob forever; and of whose kingdom there is no end (Luke 1:32); and as long as he is King of saints, which will be forever, David will not want a man to sit upon his throne.” (Jeremiah 33:17). Robertson says: “In the covenant, assurance was given that the line of David would sit on the throne of Israel forever. Yet unquestionably the descendants of David ceased to occupy the throne of Israel. The Old Testament history of Davidic succession indeed was impressive. It stretched for a period of over 400 years. But it did not last *forever*. It came to an end. . . .What is the solution to this problem? *The breaking off of Davidic throne-succession in the Old Testament history may be evaluated in terms of the anticipative role of Israel's monarchy.* David's line anticipated in shadow-form the eternal character of the reign of Jesus Christ. While God was actually manifesting his lordship through David's line, this human monarchy was serving at the same time as a typological representation of the throne of God itself. David's reign was intended to anticipate in shadow-form the eternal character of the reign of Jesus Christ. The succession of the Davidic kings under the Old Covenant was a type. It was a shadowy figure.”
His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this,” (9:7). David's kingdom would be established forever because the Messiah would ever live to sit on his throne.61 Just as Luke 1:32-33 says: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.” The earthly dynasty would come to a close. But the promise would be realized in the eternal Davidic rule of Jesus Christ.

A SUMMARY OF THE PROMISES GIVEN TO DAVID IN 2 SAMUEL 7

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<td>God would cause David's throne and kingdom to endure forever</td>
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2. The NATURE of the Covenant of Grace: We learn how it is that God's blessings flow to His people

David's last words are recorded in 2 Samuel 23:1-7. And here, as his earthly days draw to a close, we still find him meditating on the covenant the Lord had made with him. David says in verse 5: “[God] has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and secured; for all my salvation and all my desire, will He not indeed make it grow?” Now, let's ponder over these words for a moment. Back in 2 Samuel 7, the primary emphasis in God's covenant with David was God's promise to send the Messiah through David's line. That's what the covenant was about: The Christ would come into the world as one of David's descendants; He would be a king that would reign on David's throne, and the Lord would establish His kingdom forever. God's covenant with David was about David's seed. But now in this passage, David's telling us that God's covenant with him was also about his salvation. It's a similar yet distinct truth: In 2 Samuel 7, we learned that the Christ would come through David's line; now we learn that the Christ would come for David's salvation. In 2 Samuel 7, we saw God promising that Christ would come from David; here we see the truth that Christ would also come for David. If 2 Samuel 7 tells us how it is Christ would come, here we're told why it is He would come.62

61 God told David in Psalm 89:4, “I will establish your seed forever and build up your throne to all generations” (cf. v29,36). Indeed, David's throne would be established forever because his Seed, Christ Jesus, would ever live to reign upon his throne.

62 On 2 Samuel 23:5, the Westminster Annotations say: “for this is all my salvation, and all my desire: The only ground of all my hope concerning salvation, and all that I can wish and desire.” And on 2 Samuel 23:5, Roberts says: “As if David had said: This righteousness, holiness, royal splendor and prosperity promised to me and my family are most sweet and precious mercies. . .God's Covenant with me touching all these and like mercies is sure, ordered in all things, and everlasting. Therefore. . .I lay the whole stress of all my Salvation and delight upon this his covenant and this is my great stay and comfort now in my old age when I am going to my grave. . .” (pp1028-29). And again: “this covenant [with David] was. . .ordered in all things, sure, and everlasting; in all these regards it was exceedingly comfortable. And upon these considerations David in his last words notably raised up his consultations upon this covenant, placing all his salvation, and all his delight thereupon. . .And this covenant was his comfort to his last breath, to his dying day. Oh! The covenant and promises of God in Jesus Christ are the safest, surest, sweetest, and most immovable comforts of believers both in life and death.” (Francis Roberts, p1081).
Jesus wouldn't just come as a descendant of David; He would come to save David. He wouldn't just come as David's seed; He would come to be his Savior. By sending the Christ through his line, God wasn't just bestowing a great privilege on David; He was providing for his own deepest spiritual needs. One writer put it this way: “God's covenant with David, was his gospel to David. . .As it was said of Jacob; that his life was bound up in his son's life, so it might be much more said of David, that his life, salvation and delight was bound up in this covenant, and in Jesus Christ. . .”63 God had promised to send the Messiah through David's line, yes; but that was only part of what God was promising to him; that was just the beginning. In God's covenant with David, the Lord was also promising that in and through and because of the Messiah, He would provide for David everything he needed for salvation. In His covenant with David, the Lord was promising to send forth a Savior through David; but He was also promising that in and through that coming Savior, He would accomplish salvation for David.

And we can see this aspect of the covenant back in Psalm 89 as well. We focused earlier on how this Psalm describes for us that Christ would come from David; but it also gives us glimpses of the favor God would pour out upon David in and through Christ. In Psalm 89:24, the Lord declares of David, “My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him. . .”; and in verse 28: “My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever. . .” And again in verse 33: “. . .I will not break off My lovingkindness from him. . .” This was part of the covenant too. God would send Jesus through David's line; but there was more: In and through Jesus, God would deal with David according to His lovingkindness. And isn't this what we see throughout his life? David couldn't get away from God's favor and blessing. It was these mercies that he basked in as he penned those words: “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (Psalm 23:6).

So then, God's mercies would be sent through David, in the coming of Christ; but in and through the Christ, God's mercies would also be displayed to David. As a result of what the Christ would come and do, David would live all his days in this life under the blessing and favor of God; and when it was time for him to depart this life, he would dwell in the house of the Lord forever. This was part of the covenant too. And it brings us to our next passage. In Isaiah 55:3, we find the Lord making an open invitation to all men: “Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David.” What's going on here? What's the Lord saying? He's extending to us the very same covenant mercies He had shown to David. This is because the covenant that God made with David was the Covenant of Grace. And as such, the blessings and benefits of this covenant that God lavished on David weren't just for David.

In Christ, all of God's people enter into the same mercies that followed David all the days of his life.64

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63 Francis Roberts. The full quote is: “God's Covenant with David, was his Gospel to David. For, this was a Covenant of Faith, preaching the glad tidings of life and salvation by Jesus Christ to all that believe in him, and particularly to David and all his believing seed. And this is pure Gospel. Oh how sweet was this Gospel Covenant to blessed David, saying of it; This is all my Salvation, and all my delight! As it was said of Jacob; that his life was bound up in his son's life, so it might be much more said of David, that his life, salvation and delight was bound up in this Covenant, and in Jesus Christ. . .When therefore we read God's covenant with David, . . .we should still remember we are reading the gospel of God in Jesus Christ.” (pp1002-03).

64 The Hebrew of Isaiah 55:3 literally reads: “And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the faithful mercies of David.” Commentators are divided over whether David here is referring to king David or to Christ as the Greater David. Personally, I believe the verse is speaking literally of king David, especially in light of the fact that in verses 1-3, Christ seems to be the One speaking to sinners (“Incline your ear and come to Me. . .”). But no matter how you interpret David in this verse, you end up with the same truth. If you take David as literal, the meaning is: I will extend to you the (same) benefits of the Covenant of Grace that were shown TO David (through Christ). If you take David as speaking of Christ, the meaning is: I will extend to you the benefits of the Covenant that are given THROUGH [the Greater] David, who is Christ. But in both cases, the blessings and benefits of the Covenant of Grace are freely offered to sinners in and through Jesus Christ. Calvin says: “by this phrase [the mercies of David] he declares that it was a covenant of free grace; for it was founded on nothing else than the absolute goodness of God. Whenever, therefore, the word 'covenant' occurs in Scripture, we ought at the same time to call to remembrance the word 'grace'. . .” Edwards likewise: “That this covenant, now established with David. . .was the covenant of grace, is evident by the plain testimony of Scripture. . .in Isaiah 55:3. . .Here Christ offers to poor sinners, if they will come to him, to give them an interest in the same everlasting covenant that he had made with David, conveying to them the same sure mercies. But what is that covenant, in which sinners obtain an interest when they come to Christ, but the covenant of grace?”
We see this truth as well if we turn back to 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89. In 2 Samuel 7:14-15, the Lord had said of Solomon: “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him.” What Scripture is telling us here is that God wasn’t just going to deal with David according to His lovingkindness; the Lord would also deal with Solomon in grace. Even when Solomon sinned, God wouldn’t take His mercies away from him. And we also saw that in Psalm 89, these same mercies are extended, not only to Solomon, but to all of David’s true sons. As we read in verses 30-33: “If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in my judgments...Then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes. But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness.” Notice that it says: Even if they go astray (speaking of David’s sons), I will not break off My lovingkindness from him (David). What’s the meaning? God’s telling us He will never cut off His mercies from David’s sons, but He’s also telling us why. In effect, He’s saying: Even if David’s sons go astray, I won’t break off My lovingkindness from them because of him. We belong to the Greater David; and God will never break off His mercies from us because of Him. In and through Christ, God will always and forever deal with us according to His mercies.

So: What do we glean from all this about how it is that God’s blessings flow to His covenant people?

A) God’s blessings flow to His people BY GRACE ALONE: God deals with us in grace. What was true for David and Solomon is true for all of God’s people. He deals with us according to the same “faithful mercies” that He showed to David (Isaiah 55:3). What was true of David in Psalm 89 is also true for us: The Lord’s lovingkindness is with us (Psalm 89:24); and that lovingkindness He will keep for us forever (v28). Even when we fall into sin (2 Samuel 7:14ff; Psalm 89:30ff), He will never break off His lovingkindness from us (Psalm 89:33). Notice that the emphasis is on the fact that the Lord will continue to deal with us according to His mercies. The Psalm isn’t telling us that God dealt with David in His mercy when He first saved him (IE, past tense); but that He will never stop dealing with him in His mercy (IE, looking to the future). See, we know that God saves us by grace. But it’s so much more than that. Grace isn’t just something we get at the beginning of our Christian life; it’s how God has promised to deal with us forever. Receiving that grace for the first time is just the beginning.

(History of Redemption, Section 7). And Pink says: “These ‘sure mercies’ are extended by Isaiah unto all the faithful as the blessings of the covenant, and therefore may be understood to denote all saving benefits bestowed on believers in this life or that to come. Those ‘mercies’ were Christ’s by the Father’s promise and by His own purchase, and at His resurrection they became His in actual possession, being all laid up in Him (2 Corinthians 1:20); and from Him we receive them (John 1:16; 16:14-15). The promises descend through Christ to those who believe, and thus are ‘sure’ to all the seed (Romans 4:16).” The Reformation Heritage Study Bible says: “Sure mercies of David: The enduring or firm covenant loyalties and love given to David and his offspring (2 Samuel 7:12-16) and fulfilled in Christ (Acts 13:34).” Isaiah 55:3 is also quoted in Acts 13:34, which Calvin explains in this way: “For because Christ rose rather for our sake than for himself, the perpetuity of life which the Father has given him reaches unto us all, and is ours. Notwithstanding the place of Isaiah which is here cited, seems to make but a little for proof of Christ’s immortality, I will give you the holy things of David (Isaiah 55:3). But it is not so. For seeing Isaiah speaks of the redemption promised to David, and affirms that the same shall be firm and stable, we do well gather by this the immortal kingdom of Christ, wherein the eternity of salvation is grounded...”

So: What do we glean from all this about how it is that God’s blessings flow to His covenant people? 65

This is how traditional theologians have understood Psalm 89:30-33. Calvin says: “God, unquestionably, is speaking of the household of his Church...in the promise which he makes of pardoning their offenses...the pardon which is here promised belongs to the spiritual kingdom of Christ; and it may be equally gathered from this passage, that the salvation of the Church depends solely upon the grace of God...we must understand the passage as amounting to this, that although the faithful may not in every instance act in a manner worthy of the grace of God, and may therefore deserve to be rejected by him, yet he will be merciful to them, because remission of sins is an essential article promised in his covenant...Thus the promise is fulfilled, that he does not withdraw his lovingkindness from his people...it is, however, to be observed, that there is a change of person in the words. After it is said, If his children shall forsake my law, etc, it is at length subjoined, My lovingkindness or mercy will I not withdraw from him. It ought surely to have been said, them instead of him, since it is children in the plural number who are before spoken of. But it is very probable that this form of expression is purposely employed to teach us that we are reconciled to God only through Christ; and that if we would expect to find mercy, we must seek for it from that source alone.”

And Spurgeon notes: “the seed of the Son of David are apt to start aside, but are they therefore cast away? Not a single word gives liberty for such an idea, but the very reverse. Jesus still enjoys the divine favor, and we are in him, and therefore under the most trying circumstances the Lord’s lovingkindness to each one of his chosen will endure the strain...This passage sweetly assures us that the heirs of glory shall not be utterly cast off.” Gill also writes: “the spiritual seed of mystical David, are they here designed, who may sin, and do sin...Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him: not from Christ...nor from all those that are in him...” And Matthew Henry likewise says: “Though David’s seed be chastened, it does not follow that they are disinherited; they may be cast down, but they are not cast off. God’s favor is continued to his people...for Christ’s sake; in him the mercy is laid up for us, and God says, I will not take it from him (verse 33)...”
David wrote perhaps most clearly about the blessings of the Covenant of Grace in Psalm 32:1-2, and Paul quotes his words in Romans 4:6-8, saying: "...David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." There's a lot that could be said about this passage, but here we can just focus on two truths that help us understand what it means that God deals with us in grace: 1) Verse 6 tells us that God's covenant blessings flow to us apart from any good things we do ("apart from works"). What this tells us is that we can't earn it; and we don't deserve it. Sometimes as Christians if we have a season in our life when we're extra obedient, we find ourselves expecting more of God's blessing. Why? Because, deep down, we think it's something that we earn through our obedience. But what David is telling us is that God's blessing flowing to us actually has nothing to do with how much we're obeying the Lord; it flows to us freely, and continually, and eternally, by grace. 2) Verses 7-8 tell us that God's covenant blessings flow to us in spite of all the ugly sins we commit (the blessed man has his share of "lawless deeds" and "sins"). As Christians, we tend to think that our sins have the power to temporarily cut us off from God's blessing. But these verses tell us that God's mercies flow to us freely, despite our sin. Verses 7-8 don't say: Blessed are you when you don't have any lawless deeds; but rather, Blessed are those who do have lawless deeds—but they've been forgiven. As hard as it is to believe, God's blessing isn't contingent on whether or not we have sin—but on whether or not our sins have been forgiven.

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1) OBJECTION ONE: What about Scriptures that seem to say God's blessing was given to David because of his righteousness? There are certain passages of Scripture, especially in the Psalms, that seem to contradict what we've been saying here. David prays in Psalm 7:8, "Vindicate me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me." And again, in Psalm 18:20-24, David says: "The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord...and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also blameless with Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyes." We've been saying that God dealt with David in grace; that the Lord's favor was upon him apart from any good that he did and despite the sins he committed. But now David himself seems to be telling us something very different. How do we understand these Scriptures? Well, we can begin by looking at the context. David wrote Psalm 7 in response to false accusations that had been raised against him (see verses 3-6); and it's in this context that David is pleading for God to vindicate him. David's not claiming to be perfect or sinless; that's not what he's saying. He's just asserting that he's innocent in this particular situation; he's declaring his innocence as it related to the charges that were being brought against him. And it's the same thing in Psalm 18; David had written this Psalm when the Lord had delivered him from all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. David's not saying that he had been blameless in everything—but that he was blameless as it related to the accusations against him. Before God, David was a sinner; it was before the lies of men that he protested his innocence.

66 So, this passage teaches that God's blessing is neither upheld by our obedience nor nullified by our sin: "the blessed man is not the man who has good works laid to his account but whose sins are not laid to his account." (Murray, Romans, p.134).
67 On Psalm 7:8, Gill says: "he speaks not of his justification before God, in whose sight he well knew no flesh living could be justified by their own righteousness (Psalm 143:2); nor of the righteousness of his person, either imputed or inherent; but of the righteousness of his cause (Psalm 53:27); not of his righteousness God-ward, for he knew that he was a sinner with respect to him; but of his righteousness towards Saul, against whom he had not sinned, but had acted towards him in the most righteous and faithful manner (1 Samuel 24:11); and therefore desired to be judged, and was content to stand or fall according to his conduct and behavior towards him." And Plummer writes: "The appeal to his own innocence is confined to the matter respecting which David had been slandered. It has nothing to do with his standing in the sight of God as a sinful man. Before God none more earnestly cried for mercy: 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified' (Psalm 143:2)." And on Psalm 18:20-24, Calvin says: "When [David] presents and defends himself before the judgment-seat of God against his enemies, the question is not concerning the whole course of his life, but only respecting one certain cause, or a particular point...The state of the matter is this: his adversaries charged him with many crimes...David, in opposition to these accusations, with the view of maintaining his innocence before God, protests and affirms that he had acted..."
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2) Objection Two: What about Scriptures that seem to say that God's blessing was taken away from David because of his sin? Again, we saw earlier that God's blessing flowed freely to David, and to us, despite our sins. But if that's true, how do we understand other Scriptures where David seems to be saying that the Lord took His blessing away from him when he sinned? David writes in Psalm 31:10, “For my life is spent with sorrow and my years with sighing; my strength has failed because of my iniquity, and my body has wasted away.” Here, David is experiencing a season in his life that we might well describe as being contrary to God's blessing, and he tells us it's all as a result of his sin. In Psalm 38:3-5, David says something similar: “there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they weigh too much for me. My wounds grow foul and fester because of my folly...”; and later in verses 17-18 David says again: “For I am ready to fall, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin.” If it's true that God's blessing flows to us despite our sin, how do we understand these kinds of passages? What we need to realize is that there's a difference between God's blessing on the one hand and the enjoyment of His blessing on the other. God's blessing itself is what we can call existential; it's always there; it never wanes or changes; and it's never taken away. In Christ, God “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing” (Ephesians 1:3); and His lovingkindnesses “never cease” (Lamentations 3:22). But at the same time, the degree to which we enjoy His blessing day to day is experiential; and when we give in to sin, we miss out on some of that enjoyment. Every day, the sun shines with the same brilliance, but if there are clouds in the sky, you're not going to see it like you would on a clear day. The sun is still there—but the clouds obstruct your view of it. In the same way, God has promised to never cut off His lovingkindness from us. But the degree to which we're experiencing that lovingkindness can vary from day to day. This is why David's prayer in Psalm 51:12 (after he sinned) was, “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation.” It wasn't salvation itself that David had lost; it was the joy of his salvation that he needed God to restore. He hadn't lost God's blessing—he'd lost the enjoyment of it. When we sin, we're miserable; and when we follow the Lord, there's joy. But the difference isn't any change in God's blessing itself—it's in our enjoyment of it.

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Towards the end of his life, David recounts the Lord's covenant with him in this way: “the word of the Lord came to me, saying...Behold, a son will be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon. . .and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.” (1 Chronicles 22:8-10). This is significant uprightly and sincerely in this matter. . .It would be absurd to draw from this the inference that God is merciful to men according as he judges them to be worthy of his favor. Here the object in view is only to show the goodness of a particular cause, and to maintain it in opposition to wicked calumniators...” And Spurgeon: “Viewing this psalm as prophetical of the Messiah, these strongly-expressed claims to righteousness are readily understood, for his garments were as white as snow; but considered as the language of David they have perplexed many. Yet the case is clear, and if the words be not strained beyond their original intention, no difficulty need occur...David's early troubles arose from the wicked malice of envious Saul, who no doubt prosecuted his persecutions under cover of charges brought against the character of 'the man after God's own heart.' These charges David declares to have been utterly false, and asserts that he possessed a grace-given righteousness which the Lord had graciously rewarded in defiance of all his calumniators. Before God the man after God's own heart was a humble sinner, but before his slanderers he could with unblushing face speak of the 'cleanness of his hands' and the righteousness of his life...It is not at an opposition to the doctrine of salvation by grace, and no sort of evidence of a Pharisaic spirit, when a gracious man, having been slandered, stoutly maintains his integrity, and vigorously defends his character...” (Calvin).

68 This truth unlocks several passages in the Scriptures. It's how we can explain the tension that Scripture tells us on the one hand that God “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3); and that “The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease” (Lamentations 3:22); but how on the other hand Jesus tells us in John 13:17, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them”, and Paul reminds the elders at Ephesus, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). God's blessing is poured out upon us in Christ to the full and in and through and because of Him, it's never taken away or cut off from us. But at the same time, our enjoyment of that blessing can vary from day to day.
because David is telling us that even as the Lord was making this covenant with him, God knew about Solomon. The Lord knew Solomon by name long before he was born. Which also means that even as God made His covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7, He knew about what David was going to do in 2 Samuel 11: It was Bathsheba, remember, that would give birth to Solomon. God knew about the sins David would commit in the future. David’s sin didn’t take God by surprise. But His grace would cover his sin. And not only that—He would turn his sin into something beautiful. Remember, Jesus would come from Solomon. Now, that never meant there wouldn’t be consequences. There were. It is likely that his servants never looked at him the same again. In one moment of temptation, David lost what he would never be able to buy back with all the riches of his kingdom. The consequences David brought on himself were devastating, lasting, and irreparable. But even the strokes and stripes he bore for his sin—far from being a sign that God had left him—actually served to verify the promise He had made to him in the covenant: The Lord would indeed punish his sins with the rod and his iniquity with stripes. But He would never break off His lovingkindness from him (Psalm 89:30-33).

B) God’s blessings flow to His people THROUGH FAITH ALONE. This is how it was for David, and it’s how it is for us. We see this most clearly back in Isaiah 55:3: “Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David.” We already looked at “the faithful mercies” shown to David; and what they were. But here we can notice how it is that we enter into those blessings: “Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live.” The context of the passage is that God has prepared a lavish feast, and He’s extending an open invitation to all: “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.” (55:1). The banquet is prepared, and the invitation is extended to all men without exception. We’re being beckoned; all we need to do is listen and come. Further, there’s no “cover charge” to pay at the door. All are beckoned to come “without money and without cost.” There’s no price to pay; no gift to bring. Well, the scene is put forward as a picture for us of God’s free offer of salvation. Just as the banquet is set already, God has already done everything on our behalf. All He’s asking us to do is listen to what He’s done for us and come and receive it. It’s the language of faith. We’re ashamed to come empty-handed; we think we need to bring something in return; a gift to offer our host. But God requires us to come empty-handed! His blessings flow to us through faith alone.69

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This language of listening in Isaiah 55:3 is the language of faith. And one of the reasons we know this is that Paul picks up this same language of listening to speak about faith in Galatians 3:1-5. Here, the Galatian church had gotten off track, and Paul has a few questions for them to help them understand what had happened. So he writes: “This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? . . . So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by . . .” (5:1). The requirement of faith in the Davidic Covenant, Roberts says: “The covenant duties and conditions imposed upon David and his seed . . . necessitate their keeping covenant by true faith in Jesus Christ, the great mercy and mystery promised both in this [covenant] . . . That Jesus Christ was . . . revealed and chiefly intended in this covenant, I have in this chapter evidenced . . . Therefore true faith in this Christ is necessary to the keeping of this covenant. For, 1) Without true faith Christ herein revealed could not be apprehended by David or his seed. 2) And without true faith, neither their persons nor performances could be accepted. For without faith it is impossible to please God.” (p1054; cf. p1067).

69 Calvin says of Isaiah 55:3: “Besides, this is a description of the nature of faith, when he bids us ‘come to himself.’ We ought to hear the Lord in such a manner that faith shall follow; for they who by faith receive the word of God have laid aside their desires and despised the world, and may be said to have broken their chains, so that they readily and cheerfully ‘draw near to God.’ But faith cannot be formed without hearing, (Romans 10:17) that is, without understanding the word of God, and so he bids us ‘hear’ before we ‘come to him.’ Thus, whenever faith is mentioned, let us remember that it must be joined to the word, in which it has its foundation.” On the requirement of faith in the Davidic Covenant, Roberts says: “The covenant duties and conditions imposed upon David and his seed . . . necessitate their keeping covenant by true faith in Jesus Christ, the great mercy and mystery promised both in this [covenant] . . . That Jesus Christ was . . . revealed and chiefly intended in this covenant, I have in this chapter evidenced . . . Therefore true faith in this Christ is necessary to the keeping of this covenant. For, 1) Without true faith Christ herein revealed could not be apprehended by David or his seed. 2) And without true faith, neither their persons nor performances could be accepted. For without faith it is impossible to please God.” (p1054; cf. p1067).
enough to continue in God's blessing every day in their Christian life. They knew they had obtained God's blessing by faith alone—but then after they became Christians, they started thinking they had to maintain that blessing through their obedience. And don't we fall into the same trap? We know we entered into God's blessing by faith alone, but we start thinking that in the Christian life, His blessing runs on our obedience. We long that God would pour out His blessing upon us, but we believe that whether He actually will or not is directly related to the latest figures in our monthly obedience report (hot off the press). We desire that God would anoint us with His Spirit; and we long to be powerfully used of God, but we don't think it will happen because there's not enough obedience in our checking account to afford blessings like that (maybe if we've saved enough up we can transfer from savings?). But Paul's whole point to the Galatians is that if they entered into God's blessing at the beginning by faith alone (v2), it's by faith alone they continue to receive His blessing every day in their Christian life (v5). God doesn't just freely pour out His blessing upon us in Jesus at the beginning. It's not just at the beginning that we're invited to come with empty hands. His blessing continues to flow to us every day in our Christian life in exactly the same way. We receive it with empty hands...by faith alone.70

OBJECTION: If it's true that the Davidic Covenant is part of the Covenant of Grace, and the only requirement for entering into these blessings is faith—and faith alone—then how are we to understand certain passages that seem to say that this covenant was conditional on obedience? There are some Scriptures where David, recounting God's covenant with him, seems to tell us that this covenant was based on the obedience of Solomon, and his sons, and Israel on the whole. In 1 Kings 2:2-4, David admonishes his son Solomon: “Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that the Lord may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.” God himself tells Solomon that if he would walk before the Lord, His throne would be established, but He also warns him, saying: “But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight...And they will say, ‘Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them, therefore the Lord has brought all this adversity on them.’” (1 Kings 9:6-9). And Psalm 132:12 recounts God's covenant with David, saying: “If your sons will keep My covenant and My testimony which I will teach them, their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever.” Was this covenant conditional on obedience after all?71

The main thing we have to realize with all these Scriptures is that the Lord is speaking with reference to His people as a whole. In these passages, God isn't talking about His dealings with individuals as it relates to their salvation; He's talking about how it is that He would deal with the entire body of the visible church corporately, as a whole. And He's warning them that He cannot and will not bless an unrepentant church. In earlier days, God's people had made the mistake of trusting in the ark of the covenant to deliver them instead of truly trusting in the Lord (1 Samuel 4). In days still yet to come, 

70 We could paraphrase Paul's question in Galatians 3:5 like this: “So then, does God continue to pour out His blessing upon you every day as a Christian because you're keeping His commands, or because you've trusted in Christ?” Verses 2 and 5 are similar, but the main difference is that verse 2 is in the past tense, while verse 5 is in the present. Paul's asking: “How did you enter in to God's blessing at the beginning” (v2)? Was it not by faith alone? “So then, why would you think that His blessing continues to flow to you now every day as a Christian in any other way” (v5)? This same truth is echoed in Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” We tend to think that God gives us salvation freely by grace—but every other blessing in the Christian life comes to us based on our level of obedience. Not so: All things He continues to give to us freely. When we're living as though God's blessing was based on our obedience, we're functionally no better than those who used to buy indulgences from the Roman Catholic Church. It's just that instead of buying salvation in the next life, we're trying to buy spiritual blessings in this life. And instead of using for our currency the treasury of merit of the saints and martyrs, we're using our own private treasury of merit; our own off-shore bank account. But this dishonors God, because when we obey, we expect God's blessing for the completely wrong (and off-based reasons); and when we don't, we feel doomed because our account has run dry. Truth is, God's blessing flowing to us doesn't come from our own bank account at all. It comes from Christ's. And we have free access to it by faith alone in Him.71 Other passages that fall into this category are 1 Chronicles 28:5-8 and 2 Chronicles 7:17-22. A similar passage is 1 Kings 6:12, but I believe this particular passage has a different emphasis. We'll get back to it later and deal with it at some length.
the prophet Jeremiah would warn God's people against trusting in the temple instead of truly trusting in the Lord (Jeremiah 7:1-15). Here, God himself is warning his people against trusting in David's throne instead of truly trusting in the Lord. David's throne wasn't some kind of good-luck charm that would always just automatically make Israel's enemies go away. If Israel turned away from the Lord, God himself would turn against her as an enemy. Earlier in the study, we saw that the first generation under Moses in the wilderness broke faith with the Lord, and they missed out on entering the land. Here, the Lord is giving His people a similar warning: If God's people break faith with Him, even David's throne wouldn't be able to keep them from being exiled from the land. It may come as a surprise to some, but this is the way God deals with His people corporately in the Covenant of Grace. It's no different for us today. In Revelation 2:5, Jesus says to the church at Ephesus: “Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.” Jesus wasn't speaking about individuals here; He was speaking about the whole body; and His message was one and the same: He cannot and will not bless an unrepentant church. The fact is: “No church has a secure and permanent place in the world. It is continuously on trial.” During the time of David and Solomon, it's as if all Israel was one enormous mega-church. And in these passages, the Lord is warning His people. Because when the church as a whole embraces Christ and follows her Lord, the result is indeed corporate blessing. But when the church as a whole rejects her Lord and forsakes His ways, the result is always corporate judgment.72

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C) God's blessings flow to His people IN CHRIST ALONE. Grace is precious, but it doesn't exist apart from Christ. And faith is what God requires, but it means nothing if it's not in Christ. The faith that saves is not just faith in anything; nor is it a faith in God in general; but faith in Jesus. Earlier, we looked at the various promises God had given to David in 2 Samuel 7, and how they were fulfilled in Christ. Here, we're going to look at a few other ways we're pointed to Jesus in the Davidic Covenant.

1) THE PERSON OF CHRIST: In the promises of 2 Samuel 7, most of the emphasis is on the fact that the Messiah would come forth from David. The Messiah would come into the world as one of David's offspring, and for that reason he would be called the Son of David. We did see in 2 Samuel 7:14 that the Lord also spoke of this particular son of David, saying: “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me.” But what exactly did this mean? If this was all that God had said, His people might have been left confused. Thankfully, the Lord made it clear elsewhere exactly what He meant.

Psalm 45 is written as a song of celebration for a royal wedding. The groom set to marry was a great king in Israel (and most likely Solomon himself). But in the midst of this Psalm, we read something

72 So then: Individual faith saves; but in the Covenant of Grace God must also deal in a certain manner with the visible church as a whole. And that body is always made up of those who have truly believed and those who haven't. Now if the body as a whole is characterized by those who have embraced the covenant from the heart and are walking in God's ways, that body will experience special measures of God's blessing. But if the body as a whole is characterized by those who are unbelieving and have turned away from following the Lord, that body is ripe for corporate judgment. Leviticus 14 talks about a leprous house; and this is the case of any church or denomination that has been infected with the leprosy of unbelief and rebellion against the Lord; and just as that house was to be torn down and thrown outside to an unclean place, so it was with the house of Israel at the exile; and so it will be for any church or denomination that, on the whole, has turned away from following the Lord. This is the way the Lord deals with His people corporately as a whole: Individual faith saves; but corporate apostasy will result in corporate judgment. Calvin writes the following on Psalm 132:12: “the covenant was perfectly gratuitous, so far as related to God's promise of sending a Savior and Redeemer. . .This may serve to show in what sense the covenant was not conditional; but as there were other things which were accessories to the covenant, a condition was appended, to the effect that God would bless them if they obeyed his commandments. The Jews, for declining from this obedience, were removed into exile.” And Roberts notes: “For [certain] sins God is wont to withdraw his presence and residence from a people; and for most of these he forsook Zion and Jerusalem, that once was his delightful rest and habitation.” (p1048). There is one more aspect that will help unlock these passages; we'll get to it in the next section. (Quote is from John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, p31).
we're not necessarily expecting. Addressing the groom himself, the Psalmist declares: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows.” (v6-7). Notice that in verse 7, the Psalmist tells us that this royal king had been anointed by God, but in verse 6 the Psalmist is telling us that this royal king himself was God. How do we make sense of it? The Psalmist is looking past this particular son of David and speaking of the Greater Son of David yet to come, whose kingdom shall be forever. And he’s helping us understand that the coming Messiah would be none other than God himself. The author of Hebrews quotes this passage, together with the other passage from 2 Samuel 7:14, and helps us to see both as referring to Christ (1:8-9). And so, Psalm 45:6-7 helps to unlock for us a vital truth about the Messiah’s identity: He would come into the world as a man. But He would also come into the world as God himself.73

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<td>VERSE 7</td>
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<td>This king himself IS God</td>
<td>The one anointed is God the Son</td>
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Psalm 110 is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament (see Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; and Hebrews 1:13). And it’s this Psalm that Jesus alludes back to in order to help people understand His identity. The scribes understood well from 2 Samuel 7 that the Messiah would come into the world as the Son of David; that is, as a descendant of David. So far so good; but Jesus had a question for them. We read in Mark 12:35-37: “And Jesus began to say, as He taught in the temple, ‘How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?’ David himself said in the Holy Spirit, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet.’” David himself calls him ‘Lord’; so in what sense is He his son?” Here, Jesus is referring back to Psalm 110:1; and He’s challenging the notions of the scribes. What the Savior is drawing out here is that the Messiah wouldn’t just be David’s son—he would be his Lord. In other words, David wouldn’t just bring him into the world—David would owe him his allegiance. And further, if David, in his lifetime, is quoting a conversation that had already taken place between God and the Messiah, the implication is that though the Messiah would later come from David; yet somehow that Messiah had already existed before David. So then: In Psalm 110, God the Father is speaking to God the Son. If 2 Samuel 7 sets forth the Messiah as the son of David; Psalm 110 sets him forth as the Son of God.74

73 Calvin writes on Psalm 45:6-7: “The Jews, indeed, explain this passage as if the discourse were addressed to God, but such an interpretation is frivolous and impertinent. Others of them read the word Elohim in the genitive case, and translate it of God; thus: The throne of thy God. But for this there is no foundation, and it only betrays their presumption in not hesitating to wrest the Scriptures so shamefully, that they may not be constrained to acknowledge the divinity of the Messiah. . . Although [Solomon] is called God, because God has imprinted some mark of his glory in the person of kings, yet this title cannot well be applied to a mortal man; for we nowhere read in Scripture that man or angel has been distinguished by this title without some qualification. . . From this we may naturally infer, that this Psalm relates. . . to a higher than any earthly kingdom. . . For indeed, it is obvious, from the usual tenor of Scripture, that the posterity of David typically represented Christ to the ancient people of God. . . But, above all, no clearer testimony could be adduced of the application of this Psalm to Christ, than what is here said of the eternal duration of the kingdom. . . Accordingly, although the prophet commenced his discourse concerning the son of David, there can be no doubt, that, guided by the Holy Spirit to a higher strain, he comprehended the kingdom of the true and everlasting Messiah.” Plumer likewise notes: “This verse and the next are quoted. . . in Hebrews 1:8-9, for the purpose of establishing the divinity of Jesus Christ. . . We may rely with infallible certainty upon the interpretation there given. . . The true and proper divinity of Christ is plainly and beyond all question here asserted. The clause refers to him who is by John called the true God and by Isaiah the mighty God. It cannot without violence be applied to Solomon.” And the Reformation Heritage Study Bible says: “One of the most explicit statements in the Bible declaring the deity of Christ, the human Son of David and divine Son of God (Hebrews 1:8-9). . . The Son is God (v6); yet distinct from God the Father, who is the covenant Lord of the Mediator. . . The expressions of this Psalm can hardly refer to anyone else but the incarnate Lord Jesus, both God and the human Son of David, as the New Testament confirms. Neither Solomon nor any king in Israel’s monarchy could be rightly addressed as ‘God’ without further qualification (verse 6), nor receive the eternal praise of the people (verse 17). Even in the Old Testament, believers looked for a coming king who would be God and man (Isaiah 9:6).”

74 On Psalm 110:1, the Reformation Heritage Study Bible says: “David. . . acknowledged that his descendant, Christ, would be sovereign over him.” And again on Matthew 22:44-45: “Therefore, the Son of David” (v42), though human, must be far more than a man. The question, Whose son is he? requires the answer, The Son of God. Jesus was proving from the Scriptures His unique status as the God-man. . . ” The ESV Study Bible notes: “Their reply, The son of David; reflected the common understanding that the Messiah would be a royal descendant of David. Jesus then quotes from Psalm 110:1. . . The Pharisees would have recognized this psalm of David as a divinely inspired messianic prophecy. In the psalm, David said that the coming Messiah (IE, David’s son) will not be just a special human descended from David; he will be David’s Lord.” Plumer
The prophet Isaiah also spoke of these truths. As He prophesied about the coming Davidic King, he used the imagery of a branch to help us understand the true identity of the Messiah. *In Isaiah 11:1,* we read: “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him...” Here, Isaiah is telling us that the Messiah would come as a descendant of David: The Christ would sprout forth from Jesse, just as a branch sprouts forth from the root. But later in the same chapter, Isaiah goes on to prophesy in verse 10: “Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.” In verse 1, Jesse was the root and the Messiah was the branch. But now in verse 10 it’s the Messiah who is the root of Jesse! What do we make of this? In verse 1, Isaiah is emphasizing how it is that the Christ would come (it would be through David’s line). But in verse 10, the prophet is helping us understand who it is the Christ would be. Yes, he would come forth from David (verse 1). But He also existed long before David (verse 10). In one sense He would come as the branch of David; but in another sense, David was the branch who had his life and existence in Him. In verse 1, we see Jesus’ humanity; in verse 11, his divinity. As He himself tells us in Revelation 22:16: “I, Jesus, have sent Me angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” The Christ would come as a man; but also as God in the flesh.75

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The angel Gabriel told Mary in Luke 1:31-32, “you will...bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.” The Messiah would be the Son of David, but also the Son of God. He would have David as a father, but He would also be the Son of the Most High. He would come as a man, yes; but He would also come as God himself into the world. Gabriel’s words were precious, but his message wasn’t anything new. This is what the Scriptures had been teaching from the beginning.

2) THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST: Another way we’re pointed to Christ in the Davidic Covenant is by getting glimpses of His covenant headship. In past lessons, we’ve talked about this at some length. Here, we see Christ’s headship set forth in pictures from Scripture as well as in passages of Scripture.

A) Seeing Christ’s headship in PICTURES from Scripture: David is often set forth as a type of Christ as the covenant head of His people. Examples abound, but here we’ll just focus on two in particular:

I) DAVID and SAUL: Earlier we talked briefly about the decline of King Saul and David’s ascension to the throne. We saw that Saul was a natural born leader, but he stopped listening to God. We’re baffled by Saul. How did he start out so well and yet end up like he did? Another thing that may be a bit baffling to us is the severity of punishment Saul receives for not waiting for Samuel. He waits for

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Motyer puts it this way: “There shall come a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots. That is to say, out of the line of David there will come this perfect King on whom the Spirit of God will rest in fullness. The branch springs out of the stock of Jesse in verse 1, but in verse 10 he is called the root of Jesse. Whereas by the way of family tree he springs out of Jesse’s line, in reality Jesse exists for the purpose of the branch. The branch comes before the tree. He is the root from which Jesse comes—the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star.” (The Perfection of the Covenant, Article 4).
nearly the entire seven days for Samuel to come, but at the last minute decides to offer the sacrifice when it seemed Samuel may have been delayed (1 Samuel 13:8-10). It's just afterwards that Samuel arrives; and when he does, he has this to say to Saul: "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, for now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure. . ." (v13-14).

Isn't this a bit extreme? Does the punishment really fit the crime? And more importantly, is this the way God deals with us now in the Covenant of Grace? Is Saul's sin meant to teach us that if we fail to keep the Lord's commands perfectly as Saul did, God will likewise turn away from us and revoke the blessings He's given to us? No; after all, the Lord told David explicitly in 2 Samuel 7:1-15 that He would not remove His lovingkindness from David's sons as He had removed it from Saul. But what do we make of Saul? I believe Saul's sin and punishment are set forth before us as a reenactment of Adam's sin and punishment in the garden. If we compare the two accounts, we find that the story of Saul's downfall is astonishingly similar to the fall of Adam: 1) Saul was given a single command as a test, just as Adam was (1 Samuel 10:8; 13:13-14; cf. Genesis 2:16-17). 2) At face value, that command seemed a light or trivial thing, as perhaps God's command to Adam in the garden. 3) But later we learn that the command God had given Saul carried enormous consequences—just as with Adam (Romans 5:12)—for when Saul disobeys, his whole kingdom is torn away (13:13-14). 4) Saul comes to Saul with the same words God had spoken to Adam: "What have you done?" (13:11; cf. Genesis 3:13). And just like Adam, Saul's response is to blame others for his sin (13:11; cf. Genesis 3:12).

Saul's sin is being set before us as a reenactment of the sin of the first Adam. But just as Saul is a type of the first Adam, so too David is set before us as a type of the second Adam. David was a man after God's heart; but he was also a type of Christ: David was from the town of Bethlehem, the same place where Christ would be born. He was anointed by Samuel, the last of the Judges, for his kingly task; in a similar way to how Jesus was baptized by John, the last of the Prophets, at the beginning of His ministry. He was chosen by God to reign over all Israel, and yet his own brothers hated him without cause; as it was with Christ. For David too, the path to the crown would be laced with sufferings. But the Lord had chosen David to reign, and in due time He would crush all his enemies under His feet. So then, just like Adam in the garden, Saul transgressed the command of the Lord. But when Israel's first king disobeyed, the Lord raised up a second king for His people; this time it would be different. This king would follow the Lord fully where the first had turned away and rebelled. For, "After [the Lord] had removed [Saul], He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man. . .who will do all My will.'" (Acts 13:22).

A similar passage to this is Joshua 7, where Scripture sets forth Achan's sin as a reenactment of the sin of Adam. There, the spoil of just one city was forbidden (6:17), as in Genesis the fruit of just one tree was forbidden. In 7:21, when Achan owns up to his sin, he uses the same three Hebrew verbs that were used to describe Adam and Eve's sin in Genesis 3:6 (saw; coveted; took). Further, it was Achan alone who sinned, but his sin is then imputed to all Israel (7:11; Romans 5:12); and as a result, all Israel is judicially punished with God's curse (7:12). So, there's precedent in Scripture for seeing Saul's sin as a type of Adam's.

Speaking of David as a type of Christ, Roberts says: "Now David was a type of Christ. . .in his condition and state. . .1) Both of them were born of obscure and mean parents in Bethlehem. . . 2) Both of them were advanced from a low and despicable state to their royal dignity. . . David. . .from the shepherd's staff to the scepter. . .So Christ. . .from the manger to the throne. . . 3) Both of them were born King of the Jews, was cruelly persecuted by King Herod, so that he fled to the heathen country Egypt; 4) Both of them were advanced from a low and despicable state to their royal dignity. . . David. . .from the shepherd's staff to the scepter. . .So Christ. . .from the manger to the throne. . . 5) Both of them at last were exalted to a high and glorious state. 6) David after all his afflictions retained his kingdom in peace and honor. . .So Christ after all his conflicts and sufferings, having conquered his enemies on every side. . .entered into his heavenly glory. . . 6) Both of them had their kingdom enlarged even over strangers. David became head of the heathens about him, so that strangers unknown served him. . .Christ also became head not only of Jews but of Gentiles also, having all power over them. . . 7) Both of them had an everlasting kingdom established upon them. David in some respects only. . .Christ absolutely." (pp1074-75). Ball notes: "David himself was a type, and did bear the person of Christ, and many things spoken of David, were more properly fulfilled in Christ the person typified, than in David; as, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? They parted my garments among them, and for my coat they cast lots. They pierced my hands and my feet. . .'(pp145-46). And Edwards says: "David, as he was the ancestor of Christ, so he was the greatest personal type of Christ of all under the Old Testament. . .Hence Christ is often called David in the prophecies of Scripture; as [in] Ezekiel 34:23-24." (History of Redemption). And Thomas Boston likewise concludes: "What the first Adam failed in, the second Adam was to do. And this I take to be represented unto us, in the case of the first and second king of Israel, [namely], Saul and David. Acts 13:22 [says], 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will (Gr. 'all my wills'). In which there is a plain view to Saul, who was partial in his obedience to the will of God (1 Samuel 15) and upon that score lost the kingdom for him and his." (p80).
There was a test based on his obedience to a command (13:13-14) He was also from the town of Bethlehem

The command seemed in itself an insignificant thing (10:8) Samuel went before him as John before Jesus

But there was more at stake than he may have realized (13:13-14) Chosen by God yet hated by his own kinsmen

He failed the test as Adam failed his test in the garden (13:8-9) Suffering before glory; a cross before a crown

The Divine response is: “What have you done?” (13:11) But in due time his kingdom was exalted

Saul tries to blame others for his sin (13:11) A lamb towards his friends; a lion to his foes

His sin results in the tearing away of his kingdom (13:13-14) A king who ruled over Israel in righteousness

II) DAVID AND GOLIATH: Often, the story of David and Goliath is taught in such a way that we are encouraged to be like David and step out in faith. We’re exhorted to be bold like David and take a stand for God; to look around at the Goliath’s in our society, in the church, or in our personal lives and charge the battle field without fear. But it's only as we understand David as a type of Christ that we begin to see what this passage is really about. This account is in 1 Samuel 17. This is important because Saul’s disobedience was still fresh; it was just two chapters earlier where Samuel had said his final goodbye to king Saul. We watched Saul fall from God. Like Adam before him, he transgressed the command of the Lord. So now, here comes Goliath, and it seems as though he’s coming against God’s people with a sword of justice. Their covenant representative has sinned; and it seems that this must be the day of reckoning. God’s people were helpless and hopeless before their enemy. Their fallen king couldn’t help them; and they couldn’t help themselves. Goliath completely owned them.

But just when it seemed there was no hope, something happened. A father sent his son to his own kinsmen, to seek their welfare. Saul's kingdom was formally torn away from him in 1 Samuel 15; but God sent Samuel to anoint David as the new king over His people in 1 Samuel 16. Saul and his men were totally paralyzed before Goliath; so David single-handedly ran to the battle line; this was a battle he would fight alone. David fought against Goliath and conquered. And after David cut off his head, we read in 17:52, “The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines...” It was David alone who defeated Goliath; but when he did it meant victory for all God’s people. And this is what Christ has done for us: We were ruined in Adam; but we conquer now because of Jesus.78

B) Seeing Christ's headship in PASSAGES of Scripture: We see this principle of covenant headship not only through types and pictures but also explicitly in particular passages in the Davidic Covenant:

I) SOLOMON'S FAILURE: Earlier we refuted certain Scriptures that seemed to imply the Davidic Covenant was conditional on Solomon's obedience or the obedience of his sons. We showed that in these passages, the Lord was speaking about His Church as a whole. But in some of these passages, Scripture is also setting forth the principle of covenant headship. The Lord tells Solomon in 1 Kings 6:12-13, “if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father. I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel.” Here, the entire well-being of God's people seems to be contingent on the obedience of one man. What do we make of it? It's the same principle of covenant headship: “the consequences aren't just for Solomon. Because of this one man's disobedience, the nation will be torn in two. While Solomon kept the covenant, the people were blessed. When Solomon rebels, disaster falls on his whole people.” Why? Because Solomon wasn't just any person; as the king, he was the covenant representative of God's people. And so when Solomon failed, we're pointed back once again to Adam's failure in the garden. Solomon's headship over Israel is meant to echo back to Adam's headship over all humanity; Solomon's disobedience is another reenactment of the disobedience of Adam. When he sinned, disaster came upon them all.79

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78 Another passage from David’s life that sets forth pictures of covenant headship is 2 Samuel 24. Here, David does what is wrong by taking a census of the people of Israel. It was David who sinned, but because of his sin, the Lord sent a plague upon Israel that ended up claiming the lives of 70,000. So, just like Adam, it was David alone who sinned, but it was the people of Israel who died as a direct result of his sin. So David's sin is set forth as a reenactment of Adam's. But as David is a picture of the 1st Adam, he's also a picture of the 2nd; for as David alone brought about the plague, it was David alone who stopped it.

79 Quote is from Jonny Rhodes, Covenants Made Simple. We see this principle of headship failure and its results acted out,
II) DAVID'S REWARD: If Solomon echoes back to Adam, then David echoes forward to Christ. There's a passage in 1 Kings 15 that describes the failures of one of the kings of Judah (Abijam). And yet, right after outlining all the ways he went wrong, Scripture tells us in verses 4-5: “But for David's sake the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to raise up his son after him and to establish Jerusalem, because David did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.” If Solomon gave us a glimpse of a covenant representative in his disobedience, David gives us a glimpse of one who through his obedience merits the favor of God on behalf of the people. We're reminded even in this verse that David wasn't perfect. The point isn't that it was actually David's obedience that secured God's blessing for His people. The point is that David is meant to echo us forward to Christ. David's obedience was flawed. But it's meant to point us forward to the perfect, spotless, obedience of the Greater David yet to come. It's the same truth we've seen all along. Back in Genesis 7:1, we saw that Noah's household was saved from the flood because of Noah's righteousness. Then later, in Genesis 22:18 we saw that all the nations of the earth would be blessed because Abraham obeyed the voice of the Lord. All these passages convey the same truth. Noah, Abraham, and David all point us forward to the obedience of Christ. Their obedience was simply meant to echo forward to His.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Truth</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.” (Genesis 7:1; cf. Genesis 6:18, 7:23)</td>
<td>Noah’s family would be saved because Noah was righteous</td>
<td>Noah’s righteousness is meant to point us to the righteousness of JESUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Genesis 22:18; cf. also Genesis 26:4-5, 24)</td>
<td>The nations would be blessed because Abraham obeyed</td>
<td>Abraham’s obedience is meant to point us to the obedience of JESUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“For David's sake the Lord would establish Jerusalem; because David did what was right in the sight of the Lord” (1 Kings 15:5; cf. 2 Kings 19:34)</td>
<td>God would continue to bless Israel because David did right</td>
<td>David’s uprightness is meant to point us to the uprightness of JESUS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We saw above there are certain Scriptures that seem to imply that the well-being of Israel completely hinged upon the obedience of David's son. In a sense, that's true. But the question is: Which son is really intended? Because Solomon did fail. But the Greater Son of David would triumph. So, “the role of Jesus Christ as the ultimate seed of David speaks...decisively to this question of conditionality in the covenant. It may be affirmed as emphatically true that David's covenant hinged conditionally on the responsible fulfillment of covenant obligations by Jesus Christ, the seed of David. He satisfied in himself all the obligations of the covenant. In Christ, the conditional and the certain aspects of the covenant meet in perfect harmony. In him the Davidic covenant finds assured fulfillment.”

not just with Solomon but scattered throughout the books of Kings and Chronicles. Speaking of 2 Kings 21:10-12, Rhodes goes on to note: “Manasseh brings covenant curses down on his people in two ways. First, he does so as their representative. It is because he sins that God will judge. As their covenant king, his record gives God grounds to punish his whole people. In a sense, they bear the guilt of his crimes. But equally, Manasseh 'made Judah also to sin with his idols.' Here, the problem is not Manasseh's lack of righteousness, but his corrupting effect on his people. Through his influence, they too indulge in grimy, sinful lives. This might sound familiar. It is an echo of Adam in the garden. When Adam sinned, remember, he did so as covenant king of all humankind. Through being united to him, we become corrupt too.” In 1 Kings 14:6-11, God also tells Jeroboam that He will cut off every male from his house on account of the evil he had done. Jeroboam alone did evil—but his sons are punished on account of his sin. It's the same thing with Baasha in 1 Kings 16:1-4 and then Ahab in 21:20-22. We saw the same truth back in Psalm 89:30-33 in the introduction to The Nature of the Covenant of Grace. Here in this passage, David is being set forth as a type of Christ in His covenant headship for His people; and these verses in Psalm 89:30-33 are telling us that even if God's people go astray, the Lord will never cut off His lovingkindness from them because of Him. We also see this truth in Psalm 132. Gill says on verse 1: “respect in all this may be had...to the Messiah, who is the antitype of David...and so is a petition that God would remember the covenant of grace made with him; the promise of his coming into the world; his offering and sacrifice, as typified by the legal ones; and also remember them and their offerings for his sake...Likewise 'all his afflictions' and sufferings he was to endure...both in soul and body; and so as to accept of them in the room and stead of his people, as a satisfaction to his justice.” And on verse 10, he says: “For thy servant David's sake: Not for any virtues, or excellencies or merits, of David, literally understood...but for the sake of the antitypical David, the Messiah, the son of David according to the flesh, and the servant of the Lord as Mediator; for whose sake, and in whose name, prayers and supplications are made and presented...And the request is, that God would not turn such away from him, and cause them to depart from his throne of grace, ashamed and disappointed; but hear and answer their petitions, for his Son's sake.”  

81 Quote is from Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, pp248-49. Francis Roberts likewise says: “By Jesus Christ especially, the conditioned duties of this covenant had their fullest and exactest accomplishment. David and his seed, even the most religious
## Table: The Davidic Covenant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Scriptures</th>
<th>Son</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Record</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Obedience of David's son</td>
<td>1 Kings 6:11-13 and 9:4-5; also 1 Chron. 28:7; 2 Chron. 7:17-18</td>
<td>Solomon</td>
<td>David's initial son</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Disaster for Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christ</td>
<td>David's ultimate son</td>
<td>Triumph</td>
<td>Blessing for Israel</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### 3) THE REIGN OF CHRIST:

A third way that we see Christ in the Davidic Covenant is by noticing how Scripture speaks about the different stages of his kingship. Through both the prophecies David penned and in the pattern of his own life and reign, we come to learn much about the reign of Jesus.

**A) Learning about Christ’s reign from the PROPHECIES of David’s psalms:** We trust in Jesus today by looking back in history to what He did and believing. But David actually looked forward to Christ with the eyes of faith and trusted in the One who was yet to come. And as he looked ahead and saw Jesus, he also wrote about him. David wrote a good deal about Christ's HUMILIATION: In Psalm 8:4-6, he looks forward to the incarnation when he sees that the Messiah would, for a time, humble himself to a place lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:6-9). And prophesying again of the incarnation, David foresees the Christ declaring, “Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me” (Psalm 40:7; cf. Hebrews 10:5-9). David also prophesies much of the sufferings that Christ would endure. He foretells that the Messiah would be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18); that the Gentiles would gather together against him (Psalm 2:1-3; Acts 4:25-28); that He would be mocked by his enemies for trusting the Lord (Psalm 22:6-8; Matthew 27:39-43); and that His hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16-17; Matthew 27:35). He foresees that they would divide his garments and cast lots for his clothing (Psalm 22:18; Luke 23:34); that gall and vinegar would be given Him to drink (Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:48); and that God himself must forsake him (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46). David also prophesies of the death and burial of Christ. He would be made to taste “the dust of death” (Psalm 22:15); for a time He would experience Sheol (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:23; 13:35).

But David also looks forward to Jesus' EXALTATION: The Messiah would be given over to Sheol for a time, but He wouldn’t be left there. Speaking of Christ’s resurrection, David declares in Psalm 16:10; “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay” (Acts 2:24-32). And foreseeing the Christ's ascension, David prophesies in Psalm 68:18; “You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men. . .” (cf. Ephesians 4:8-10). David also looks forward to the eternal reign of Christ; and to the time after His resurrection and ascension, when He would take His seat at the right hand of the throne of God, until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:29). So then, we find David prophesying much about the stages of Christ's kingship; both in His humiliation and His exaltation.

### Table: Christ in His Humiliation vs. Christ in His Exaltation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Stage</th>
<th>Second Stage</th>
<th>Third Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The INCARNATION of the Christ</td>
<td>The SUFFERINGS of the Christ</td>
<td>The DEATH and BURIAL of the Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RESURRECTION of Christ from the dead</td>
<td>The ASCENSION of Christ into heaven</td>
<td>The ETERNAL REIGN of Christ from His throne</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### B) Learning about Christ’s reign from the PATTERN of David’s life:

We also see the same truths of Christ's humiliation and exaltation woven into David's own life and kingly reign. He was anointed as God's rightful king even from his youth; but though anointed, the first part of his life was a ministry of suffering. His own kinsmen hated him, and the rulers of God's people hunted him, to such an extent that he had to flee and live in the wilderness (1 Samuel 22-26). Though anointed as God's king, he was persecuted to such an degree he was even driven into exile from the land of Israel; cut off from the land of promise (1 Samuel 27-31). The prophet Isaiah later uses this same language to describe the sufferings of Christ, that “He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due” (53:8). In all this David's life is a pattern of Christ's humiliation.
But if the book of 1 Samuel is marked by David's afflictions and sufferings, the book of 2 Samuel is marked by David's kingly reign. If 1 Samuel is the account of David in his humiliation, 2 Samuel is the account of David in his exaltation. Under David, the tribes of Israel are united; and he rules over them with righteousness, and shepherds them "according to the integrity of his heart" (Psalm 78:72). In days past, David had lived as a suffering servant; but now he reigned as the exalted king. But even though David was now sitting on the throne, that didn't mean everything was perfect just yet. There were still battles to be fought with enemies on the outside (cf. 2 Samuel 8,10). And sadly, there were also uprisings, revolts, and rebellions that arose against David from enemies on the inside (2 Samuel 15-18, 20). In all these things we're pointed to Christ's present exaltation. For Jesus has been raised from the dead, He has ascended to the right hand of God, and that is where He now reigns as King over His people; and indeed, over all things. But though Jesus reigns and God has "put all things in subjection under His feet" (Psalm 8:6; 1 Corinthians 15:27); still, as the author of Hebrews notes, we now "do not yet see all things subjected to him" (2:8). There are still enemies who fight against Him from outside the church; and there are still enemies that arise against Him from inside the church.83

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 SAMUEL</th>
<th>Characterized by</th>
<th>David's Reality</th>
<th>David's Dwelling</th>
<th>David's Enemies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>David's Humiliation</td>
<td>Hated and Hunted</td>
<td>In the wilderness and outside the land</td>
<td>Do seem to prevail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 SAMUEL</td>
<td>David's Exaltation</td>
<td>Exalted and Ruling</td>
<td>In the palace and on his royal throne</td>
<td>Don't cease to exist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We do not presently see all things subjected to Christ. But the day is coming when Jesus will return. He is coming again. And when the trumpet sounds, and He returns to judge the earth, men will bow the knee to Jesus whether they want to or not. For "every knee will bow" to Him (Philippians 2:10); if not voluntarily, then it seems, by force. On that day we will finally see all things subjected to Him; for "the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). Well, if David's reign is a foretaste of the beginning of Christ's exaltation, then Solomon's reign is the climax. At the very end of David's reign, there is an uprising. Solomon had been appointed to rule after his father, but David's son Adonijah was making a run to declare himself the new king. But while Adonijah was holding a coronation feast for himself, all of a sudden there was the sound of a trumpet (1 Kings 1:39). Solomon had taken his seat on the throne of the kingdom (1:46). And all the traitors who had revolted against his reign were about to be brought to stand before him, face to face. Indeed, the first act of business for Solomon is to deal with all the traitors and enemies in the kingdom. Adonijah is executed for his treason; and Joab, who had not only followed in the rebellion, but had shed innocent blood all his life, is executed shortly afterwards. Not long after that, Solomon also deals with Shimei, who had done much harm to David during his lifetime. Outwardly, these men were part of the community; but inwardly they were rebels. David let them live for a time under his rule, but they are brought to judgment under Solomon. So, Solomon completes the picture: David had reigned, but through trials and hardship; Solomon's reign ushered in unprecedented peace (1 Kings 4:20). During David's rule, there were still enemies without and within, but they are dealt with at the ascension of Solomon. David's kingdom extended over God's people, but Solomon reigned as King of kings, imposing His authority over all. So, if David's reign is the beginning of Christ's exaltation, the reign of Solomon is the culmination.84

83 Calvin comments on Hebrews 2:8: "after having laid down this truth, that Christ has universal dominion over all creatures, he adds, as an objection, But all things do not as yet obey the authority of Christ, 'To meet this objection he teaches us that yet now is seen completed in Christ what he immediately adds respecting glory and honor, as if he had said, Though universal subjection does not as yet appear to us, let us be satisfied that he has passed through death, and has been exalted to the highest state of honor; for that which is as yet wanting, will in its time be completed'. . .It is asked again, 'Why does he say that we see not all things made subject to Christ?' The solution of this question you will find in that passage already quoted from Paul [in 1 Corinthians 1:5:28]. . .As Christ carries on war continually with various enemies, it is doubtless evident that he has no quiet possession of his kingdom. . .his enemies are not to be subdued till the last day, in order that we may be tried and proved by fresh exercises.' And Calvin writes in 1 Corinthians 1:5:28: "For the present, as the Devil resists God, as wicked men confound and disturb the order which he has established, and as endless occasions of offense present themselves to our view, it does not distinctly appear that God is all in all; but when Christ will have executed the judgment which has been committed to him by the Father, and will have cast down Satan and all the wicked, the glory of God will be conspicuous in their destruction."

84 Roberts comments: "Solomon the immediate seed of David was also a notable type of Jesus Christ, who was greater than
3. The WARNINGS and COMFORTS of the Covenant of Grace: **We learn what this all means for us**

As we seek to wrap up our time, what are some things we can take away from this lesson? What are some final points of application that we can draw out from our lesson on God's covenant with David?

**A) There are WARNINGS:** David says in 2 Samuel 23:5: “[God] has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and secured; for all my salvation and all my desire, will He not indeed make it grow?” We’ve already spoken about this verse. But David goes on to say this in verses 6-7: “But the worthless, every one of them, will be thrust away like thorns, because they cannot be taken in hand; but the man who touches them must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they will be completely burned with fire in their place.” What’s he talking about? He’s reminding us that the covenant God made with him doesn’t automatically just extend to everybody. Those who have trusted in Christ will live under God’s favor and blessing all the days of their life. But there are others who will be “thrust away like thorns,” and “completely burned with fire in their place.” Who is David talking about? Well, the phrase that’s translated as “the worthless” is literally “sons of Belial” in the original Hebrew. And in the Old Testament, this phrase, “sons of Belial” wasn’t just a term for the unbelieving in general. Every other time the phrase “sons of Belial” or “children of Belial” is used in the Old Testament, it's talking about Hebrews who outwardly belonged to the covenant community, but they never truly knew the Lord. So, David's words are a warning for us. Jesus picks up the same language in John 15:1, where He says: “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away;” and then again in verse 6: “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.” Jesus is likewise talking about those belong to the church outwardly in the New Testament— but they never truly knew Him. There’s a similar warning in Matthew 8:11-12. Jesus tells us: “I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” In other words, there are sons of the kingdom that never really become sons of the King. Jesus is saying: Don’t let that happen to you. Don’t rest until you’re sure you have really trusted in Christ. As Psalm 2:8 bids us, “Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!”

**B) There are COMFORTS:** There is also a final word of comfort for us here in this passage. We’ve spent a lot of time in this lesson meditating on the eternal security we have in Christ. But here in this text, we’re reminded that in Christ, we don’t just have eternal security in this life; we have an eternal home waiting for us in glory. David is writing these last words as he lay on his death-bed. And here at the close of his life, he says in verses 3-4: “He who rules over men righteously, who rules in the fear of Solomon... In his Acts, Solomon was a singular type of Jesus Christ. For: 1) Both of them were builders of the house and temple of God. Solomon built the material dead temple... But Jesus Christ builds the mystical, spiritual, and living temple, the house and Church of God; of people both from among Jews and Gentiles... 2) Both of them ruled righteously. As Solomon in punishing offenders after David's death [1 Kings 2]... But Christ is the Lord our righteousness... 3) Both of them enriched their subjects abundantly. Solomon enriched his subjects with outward temporal wealth... But Jesus Christ enriches his subjects both with outward and inward, temporal, spiritual and eternal wealth.” (pp1077-78). Edwards distinguishes between David and Solomon, saying: “David, a man of war, a man who had shed much blood, and whose life was full of troubles and conflicts, was a more suitable representation of Christ in his state of humiliation, wherein he was conflicting with his enemies. But Solomon, a man of peace, was a representation more especially of Christ exalted, triumphing and reigning in his kingdom of peace.” (History of Redemption). Clowney says: “David’s charge to Solomon takes account of the difference in their reigns. David bears not only the agony of battle, but also the reproach of those who betrayed and disobeyed him. Solomon brings in the kingdom in which peace is founded on stern justice. David foreshadows the long-suffering restraint of Christ’s humiliation. Solomon typifies Christ as the Judge, who ushers in the Kingdom by judging justly.” (The Unfolding Mystery, p173).
of God, is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springs out of the earth, through sunshine after rain.” For most, the death-bed is the setting of the sun. At best, death is the end of earthly treasures and kingdoms; and at worst it’s the beginning of eternal miseries. For most, the death-bed is where the sun sets and darkness begins. But David isn’t speaking about the setting of the sun as he prepares to die on his bed; he’s speaking about its rising. He had a place prepared for him in glory, where he had already shipped all his treasures. And he had his Lord waiting for him there, whom he had known and loved and followed all the days of his life. So, David lay in his own palace; but he wasn’t leaving home—no, he was finally going home. David knew that the grace God lavishes upon us in Jesus in this life is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springs out of the earth, through sunshine after rain.” For most, the death-bed is the setting of eternal miseries. For most, the death-bed is where the sun sets and darkness begins. But David wasn’t speaking about the setting of the sun as he prepares to die on his bed; he’s speaking about its rising. He had a place prepared for him in glory, where he had already shipped all his treasures. And he had his Lord waiting for him there, whom he had known and loved and followed all the days of his life. So, David lay in his own palace; but he wasn’t leaving home—no, he was finally going home. David knew that the grace God lavishes upon us in Jesus in this life is just the beginning. And he was about to experience the words he himself had penned in Psalm 23:6: “Surely goodness and loving-kindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

**PSALM 72**

GIVE THE KING YOUR JUDGMENTS, O GOD, AND YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO THE KING’S SON.
MAY HE JUDGE YOUR PEOPLE WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS AND YOUR AFFLICTED WITH JUSTICE.
LET THE MOUNTAINS BRING PEACE TO THE PEOPLE, AND THE HILLS, IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.
LET THEM FEAR YOU WHILE THE SUN ENDURES, AND AS LONG AS THE MOON, THROUGHOUT ALL GENERATIONS.
MAY HE COME DOWN LIKE RAIN UPON THE MOYN GRASS, LIKE SHOWERS THAT WATER THE EARTH.
IN HIS DAYS MAY THE RIGHTEOUS FLOURISH, AND ABUNDANCE OF PEACE TILL THE MOON IS NO MORE.
MAY HE ALSO RULE FROM SEA TO SEA AND FROM THE RIVER TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.
LET THE NOMADS OF THE DESERT BOW BEFORE HIM, AND HIS ENEMIES LICK THE DUST.
LET THE KINGS OF TARSHISH AND OF THE ISLANDS BRING PRESENTS; THE KINGS OF SHEBA AND SEBA OFFER GIFTS.
AND LET ALL KINGS BOW DOWN BEFORE HIM, ALL NATIONS SERVE HIM.
FOR HE WILL DELIVER THE NEEDY WHEN HE CRIES FOR HELP, THE AFFLICTED ALSO, AN HIM WHO HAS NO HELPER.
HE WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON THE POOR AND NEEDY, AND THE LIVES OF THE NEEDY HE WILL SAVE.
HE WILL RESCUE THEIR LIFE FROM OPPRESSION AND VIOLENCE, AND THEIR BLOOD WILL BE PRECIOUS IN HIS SIGHT;
SO MAY HE LIVE, AND MAY THE GOLD OF SHEBA BE GIVEN TO HIM;
AND LET THEM PRAY FOR HIM CONTINUALLY; LET THEM BLESS HIM ALL DAY LONG.
MAY THERE BE ABUNDANCE OF GRAIN IN THE EARTH ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS;
ITS FRUIT WILL WAVE LIKE THE CEDARS OF LEBANON;
AND MAY THOSE FROM THE CITY FLOURISH LIKE VEGETATION OF THE EARTH.
MAY HIS NAME ENDURE FOREVER; MAY HIS NAME INCREASE AS LONG AS THE SUN SHINES;
AND LET MEN BLESS THEMSELVES BY HIM; LET ALL NATIONS CALL HIM BLESSED.
BLESSED BE THE LORD GOD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL, WHO ALONE WORKS WONDERS.
AND BLESSED BE HIS GLORIOUS NAME FOREVER;
AND MAY THE WHOLE EARTH BE FILLED WITH HIS GLORY.
AMEN, AND AMEN. THE PRAYERS OF DAVID THE SON OF JESSE ARE ENDED.

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85 As Edmund Clowney observes: “Beer commercials on American television have pictured a group of friends sitting on the porch of a lodge after a day of fishing. The sun is setting, and they are sharing a couple of six-packs. ‘It doesn’t get any better than this,’ says one of them. The commercial raises a disturbing question, even for a fisherman who might regard an evening beer as life’s crowning pleasure. Life might not get any better, but it will certainly get worse. Life itself moves toward a sunset, if it doesn’t crash sooner. What meaning does life have that is not canceled by death? Many a six-pack has been emptied in an effort to postpone that question, but the question will not go away.” (Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, pp176-77).
The New Covenant
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The New Covenant (Part 1)

I. The Background of the New Covenant

1. The KING of God's People: The Reign of Solomon

A) The Significance of Solomon's Reign: We finished our last lesson by talking about the beginning of Solomon's reign. It was the highest point in Israel's history. Everything in their past was building up to this; and for Israel, it couldn't get any better. In King Solomon, God was fulfilling the promises He had made to David. As Solomon dedicated the temple, he said: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David and has fulfilled it with His hand. . .Now the Lord has fulfilled His word which He spoke; for I have risen in place of my father David and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built the house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel." (1 Kings 8:15,20). Remember, back in 2 Samuel 7, the Lord had promised to David that He would raise up his son after him who would not only sit on his throne, but build a house for the name of the Lord (vv12-13). Here, Solomon's acknowledging that God had kept His promises.

Solomon's kingdom also brings to fulfillment the promises that God had made all the way back to Abraham. In 1 Kings 4:20-21, Solomon's reign is described for us in this way: "Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance. . .Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life." Do you see it? God had multiplied His people Israel like the sand on the seashore, just as He promised to Abraham back in Genesis 22 (v17; cf. 32:12). And God had given to Israel the full boundaries of the land that He had promised to Abraham back in Genesis 15 (v18; cf. 17:8). God had multiplied His people, He had given them a place, and with the temple He had crowned them with His presence.1

B) The Beginning of Solomon's Downfall: Things couldn't get any better for Israel. Sadly, though, they would get worse. Solomon's heart turns away from the Lord, and the whole kingdom falls with him. My daughter asked me recently: "Does sin ever trick you?" I think that's what happened to Solomon. He was a good man, a godly man. He was humble leader, and a gifted teacher. But at some point, he lets his heart grow distant and begins engaging in activities the Lord had forbidden. In Deuteronomy 17 God lays out three commands for kings in Israel: The king "shall not multiply horses for himself. . .He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself." (vv16-17). But in 1 Kings 9-11, these are the things Solomon begins to do: It starts with the gold (1 Kings 9:26-28; 10:14-15); then the horses (10:26-29); and last of all Solomon isn't just multiplying wives, but marrying unbelieving women who worshipped other gods (11:1-4). One writer has summarized these three temptations as guns, girls, and gold.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERENCE</th>
<th>SPECIFIC COMMAND</th>
<th>PROHIBITION</th>
<th>TEMPTATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy 17:16</td>
<td>&quot;he shall not multiply horses for himself. . .&quot;</td>
<td>Guns</td>
<td>Power (Control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy 17:17</td>
<td>&quot;He shall not multiply wives for himself. . .&quot;</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Sex (Pleasure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy 17:17</td>
<td>&quot;nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold. . .&quot;</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Money (Security)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

1 The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible says: “The borders of Solomon's kingdom correspond with the borders promised to Abraham (see Genesis 15:18; 17:8; Deuteronomy 1:7; 11:24; Joshua 1:4 and their notes). Hence, Kings presents Solomon's rule over an empire that represented the long-awaited fulfillment of the patriarchal promises (cf. vv24-25).” (on 1 Kings 4:21). Jonty Rhodes notes of 1 Kings 4:20-21: “David's son Solomon takes to the throne, and initially all is well. . .See the promises being fulfilled? The people of Israel are as many as the sand by the sea, just as God promised Abraham in Genesis 22. They are living in the land stretching from the Euphrates to Egypt, just as God promised Abraham in Genesis 15. Solomon is ruling over them, as a wise father. People, paradise, the covenant king, but what about God's presence? In fact, this blessing too is lavished on Israel during Solomon's reign. The early chapters of 1 Kings tell of the building of a great temple for God.”

2 Rhodes: “Solomon [commits] exactly the sins. . .Deuteronomy 17 warned against. . .Guns, girls, and gold: they're all there.”
We also have temptations, like Solomon. What are the ways sin may be trying to trick you in your life right now? I think one way sin tricks us is believing wrong things about God when we go through things that are hard in our life. Sometimes I find my heart getting frustrated with the Lord, or bitter, when I'm not seeing very much fruit in ministry. It's harboring these feelings that distances my heart from the Lord and can lead me down the road of giving in to other sins. I want the Lord to give me success and I pout when He doesn't. What I forgot is that this is exactly what the Lord had given to Solomon. And yet, for Solomon, it seemed it was success that began to turn his heart away. A child might want to play with a sharp knife, but that doesn't mean you give it to her. And the reason you don't is that you love her too much. Friends, God knows what's best for us. We can trust in Him.

C) The Result of Solomon's Sin: God had warned Solomon about this. When he was building the temple, the Lord had told Solomon that if he would walk in God's ways, the Lord's blessing would rest upon all Israel (1 Kings 6:11-13). And after Solomon had dedicated the temple, the Lord came to him in a dream and repeated the same message: If Solomon walked before the Lord, observing His commandments and keeping His statutes, the Lord would establish his kingdom (1 Kings 9:3-5; cf. 1 Chronicles 28:5-8; 2 Chronicles 7:17-18). But there was no such promise for Solomon and his kingdom if he were to turn away from the Lord. And so, sadly, when Solomon sins, it results in the shattering of the kingdom. The Lord tells Solomon in 1 Kings 11:11, “Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.” Sure enough, this is exactly what happens in the days of Solomon's son, Rehoboam. When the elders of Israel approach Rehoboam shortly after he had been anointed king, he speaks harshly with them. As a result, the northern tribes of Israel break off from Rehoboam and his kingdom, form their own nation, and appoint their own king. So, when Solomon sins, the kingdom gets torn in two. Rehoboam continues to be king over the tribe of Judah, along with the southern tribe of Benjamin (1 Kings 11:30-31; 12:21). They become known as the kingdom of Judah (with their capital in Jerusalem). The ten other northern tribes who split off form their own nation which becomes known as the kingdom of Israel (with their capital in Samaria).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE UNITED MONARCHY</th>
<th>THE DIVIDED MONARCHY</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WHO REIGNED</strong></td>
<td><strong>WHO THEY REIGNED OVER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Saul</td>
<td>ALL 12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King David</td>
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</table>

Though the split was ultimately God's plan, Israel breaking off from Judah is presented in Scripture as an act of rebellion against their true Davidic king (1 Kings 12:19). Later, Rehoboam's son Abijah, the rightful king of Judah, had this to say to all the tribes of northern Israel: “Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the rule of Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? . . . So now you intend to resist the kingdom of the Lord through the sons of David. . .” (2 Chronicles 13:5,8). Abijah's words help us to interpret the splitting of the kingdom: Because God had given the rule to David and to his sons, to resist the kingdom of Judah was to resist the kingdom of the Lord.3

How do we interpret all this? How are we to fit the pieces together? I think it's easy to misinterpret what's going on here, if we're not careful. It's easy to read these Scriptures about Solomon and come to the conclusion that God turned His back on Solomon because Solomon had turned his back on

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3 The Reformation Heritage Study Bible says of 2 Chronicles 13:5-8: “War against the house of David was rebellion against God. . . Judah's kingdom was God's kingdom, which He ruled through the Davidic king as His representative.” The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible likewise says of verse 8: “Despite Rehoboam's offense, resisting David's dynasty was tantamount to resisting God himself.” And the ESV Study Bible also concludes: “The Chronicler notes that in contrast to Jeroboam's kingdom and cult, the Davidic monarchy is the object of God's enduring promise (13:5,8). . .” A similar passage can be found in 2 Chronicles 30, where couriers are sent out from King Hezekiah in Judah to the northern tribes of Israel. They are sent out with the message that Israel should return to the Lord (the Old Testament language for repentance). Though the focus is the Passover, the ESV Study Bible says: “More than an invitation to participate in a festival (30:8b), they are really a summons to repentance (return to the Lord), so that God will avert his anger and the captives of the Assyrians will be returned (v9).”
God. But that's not true. Remember, back in 2 Samuel 7, God had made a very specific promise to David about his son Solomon, telling him: “when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul...” (vv14-15). The discipline God sent to Solomon was actually the proof of His love for him. The Lord wasn't punishing him as a judge; He was drawing him back as his father.

Ultimately, though, what's happening here with Israel's kingdom is about much more than just God's personal dealings with Solomon. Remember, Solomon wasn't just any person. As the king of Israel, he functioned as the covenant representative for God's people. We mentioned this in the last lesson: The entire well-being of God's people seems to be contingent on the obedience of one man. While Solomon kept the covenant, the people were blessed. But when he sins, the whole kingdom is split apart. Now here, we see what that headship meant in particular for Israel: 1) Solomon's sin directly results in Israel being separated from their rightful king (and, in fact, into a state of rebellion against him). And, in connection with this, 2) Solomon's sin also directly results in Israel's separation from one another. From now on, Israel would be separated from their true king, and separately from one another; they would be rebels against their rightful king, and hostile towards one another. All of this is meant to point us back to Adam's headship over all humanity. Adam's sin directly resulted in both our rebellion against God and alienation from one another. Solomon's sin echoes back to Adam's.4

<table>
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<tr>
<th>HEAD ACTION RESULT: GOD-WARD</th>
<th>HEAD ACTION RESULT: MAN-WARD</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PICTURE</strong> Solomon Disobedience</td>
<td>Israel's rebellion against their King Hostility and alienation from own kinsmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REALITY</strong> Adam Disobedience</td>
<td>Our rebellion against our Creator Hostility and alienation from one another</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The CORRUPTION of God's People: The Sin of Israel

A) Israel in the north: After Solomon, things just continue to get worse.5 This was especially true of the kingdom in northern Israel. After breaking off from the Davidic tribe of Judah, these ten tribes appoint a man named Jeroboam as their new king. When Jeroboam came to power, he set his heart on keeping that power. But he realized there was something that could be a problem for him: God had commanded over and over again in His Law that true worship was to happen where the temple was. God had told His people: “you shall seek the Lord at the place which the Lord your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.” (Deuteronomy 12:5).6 It was Jerusalem that God had chosen. So, in Deuteronomy 12, that's where God's people were commanded to offer up their burnt offerings. Further, in Deuteronomy 16, that's where all God's people were to go three times a year to observe the feasts of the Lord. Israel's new king didn't like the sound of this: “Jeroboam said in his heart. . .If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah.” (1 Kings 12:26-27). So, to keep the allegiance of his people, he came up with a plan: He told the people it was too much of a hassle to go all the way up to Jerusalem. And he made two golden calves for them to worship instead, putting them in the northern and southern sides of his territory (Dan and Bethel). Then he appointed his own priests who didn't come from the tribe of Levi. Last of all, he invented his own feast, on his own day, a counterfeit of the one at Jerusalem.

The Beginning of False Worship in the Kingdom of Northern Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT GOD COMMANDED</th>
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<td>The true God</td>
<td>Bring to the temple</td>
<td>Levites</td>
<td>In the 1st, 3rd and 7th months</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What Jeroboam Instituted</td>
<td>False gods</td>
<td>Bring to Dan or Bethel</td>
<td>Non-Levites</td>
<td>In the 8th month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Reflecting on what we've been discussing, Jonty Rhodes refers to 1 Kings 11:11-13, noting: “We need to be careful here. It's not that God brings the fulness of the covenant curses to bear on Solomon. . .Speaking about David's descendants, God had cautioned: 'When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him' (2 Samuel 7:14-15). . .At this stage of the story though, notice that the consequences aren't just for Solomon. Because of this one man's disobedience, the nation will be torn in two. . .While Solomon kept the covenant, the people were blessed. When Solomon rebels, disaster falls on his whole people.” (Covenants Made Simple).
5 Clowney puts it: “After the days of Solomon, the history of Israel was a story of increasing apostasy and judgment.” (p185).
6 This same truth is emphasized throughout the entire chapter. See Deuteronomy 12:5,11,14,18,26). It's impossible to miss.
Jeroboam is just the first king of northern Israel. But once he sets up the golden calves, the kingdom never recovers. The calves are never taken down. Throughout the books of Kings and Chronicles, there is only one essential criteria by which God assesses the kings of northern Israel: Did they tear down the golden calves or let them stay? The answer is always the same. With every new king, we read: “He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel sin.” (1 Kings 15:34).7 Jeroboam's message to the people of Israel was basically: “This is good enough.” But it was a lie. As long as the golden calves stood at Dan and Bethel, there was no true worship happening in Israel. Earlier, when Solomon had sinned, it resulted in Israel’s rebellion. But now, when Jeroboam sets up the golden calves, it results in Israel's corruption. A false king had stolen their allegiance, and a false worship characterized their lives. As long as they stayed in Israel, they continued in rebellion against their rightful king. And as long as the calves stood at Bethel and Dan, they may have been religious, but their religion was useless, and even offensive, to God. All of this is a picture of our natural condition without Christ and apart from Him. Apart from Jesus, this is a description of who we are: Rebels against God and corrupted to the very core of our nature.8

B) Judah in the south: Things were a little better in Judah. Abijah, the king of Judah, gives a pretty fair summary of things when he says to Jeroboam and all Israel: “Have you not driven out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams, even he may become a priest of what are no gods. But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the sons of Aaron are ministering to the Lord as priests, and the Levites attend to their work. Every morning and evening they burn to the Lord burnt offerings and fragrant incense. . .for we keep the charge of the Lord our God, but you have forsaken Him.” (2 Chronicles 13:9-11). It was true. Where Israel had failed, the tribe of Judah had continued to be faithful: They were led by the true Davidic king, their worship was performed by the proper Levitical priests, and they gathered together where God had set His presence, in the temple at Jerusalem. But they had their own issues. If Israel in the north was guilty of idolatry, Judah in the south was often guilty of religious formality. They had the temple, they had the priests, and they had their king, but their hearts were distant from God, and their lives were dishonoring to the Lord. Later, God asks them: “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me? . . . I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. . .Bring your worthless offerings no longer. . .I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.” (Isaiah 1:11-13). See, Judah had better theology; but in a very real sense, that made them all the more guilty.

Judah did have a few good kings who led God’s people to seek the Lord (such as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah).9 But sadly, the good kings are the exception rather than the rule. On the whole, Judah’s kingdom also proves unfaithful to the Lord, and increasingly so as time goes on:King Jehoram kills all his brothers to maintain control of the kingdom (2 Chronicles 21:1). Amaziah brings back the gods of Edom to bow down before them (2 Chronicles 25:14). Ahaz not only sacrifices to other gods, but closes the doors of the temple (2 Chronicles 23:24). Manasseh goes even further when he sets up altars for foreign gods inside the temple (2 Chronicles 33:3-4; 5,7-8). Ahaz and Manasseh even sacrifice their own sons to other gods (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6). Manasseh practices witchcraft and sheds so much innocent blood that he fills Jerusalem with it “from one end to the other” (2 Kings 21:16).

7 This is the constant theme of the kings of Israel in the north. See 1 Kings 15:30; 15:34; 16:2; 16:19; 16:31; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:3; 13:2; 13:6; 13:11; 14:24; 15:9,18,24,28. All these passages talk about “walking in the way of Jeroboam” and “in his sin with which he made Israel sin.” If there was any ambiguity as to what this might have meant, 2 Kings 10:29 gives us all the clarity we need: “However, as for the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin, from these Jehu did not depart, even the golden calves that were at Bethel and that were at Dan.” This is indeed why they go into exile (1 Kings 14:16).

8 It’s interesting to note there are passages that describe Israelites who forsake their heritage in northern Israel to return to true worship and to give their allegiance to their rightful king in Judah. In 2 Chronicles 11:14-16, we read: “the Levites left their pasture lands and their property and came to Judah and Jerusalem . . . Those from all the tribes of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the Lord God of Israel followed them to Jerusalem, to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers.” Other passages include 2 Chronicles 15:9 and 30:1-12, where Israelites return to Judah. We mentioned earlier that in the Old Testament, returning is the language that is used for repentance. These instances seem to be Old Testament shadows and pictures for the reality that we are, by nature, outside of the kingdom of God. Jesus tells us: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

9 Jonathan Edwards (I think rightly) interprets these ups and downs as seasons of revival and decline. He says: “When things seemed to be come to an extremity, and religion at its last gasp, he was often pleased to grant blessed revivals by remarkable outpourings of his Spirit, particularly in Hezekiah’s and Josiah’s time.” (Edwards, A History of the Work of Redemption).
to another” (2 Kings 21:16). And it wasn’t just the kings. Zephaniah tells us: “Her princes within her are roaring lions, her judges are wolves at evening. . . . Her priests have profaned the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.” (3:3-4). Jeremiah calls out the people for their idolatry, asserting they had as many gods as they had cities (2:28). And shortly before the exile, Jeremiah asks them: “Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’. . .?” (7:9-10).

### Comparing the Kingdoms of Northern Israel and Southern Judah

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<th>Their Lives</th>
<th>Their Worship</th>
<th>Their Parallel</th>
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<td>Northern Israel</td>
<td>Rampant Idolatry</td>
<td>Idols minus God</td>
<td>Defiant lives</td>
<td>False worship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern Judah</td>
<td>Religious Formality</td>
<td>Idols plus God</td>
<td>Double lives</td>
<td>Fake worship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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3. The EXILE of God’s People: The Judgment of God

**A) The Approach of the Exile:** God had entered into a covenant relationship with His people. But from the very beginning, He had also warned His people about the seriousness of covenant-breaking. Even before Israel had entered the land under Joshua, God had warned Israel that if they forsook Him and worshiped other gods, there would be discipline. In Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, the Lord tells Israel that this discipline would mostly take the form of famine, pestilence, and the sword. God also warns His people in these passages that if they refused to turn back to Him, this discipline would only become more and more severe as time went on. It could get to the point that the kinds of things that would happen to them are too horrible to even mention (see Deuteronomy 28:52-57). And ultimately, if Israel continued to turn away, the final judgment was exile: God would cast His people out of the land He had given them. After the dedication of the temple, these are the same warnings the Lord repeats to Solomon: “But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples.” (1 Kings 9:6-7). Covenant-breaking is serious.

God had promised to send famine, pestilence, and the sword if His people turned away from Him. And, as they continued to forsake Him, that’s exactly what He did. The purpose of God’s discipline was to wake His people up; to help them come to repentance. Sadly, it didn’t have that effect. Isaiah describes God like a father who doesn’t know what else to do for his son, when he says: “Where will you be stricken again, as you continue in your rebellion? . . . From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, only bruises, welts and raw wounds, not pressed out or bandaged, nor softened with oil. Your land is desolate, your cities are burned with fire, your fields—strangers are devouring them in your presence; it is desolation, as overthrown by strangers.” (1:5-7). God was sending forth the covenant curses of famine, pestilence, and the sword as the discipline of a father.

We could also think about these covenant curses as the birth-pangs of judgment. When a pregnant woman is in labor, the pain doesn’t come all at once. It starts slowly, and at the beginning, the pain is less intense. But it intensifies and grows more and more with each contraction. Well, the covenant curses were like contractions of judgment: God would send a famine, and then He would give relief. But when His people continued on in their sin and refused to turn back to Him, He would raise up a foreign army to come against them (cf, the sword). Then He would again provide relief. But each time the contractions would increase in intensity, just like God had said they would (cf. Leviticus 26).

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10 This is emphasized throughout Leviticus 26. We read in 26:18: “If also after these things you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.” The same thing is repeated again in verses 21, 24, and 28 of the same chapter.

11 These are also called the covenant curses. There were others (such as the attacking of wild animals, cf. Leviticus 26:22), but most of them fall into the broader categories of famine (see Leviticus 26:19-20; Deuteronomy 28:23-24); pestilence or plague (see Leviticus 26:25; Deuteronomy 28:21-22,27,58-61), and the sword (see Leviticus 26:17; Deuteronomy 28:25-26).

12 Gill says of Isaiah 1:5: “[Stricken] with afflictions and chastisements, with which God smites His people by way of correction for their sins (Isaiah 57:17), and the sense is, either that they did not consider what they were afflicted for, that it was for their sins and transgressions. . . .or the meaning is, that the chastisements that were laid upon them were to no purpose. . . .”
These birth-pangs of judgment continued and grew in their intensity until God's people were ripe for exile. It was then that God said in Micah 4:10: “Writhe and labor to give birth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth; for now you will go out of the city, dwell in the field, and go to Babylon.”

### The Covenant Curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Culmination of the Curses</th>
<th>Significance of the Curses</th>
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<td>The Exile</td>
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<td>Pestilence</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Discipline of a Father (Isaiah 1:5-7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sword</td>
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<td>Sent as Judgment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Labor Pains of Judgment (Micah 4:10)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**B) The Reality of the Exile:** Cardiac arrest happens when a person's heart stops pumping blood to the rest of their body. When someone goes into sudden cardiac arrest, it's incredibly serious. If it's not treated immediately, it can lead to death; and the only effective treatment is using a defibrillator to deliver a shock to the heart. This was the state of God's people. God had warned them over and again through the prophets. And He had sought to turn them back to Him by even the most severe forms of fatherly discipline. But there was no response. Nothing. It was like God's people had gone into a coma of sin; and there was nothing waking them up. There was only one thing left to do.

And so, we read in 2 Kings 17:6: “In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria…” The exile began with northern Israel. The Assyrians came up against them and besieged their capital, Samaria, for three years. Afterwards, they took the city, and “Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria” (2 Kings 17:23). Things lasted a little longer for the kingdom of southern Judah. Many of those living in Judah thought they were immune from the possibility of being exiled. They trusted in the fact that they had the Davidic king reigning over them and they had the temple in Jerusalem. But soon enough, they were also sent into exile; this time by the hand of the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem, overtook it, and captured the king: “Then they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem. . . Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons…” (2 Chronicles 36:19-20). Exile had become a reality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Sin</th>
<th>Duration of Kingdom</th>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Israel</td>
<td>Rampant idolatry</td>
<td>Sent first into exile</td>
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<td>Southern Judah</td>
<td>Religious formality</td>
<td>Sent later into exile</td>
<td>Exiled to Babylon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It's hard to put into words just how devastating the exile was for God's people. It was horrific. Both the Assyrians and Babylonians were known for their cruelty. Many husbands and fathers would have been brutally killed during the capturing of the city, but the brutality also extended to the women and children (see Hosea 13:16 and Psalm 137:8-9). Those who survived from northern Israel were led...
away with meat-hooks in their noses (Amos 4:2). The king of Judah was made to watch the death of his own sons before being blinded and led away to Babylon. But the pain went even deeper, because it seemed that everything God had done for His people was coming untrue. The God who had cut a covenant with Abraham and his descendants was now casting those descendants away. The God who had freed His people from their captivity in Egypt was now sending them back as captives to Assyria and Babylon. Their God, who had planted them in the land under David, was now uprooting them from it. The whole world was coming unraveled and spinning out of control. God had made them a people; but now He was cutting them off. He had given them a place; but now He was casting them away. He had crowned them with His presence; but now the temple was a burning heap of ruins.15

C) The Cause of the Exile: Some people have the notion that Israel was sent into exile because they broke God's commands: God had given them His Law, but they didn't keep that Law perfectly as He commanded, so He sent them away into exile. The notion is that God dealt with Israel according to the Law in the Old Testament, but now He deals with us in grace. But this understanding misses the whole point of what was happening in the exile. In Jeremiah 2:35, God tells His people: “Behold, I will enter into judgment with you because you say, I have not sinned.” In other words, Israel wasn't being sent into exile because they had too much sin; they were being sent into exile because they had refused to acknowledge their sin. The problem wasn't the presence of their sin, it was rather a lack of turning back to God. Throughout the prophets it's the same message: Israel isn't being sent into exile because they've failed to keep some kind of law of works, but because they've refused to return to the Lord (Amos 4:6-12). What God was commanding wasn't better obedience; it was repentance (Hosea 14:1). The problem wasn't that Israel broke the Law; it was that they had broken faith with the Lord. Indeed, the covenant they had broken wasn't the Covenant of Works; it was the Covenant of Grace.16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOT</th>
<th>A lack of better obedience</th>
<th>Failure to keep a Covenant of Works</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>A lack of faith and repentance</td>
<td>They broke the law of the Lord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And as we saw in the last lesson, the exile was about God's dealings with the entire body of the visible Church, corporately, as a whole. There were godly men, like Jeremiah and Daniel, who were swept away with the exile; why did they have to go through it along with everyone else? Because the exile wasn't about God's dealings with particular individuals; it was about God's dealings with the corporate body of the Church, as a whole. And the Church, in the days leading up to the exile, had become an apostate Church. It was no longer a Church that followed her Lord. In Leviticus 14, God gives the priests instructions about what to do when there was an infection of leprosy in a house. He was to go and look at the mark, and if it appeared deeper than the surface, he was to quarantine the house for seven days. But if the mark of leprosy had spread further after he came back to inspect it, the priest was to order them to tear out the stones, scrape out the plaster, and take it all out to an unclean place outside the city. Well, Scripture often speaks of “the house of Israel” and “the house of Judah”; and over time, the whole house had developed an infection of chronic unbelief. God was like the priest, and he had been patient and given them time, but instead of going away, the leprosy of unbelief had only spread all the more; there was only one thing left for God to do. If God's people as a whole had embraced covenant faith, manifesting itself in corporate allegiance, it would have, in turn, resulted in corporate blessing. But corporate apostasy led God's people into the corporate judgment of the exile.

15 It's important to note that though God used the Assyrians the Babylonians to execute judgment against His people, that in no way meant the Assyrians and Babylonians were innocent of great wrongdoing themselves. It's the same principle we see at the cross, where Peter, speaking of Jesus, says to the Jews: “this man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.” (Acts 2:23). In other words, God ordained and planned it—but they were still responsible. As the Westminster Confession puts it: “God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass, yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.” (3.1). The Assyrians and Babylonians were godless men who did awful things. They will be held accountable, and in due time, the Lord would punish both nations for their own wickedness: “[The prophets] warned the people of the way God would use the Gentile nations as His instruments in judging Israel. They also warned the nations... God would indeed use them, but He would also judge them (Isaiah 10:5-19; 34:2-4).” (Clowney, p191).
16 This command to return is indeed echoed throughout the prophets, and it seems to be the single unifying exhortation to God's people leading up to the exile. Along with Hosea 14:1, see also Isaiah 31:6; Jeremiah 3:12,14,22 and Joel 2:12-13.
**D) The Result of the Exile:** God had cast Israel out of the land, and it seemed like this was the end for them. God had finally had enough. The Davidic king had been dethroned and taken into exile; the temple had been burned to the ground; and they themselves had been uprooted from the land God had promised their forefathers. It seemed like this was the end of the road for Israel: God was done with them forever. But it wasn't true. This wasn't the last chapter for Israel. We're given a hint of this way back in Deuteronomy 30. Here, Moses predicts that Israel would be banished from the land—but in the same breath he affirms they would be brought back in again, after they had humbled themselves and returned to the Lord (vv1-5). And the Lord says in Leviticus 26:44-45: “Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, 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.” Even before God had brought Israel into the land, He knew He would have to cast them out of it—but He also purposed to bring them back in.

And even before the exile, the prophets began repeating this message and also expanding on it: God would send judgment, yet He would “not execute a complete destruction” (Jeremiah 4:27) upon His people, but He would preserve “a remnant within them” (Isaiah 10:20-21). This remnant He would then bring back to the land, where He would again renew and restore them. As Amos says: “In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David...I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old. . .Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them; they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit. I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them. . .” (9:11-15). Israel's future restoration was just as certain a reality as their present exile. So much so that Isaiah named his two sons after these two truths. His second son he named, “Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey”, to signify the judgment of God’s people (8:3-4). But his first son he named, “A remnant will return” (7:3). And so, the prophets “trumpeted disaster and doom, but they also announced that the Lord was not finished with His people...After the thunderstorm of judgment would come the bright rainbow of promise.” Israel had been uprooted from their land, but they would be planted back in once again. The temple had been leveled to the ground, but it would be rebuilt. God was disciplining and purging His people, but He wasn't breaking His covenant: The Lord would spare Israel a remnant; bring them back into the land; and restore them once again.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT ISRAEL WAS EXPERIENCING</th>
<th>WHAT GOD WAS SAYING THROUGH THE PROPHETS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete Devastation</td>
<td>The Devastation of Exile would Not be Total</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Devastation of Exile would Not be Final</td>
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**E) The Significance of the Exile:** The idea of exile isn't something entirely new. Israel's exile points us back, first of all, to the exile of Eden. Because of his sin, Adam and his wife were cast away from the “garden of delight”; thrust away from God's presence. And it wasn't just Adam and his wife who were sent away from the garden into a state of exile—it was all humanity along with him. Because of Adam's sin, all of us are born into a state of spiritual exile, alienated from the Lord and cut off from His presence (Ephesians 4:18; Colossians 1:13,21). Only through Christ Jesus can there once again be restoration; only through the blood of Christ can we be brought back from our spiritual exile and restored to fellowship with God. Exile came through the first Adam, restoration through the second.

Israel's exile also points us forward to the exile of the coming judgment. Isaiah refers to the coming exile as “the day of punishment” (10:3). Joel describes it as “the day of the Lord” in such a way that makes it seem he's talking more about the final judgment than he is about the exile. And indeed, this is because Joel is setting forth the judgment of the exile as a type of the greater judgment yet to come.17

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17 Isaiah 8:18 clarifies the obvious: “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts...” It's also significant that Isaiah's first son signified hope; as if hope was firmly grounded even before the judgment. The quote cited above is from Edmund Clowney (Unfolding Mystery, p195). The chart below is also adapted from another quote by Clowney: “Two answers were given to the question of despair that even the prophets shared. First, the destruction would not be total: God would spare a remnant. Second, the destruction would not be final: God would bring renewal.” (p193, Unfolding Mystery). The renewal aspect is there but we will focus on it in more detail later. Perhaps the dual aspects of God returning Israel to their land and renewing them in the land could both fit best under Restoration.
He cries: “Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty.” And he says: “The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes...” (1:15; 2:31). We could also mention that it wasn’t just Israel’s exile that points us forward to the final judgment. After God had dealt with Israel in the exile, He would go on to deal with all the other surrounding Gentile nations. Joel had used the language of “the day of the Lord” to describe God’s judgment of Israel, but later he would use the same language to describe God’s judgment on the nations (3:14). And Isaiah uses the same imagery to describe the judgment that would come upon Babylon: “Wail, for the day of the Lord is near...all hands will fall limp, and every man’s heart will melt. They will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them...They will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame” (13:6-8). The day of reckoning that would begin with Israel and extend to all nations points us forward to exile of the final judgment.

Finally, Israel’s exile points us to the exile Jesus endured at the cross. Probably the clearest prophecy of Christ’s sufferings in all of the Old Testament is Isaiah 53. Here, we’re told the Messiah would be “pierced through for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities” (v5). Why? Because “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.” (v6). But then Isaiah goes on to further describe Christ’s sufferings in this way, in verse 8: “By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?” The way Isaiah is describing what happened to Jesus at the cross is that He was cut off out of the land of the living. It’s the imagery of exile. We were the ones who deserved to be exiled; cut off from living fellowship with God. But at the cross, Jesus was exiled in our place.18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE EVENT OF THE EXILE</th>
<th>THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXILE</th>
<th>SCRIPTURE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Israel and Judah exiled to Assyria &amp; Babylon</td>
<td>Points us back to the exile from EDEN</td>
<td>Eph.4:18; Col.1:13</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Points us ahead to the exile of JUDGMENT</td>
<td>Joel 1-3; Is.13:6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Points us to Jesus’ exile at THE CROSS</td>
<td>Isaiah 53:8</td>
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II. The Prophecies of the New Covenant

In the last section, we covered Israel’s history from Solomon all the way up to the exile. Here in this next section we’re going to transition to looking at what the Prophets say to God’s people during their time in exile, and especially what they say about the new covenant. We’ll be splitting this section into two parts: In the first part we’ll be studying the prophets as a whole and what they say about the new covenant; and in the second part we’ll be focusing specifically on what we learn about the new covenant in Jeremiah 31.

**PART I: THE PROPHETS AND THE NEW COVENANT**

1. Understanding the ORIGINAL CONTEXT:

   **A) The Prophets:** Jeremiah is the only prophet who actually uses the phrase, “new covenant”, and he only does so once, in a passage recorded in 31:31-34. But even in the overall context of this passage in Jeremiah 31, it’s clear that Jeremiah associates the new covenant with some particular overarching themes, such as Israel’s returning to their land (30:3; 32:37; 33:7); the reversal of the covenant curses (31:4-5,12-14,28; 32:40-42; 33:6-7,10-11); the raising up of a new Davidic king (30:9; 33:14ff); as well as God’s writing His Law on the hearts of His people (31:33; 32:39-40); the forgiveness of sin (31:34; 33:8); and the reiteration of God’s covenant promise that Israel would be His people and He would be their God (30:22; 31:33; 32:38). All of these themes are centered around what God would do for His people when He brought them back from their captivity in Babylon. So, what’s really vital for us to understand is that the “new covenant” is associated with all the things that God would do for Israel.

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18 The Hebrew verb used here for cut off (gazar) is not the Hebrew verb for cut off normally used in association with the exile (karat). Still, this verb (gazar) is explicitly used in Ezekiel 37:11 to describe Israel’s being cut off in the exile. As David Murray notes: “Just as Israel’s exodus prefigured the work of Jesus in redeeming Israel from its sins, so Israel’s exile and restoration prefigured Jesus’ exile for the sins of God’s people and His subsequent glorious restoration.” (Jesus on Every Page, p133).
when He restored them from exile. And though the other prophets don't use the specific language of the “new covenant”, they do speak of these same themes. Many of the prophets announced Israel's future restoration, but this was especially true of the Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prophet</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time-frame of Prophecy</th>
<th>Thrust of Prophecy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>740-686 B.C.</td>
<td>Before the Exile happens</td>
<td>There will be EXILE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>626-586 B.C.</td>
<td>While the Exile happens</td>
<td>There will be RESTORATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezekiel</td>
<td>592-572 B.C.</td>
<td>After the Exile happens</td>
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B) The Situation: In Ezekiel 37, the prophet has a vision of a valley filled with dry bones. The Lord explains the vision to the prophet Ezekiel in this way: “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.'” (37:11). Israel's situation was so hopeless it was like a grave. The exile was death, and now they had been buried in Babylon. Through all His dealings, God had been so merciful to them, but they had “turned their mercies into miseries.” God had given them a thousand chances, but they had blown them all; and now it was too late. Everything was ruined. They had scorned their temple and squandered their king. They had cast themselves out of the land and now they lay like dead corpses in the graves they dug for themselves in Babylon: “No exiled Israelite could paint a darker picture of the condition of a captive and scattered people. The situation was beyond human remedy.”

C) The Message: Everything shouted that God was done with Israel. But the prophets, speaking in God's name, declared something very different. In the words of Jeremiah: “This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the Lord. . .” (Jeremiah 25:11-12). “For thus says the Lord, When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.” (29:10).

19 Jeremiah only uses the phrase “new covenant” in 31:31, but 31:31-34 is part of the overall context of chapters 30-33 where Jeremiah is speaking of Israel's restoration. So, Jeremiah's understanding of the new covenant shouldn't be limited to 31:31-34 but extends (at least) to the whole of chapters 30-33. This is confirmed by the fact that the same things promised in 31:31-34 are reiterated throughout the whole of 30-33: God's writing His law on the heart of His people isn't just mentioned in 31:33 but reiterated in 32:39-40. The forgiveness of sin, heralded in 31:34, is repeated in 33:8. The promise that God would be Israel's God and they would be His people isn't exclusive to 31:31-34, but is given both before (30:22) and after (32:38). And these same themes are also trumpeted by the other prophets. Thus, as Ligon Duncan puts it: "Jeremiah 31...[is] the only passage in the prophetic literature which uses the terminology new covenant...But...even in passages where the terminology of new covenant is not used in the Old Testament, the concept of new covenant is very present.” And again: “Though Jeremiah is the only prophet to use the term new covenant, he is certainly not the only prophet to use the concept of new covenant.” Robertson likewise notes of Jeremiah 31:31-34: “Although this passage in Jeremiah alone in the old covenant Scriptures mentions specifically a 'new covenant', the concept of the new covenant cannot be restricted to this single prophecy. A significant complex of ideas surrounds Jeremiah's prediction of the new covenant. These ideas are developed rather extensively in a group of prophecies found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It is only in the broader context of these passages related to the new covenant that the message of Jeremiah 31:31-34 may be appreciated fully.” (pp273-74). And again: “It is essential to see the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah in this total biblical-theological setting. Although the term 'new covenant' occurs only in Jeremiah 31, the complex of ideas depicting the future expectation of God's people has a very broad base.” (p278).

20 Robert notes: “This covenant was first and most especially revealed to three holy prophets from the Lord, and by them to the Jews: 1) To the prophet Isaiah long before the captivity of the Jews in Babylon came to pass. . .2) To Ezekiel in the twelfth year of their captivity. . .3) To the prophet Jeremiah in the eighteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar. . .God revealed and foretold by his prophet Isaiah, that He would make such a covenant with His people, that should be captives in Babylon, long before the captivity came to pass. This is very observable in the fourth and last part of his prophecy which is promissory, from chapter 40:1 to the end of his book, which is especially directed to His people, with reference to their captivity in Babylon, which should certainly come to pass. Most, if not all his sermons after that, observably insisting upon their Babylonian captivity, their comforts under it, their certain deliverance out of it, and the happy restoration of their church and common wealth, their temple, city Jerusalem, etc, when they should be brought again into their own land. . .God revealed this covenant also to Jeremiah in the court of the prison, in the eighteenth year of the captivity, when Jerusalem was besieged [in Jeremiah 32:37-40]. . .God revealed this covenant to his prophet Ezekiel in 34:23-25. . .His covenant promises are also sweetly laid down in chapter 36:22, etc. And afterwards [when] God having brought him in the Spirit into the valley full of bones, representing the dead and hopeless condition of the captives in Babylon, among many other sweet expressions, has these words [in Ezekiel 37:26-27]. . .In which chapters 36 and 37, this covenant is most sweetly described; especially in 36:22 to the end; and in 37:21 to the end. . .There are sundry other passages in the prophets setting forth the excellent blessings promised in this covenant; but this covenant is most eminently and peculiarly described by Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah.” (pp1086-90).

21 The first quote is from Francis Roberts, p1103. The second is from Edmund Clowney, The Unfolding Mystery, p194.
Exile was real, but it wouldn't be the last word. It was awful, but it wouldn't be final. Israel had turned their mercies into miseries, but God intended to turn “their miseries again into mercies.” They had led the temple become a heap of ruins, but God would rebuild it. They had thrust themselves out of the land, but God would bring them back in. They lay as dead men in their graves. But as Ezekiel looked over that valley of bones, God told him: “Thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people.’” (37:12-13). In other words, “[God] could bring them out of Babylon into their own land, against all seeming improbabilities and impossibilities. Though they were as dead and dry bones, though buried in their graves. . .yet God could open their graves, and bring them out of their graves.” What the prophets were announcing to God's people was completely astounding: If Israel's exile in Babylon was death, then what the prophets foretold was resurrection.22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISRAEL'S HOPELESS SITUATION</th>
<th>WHAT IT WAS</th>
<th>WHAT IT WAS LIKE</th>
<th>SCRIPTURE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE PROPHETS ASTOUNDING DECLARATION</td>
<td>Exile in Babylon</td>
<td>Death and burial in the grave</td>
<td>Ezekiel 37:11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restoration to the land</td>
<td>Resurrection from the dead</td>
<td>Ezekiel 37:12</td>
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2. Overviewing the GENERAL THEMES:

We mentioned that the new covenant is associated with all the things God would do for Israel when He restored them from exile. In Jeremiah 31:31, the Lord speaks of these future dealings as “a new covenant” with His people; but that's not the only way it's described in Scripture. Another way God describes these future dealings with His people is in Jeremiah 32:40, where the Lord says He would make “an everlasting covenant” with them. And in Ezekiel 34:25, the Lord looks ahead to these days and describes His dealings with Israel as making “a covenant of peace” with them (cf. Ezekiel 37:26).

These Scriptures are all talking about the same thing; just using slightly different language. But in all these passages that speak of Israel's future restoration, we can mention two things: 1) God is referring to these future dealings with His people in the language of covenant. What God was going to do for His people was make a covenant with them. This is exciting. We haven't heard about God making a covenant with His people since the days of David. But now God is saying: I'm getting ready to make a covenant with you once again.23 2) This covenant God would make with His people wasn't going to

22 Both quotes are from Francis Roberts. The full quotes are: “The sins of these Jews turned their mercies into miseries. . .But it is only the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, that according to this His covenant, turns their miseries again into mercies.” (p1103). And: “[God] could bring them out of Babylon into their own land, against all seeming improbabilities and impossibilities. Though they were as dead and dry bones, though buried in their graves. . .yet God could open their graves, and bring them out of their graves. He could give them a resurrection in Babylon.” (p1094). Roberts also says: “They could destroy their temple and holy city; God alone could cause them both to be rebuilt. They could cast themselves out of Canaan; God alone brings them back again into Canaan. They could bring themselves into Babylonian bondage and graves; God alone can break their bonds and bring them out. . .” (Roberts, p1103). And again: “In that sad and long captivity, God's covenant with David lay as dead, and David's seed as buried and cut off; but God would deliver them thence, and revive them out of their graves.” (p1110). Roberts comments again: “Oh they too much dishonored God, and forgot this His faithful covenant, when they spoke so despairingly; ‘Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts.’ But what said the Lord? ‘Behold, O my people, I will open your graves (namely), your Babylonian graves) and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.’” He would open their graves, and raise up their dead and dry bones, rather than His faithful covenant should fail, and not be performed.” (p1100). Roberts concludes by saying: “Hence, No Difficulties whatsoever or seeming impossibilities can hinder the accomplishment of Gods Covenants and Promises. God in this covenant promised to bring His people out of Babylon into Canaan, and to place them there. Alas! How hard and impossible a thing might this seem unto them? Canaan was wasted and depopulated; the holy city and temple destroyed and laid on heaps; the Jews carried captive into Babylon and there entombed like dead persons in their graves; the Babylonian kingdom being at that time the great and potent empire over the world, unlikely to be subdued by any visible power; and Babylon itself the royal seat of the empire being so strongly fortified; naturally by the great river Euphrates, artificially by walls extraordinarily thick and high. Yet notwithstanding all these difficulties and visible impossibilities, Gods covenant and promises for the Jews deliverance were exactly performed when the seventy years were accomplished, Cyrus and Darius taking Babylon in that night after Belshazzar and his Lords had sensually feasted and quaffed in the silver and golden vessels of the temple: immediately after which Cyrus proclaims liberty to the captives to return into Canaan for rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem. So they were placed in their own land, and (though they had troublous times, and many subtle malicious and potent adversaries, whereby the work was long obstructed and retarded, yet) they builded, prospered and finished.” (Roberts, pp1207-08).

23 The context of this covenant as compared with those previous is also significant: “When God made covenant with Israel at
All these passages speak about this covenant God would make with Israel in the future tense. In Jeremiah 31:31, the Lord says: “Behold, days are coming, . . . when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, . . .” It’s the same thing in Jeremiah 32:40: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, . . .” And in both Ezekiel 34:25 and 37:26, God says, “I will make a covenant of peace with them, . . .” It’s all in the future. Every other time God makes a covenant with His people, it’s always in the present tense: the Lord comes to Adam in the garden and makes a covenant with him; He establishes his covenant with Noah; He cuts a covenant with Abraham; He confirms His covenant to David. But now here, it’s in the future tense, to show us that God isn’t actually making this covenant with the exiles in Babylon—He’s speaking of something yet to come.

To summarize: 1) God is declaring He is going to make another covenant with His people. 2) This covenant is described in Jeremiah 31 as a new covenant, but it’s also described in other places in the prophets as an everlasting covenant (Jeremiah 42:10) and a covenant of peace (Ezekiel 34:23; 37:26). And lastly, 3) This covenant is associated with all the things God was going to do for Israel when He restored them from exile in Babylon. What were all these things that God was going to do for Israel? There were five promises in particular that God was making to His people: God was going to return His people to their land; He would raise up for His people once again a Davidic king; He was going to grant a widespread spiritual reformation of His people; He would reverse the covenant curses He had sent to His people; and He would rebuild the temple and dwell with His people once again.24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Scripture</th>
<th>What it was about</th>
<th>What it was God would do</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A New Covenant</td>
<td>Jeremiah 31:31</td>
<td>Restoration</td>
<td>Return His people once again to their land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Everlasting Covenant</td>
<td>Jeremiah 32:40</td>
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<td>Raise up for His people again the Davidic king</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Covenant of Peace</td>
<td>Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reverse for His people the covenant curses</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rebuild the temple and dwell with His people</td>
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A) Return to the land: The first thing God was promising to the exiles in Babylon was that He would bring them back to their land once again. In Jeremiah 30:3 we read: “For behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.” The Lord says, “I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.” Ezekiel likewise announces: “Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land, . . .” (37:21). As our first parents were cast out of Eden, Israel had been cast out of Canaan. But it wasn’t the final word. God would gather His scattered people and bring them back into their land.

24 These themes have been categorized in slightly different ways. Ligon Duncan follows O Palmer Robertson who summarizes these major themes “which relate essentially to the new covenant concept” as: 1) The return of exiled Israel to the land of promise (Jeremiah 30:3; 32:37; 50:5-19; Ezekiel 37:21,26); 2) The restoration of God’s blessing on the land (land resurrection of His people (Jeremiah 32:43; 31:38-40; Ezekiel 37:12, 20); 3) The divine fulfillment of previous covenantal commitments (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 37:24-25); 4) The internal renewal by the work of God’s Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 3:17; 31:33; 32:40; Ezekiel 37:14, 20); 5) The full forgiveness of sins (Jeremiah 31:34; 50:20; 33:8); 6) The union of Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 31:31; 30:4; Ezekiel 37:15; 34:29); and 7) The everlasting character of the new covenant (Jeremiah 30:5) (see pp273-78). We have combined #4 and #5 and will deal with them together; we haven’t included #3 and #7 as these seem to strike more at the nature of what the new covenant is as opposed to what God has promised to do in the new covenant (we’ll come back later to deal with the nature of the new covenant). Francis Roberts summarizes the major themes in this way: “The subject matter or substance of this covenant on God’s part, consisted in many excellent covenant mercies promised therein to His afflicted captives . . . 1) His raising up the Messiah, [namely] Jesus Christ unto them. . . 2) His redeeming them out of Babylon’s captivity, and bringing them into their own land. . . 3) God’s cleansing of His people the Jews, when redeemed out of Babylon . . . from all their idols, from all their detestable things, and from all their transgressions. . . 4) God’s putting His Spirit within them, for the new framing and spiritualizing their heart. . . 5) God’s presence and residence in His sanctuary and tabernacle among His people, by His Spirit, Word, and public ministry forever. . . 6) God’s greatest covenant relation between himself and them; [namely] that He would be their God, and they should be His people. . . 7) Finally, the seventh and last covenant blessing, which the Lord in this covenant promised to His captives, was; the mutual covenant constancy between God and them in this everlasting covenant; He would not turn from them, and they should not depart from Him.” (p1105f-1199).
B) Raising up of the Davidic King: Not only would the Lord gather His scattered flock from among the nations; He would also raise up for them a shepherd. God declares through Ezekiel: “I will care for my sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered. . .Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.” (34:23-24). Obviously, David had already lived and died many years before. But the prophets were foretelling the coming of One like David who would come forth from David and reign on his throne (Isaiah 11:1,10; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-16). Ezekiel says: “I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. . .My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. . .” (37:21-22,24). Notice how Ezekiel emphasizes that Israel would have one shepherd and be one nation. Ever since the kingdom had been divided under Rehoboam, there had been two shepherds leading two distinct nations (one in northern Israel and one in Judah). But the prophets looked forward to a day when God would unify His people under one shepherd.25

C) Renewal of the people: Earlier we mentioned that God’s people went into exile because they had become a church that had stopped following her Lord. There was a spiritual leprosy that had spread throughout God’s people; an infection of chronic unbelief. The church, as a whole, had become an apostate church; and this corporate apostasy had led to the corporate judgment of the exile. But the prophets announced that God would do two things for His people: 1) He would forgive them. God says through Jeremiah: “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (31:34). It would, indeed, come at a great cost, but Israel’s sins would be completely atoned for. And not only would God forgive His people, 2) He would change them. This seems to be the primary focus of the new covenant passage in Jeremiah 31. God says: “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (31:33). Ezekiel likewise speaks of God giving His people a new heart and putting a new spirit within them (36:26-27). And so, the Lord would accomplish a great work for His people in atoning for their sins, and He would accomplish a great work in His people in changing their hearts. Both these things He would do in the restoration.

D) Reversal of the covenant curses: Leading up to the exile, God’s people were made to experience the covenant curses of famine, pestilence, and the sword. The exile was the ultimate covenant curse. But now, the prophets foretold a reversal of the curses: Instead of famine there would be abundance; instead of drought there would be showers of blessing. The tree of the field will yield its fruit and the produce of the earth will bring forth its fullness (Ezekiel 34:25-29). God would “call for the grain and multiply it, and. . .multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field” (Ezekiel 36:29-30); and He would “eliminate harmful beasts from the land” so that His people could “live securely” (34:25). In short, there would be “a [cataclysmic] reversal of the curse of sin.” The covenant curses were sent as judgment for sin. Scripture tells us that the ultimate curse for sin is death; and in the exile, God’s people were as dead men in Babylon. But in the restoration there would be a resurrection, and “the resurrection is the ultimate reversal of the curse of sin.” Israel was dead in their sin, but God would raise them from the dead; and in doing so, set into motion a cataclysmic reversal of the curse of sin.26

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25 Duncan notes: “the idea of him being one shepherd is very significant, because the last time there had been one shepherd was when Solomon was reigning. Ever since, post Solomon, there had been two shepherds at least reigning in and amongst the peoples of God in the northern and southern kingdoms. And Ezekiel is longing for the day when there is one shepherd.” Robertson says: “a hallmark of the new covenant will be the merging of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. . .As the people of God are bound in the new covenant to the God of the covenant, so they are bound inseparably with one another.” (p277).

26 The quotes are from Ligon Duncan. The full quote from Duncan is this: “There will be a reversal of the curse of sin.
E) Rebuilding of the temple: When Solomon had dedicated the temple, the Lord appeared to him and warned him that if he or his sons turned away from following the Lord, God would cut off Israel from the land that He had given them, and the house, which He had consecrated for His name, He would “cast out” of His sight; it would “become a heap of ruins” (1 Kings 9:7-8). Sure enough, when the Babylonians came against Jerusalem and defeat it, among other things “they burned the house of God, . . .and destroyed all its valuable articles.” (2 Chronicles 36:19). The temple—the place that had represented God's presence among His people—had been burned to the ground. But when the Lord promised to bring His people back to their land, He also made another promise: “I will . . . set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.” (Ezekiel 37:26-27). God's sanctuary had been destroyed—but it would be rebuilt again. The Lord even declares that the glory of the second temple “will be greater than the former” (Haggai 2:9). Not only would the temple be rebuilt—the next one will be better than the first. And once it was rebuilt, it would never again be destroyed, for this sanctuary would endure forever.

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<tr>
<td>PEACE</td>
<td>God had sent His covenant curses</td>
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Israel had been cast out of their land, but God would bring them back. They had squandered their king, but God would put His Davidic shepherd-king back on the throne. God's people suffered from chronic unbelief, but the Lord would forgive their sins and change them from the inside. They had brought on themselves the curses of the covenant, but God would grant a cataclysmic reversal of the covenant curses. The temple had been burned to the ground, but God would raise it back up again:

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3. Unpacking the COMPLETE SIGNIFICANCE:

In one sense, all these promises were fulfilled when the Lord restored His people from Babylon and brought them back into their land. But just like every other manifestation of the Covenant of Grace, there is a dual fulfillment to these promises. When the prophets looked ahead and spoke of Israel's restoration, they knew it would include all the things we've mentioned, but they also knew that behind these things there was so much more: “Jesus Christ, and the gospel of sinners' salvation through faith in him, was preached to the Jews in their captivity.” All these promises ultimately looked forward to Jesus and the gospel. There was indeed a partial fulfillment in Israel's restoration from Babylon, but this deliverance God wrought for His people points us to an even greater deliverance still to come.

Which is, of course, death. . . The dry bones resurrected are a picture of the everlasting covenant and how it brings a reviving to the people of God, from death to life. . . And of course, the redemption of our bodies, . . . is seen to be a direct fulfillment of that old covenant promise of the full restoration of blessings. The resurrection is the ultimate reversal of the curse of sin.”

27 The imagery of Ezekiel 37:26-27 is rich. The ESV Study Bible draws out the significance of the two Hebrew words used in these two verses: “The oracle’s conclusion emphasizes the centrality of God’s presence to the renewed people, the greatest of all blessings by far. The ‘dwelling place’ [of v27] (Heb. mishkan) recalls the wilderness tabernacle. The ‘sanctuary’ [v26] (Heb. migdash) points rather to the temple, in particular the renewed temple, which will occupy Ezekiel’s attention in chapter 44.”

28 The quote is from Francis Roberts, p1101. Roberts goes on to summarize some of the particular ways in which Christ is set forth: “1) This covenant assured them of their return from Babylon to Zion, from captivity to liberty; and under that as a type, of the everlasting redemption of God's elect by Christ, out of their spiritual bondage under sin, and Satan. 2) This covenant assured them of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, with greater glory than formerly; and therein typically of the
If Israel’s exile teaches us about His followers, even though He had predicted it from the very beginning. The only thing that seemed to astonish Jesus’ followers, even though this was also precisely what the prophets had said would happen! In the same way, Jesus’ death was shocking for about it in advance. The only thing that seemed to surprise them more was when God brought them back to their land again—

The exile was completely shocking for God’s people, even though they had been told that after death, He would be brought back into the land once again. There are also other parallels we can draw between the may well be using the same imagery of exile and restoration here, telling us that the Messiah would be exiled at the cross, but great. To receive an allotted portion can mean inheriting or coming into possession of a land (cf. Joshua 13:7). So, Isaiah had endured the exile of the cross in Isaiah 53:8, God declares in verse 12: “Therefore, I will set His sanctuary in their midst forever.” (pp1102-03). And again: “The Jews’ deliverance from Babylon, after the Lord had raised up the Davidic king.” (pp1124-25). Isaiah may also give us a glimpse of Jesus’ “restoration to the land” later in the same chapter. After Jesus had endured the exile of the cross in Isaiah 53:8, God declares in verse 12: “Therefore, I will set His sanctuary in their midst forever.” (pp1102-03). And again: “The Jews’ deliverance from Babylon, was a reviving of their dead bones, an opening of their graves, and a bringing them as it were out of their graves in Babylon. So the elect’s deliverance from their spiritual bondage, is their spiritual reviving and resurrection. . . The Jews were so delivered from Babylon, as that they were cleansed from their idols, detestable things and transgressions. And the elect are so delivered from their spiritual thraldom, that they are ‘washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.’ The Jews delivered from Babylon, were called to build the temple of God (Ezra 1:1-3). So the elect are redeemed and actually delivered from their spiritual thraldom by Christ, ‘are washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.’ The Jews delivered from Babylon, came into their own land, the land of Canaan, their typical rest. So the elect are redeemed by Christ out of their spiritual bondage, that at last they might return into the true Canaan, heaven itself, the eternal rest promised to God’s people, where they shall ‘sit together with Christ in heavenly places.’ (Roberts, pp1124-25). As Clowney notes: “God’s Servant was to be identified with Israel, and called by the name of Israel, yet He would also be distinguished from Israel, for He would bring back and restore those who would be preserved of Israel, and be God’s light to the Gentiles.” (p202). Isaiah may also give us a glimpse of Jesus’ “restoration to the land” later in the same chapter. After Jesus had endured the exile of the cross in Isaiah 53:8, God declares in verse 12: “Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great. . .” To receive an allotted portion can mean inheriting or coming into possession of a land (cf. Joshua 13:7). So, Isaiah may well be using the same imagery of exile and restoration here, telling us that the Messiah would be exiled at the cross, but that after death, He would be brought back into the land once again. There are also other parallels we can draw between the restoration and the resurrection is that the exile was completely shocking for God’s people, even though they had been told about it in advance. The only thing that seemed to surprise them more was when God brought them back to their land again—even though this was also precisely what the prophets had said would happen! In the same way, Jesus’ death was shocking for His followers, even though He had predicted it from the very beginning. The only thing that seemed to astonish Jesus’ disciples more than His death was His resurrection—though, again, this was precisely what Jesus had told them would happen.  

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A) JESUS AND GOD’S PLACE: Earlier we mentioned that Israel’s exile points us to the exile Jesus endured at the cross. Isaiah 53:8 tells us that “He was cut off out of the land of the living” for the sins of God’s people. Here, Isaiah was speaking of the Servant of the Lord. Sometimes when Isaiah used this phrase he was referring to Israel in the corporate sense, speaking of God’s people as a whole; but there were other times when Isaiah used this same phrase, “Servant of the Lord”, to describe Israel as a particular individual. Well, the prophet Isaiah foretold both exile and restoration for Israel; and when he did so, he wasn’t only speaking of God’s people as a whole, corporately; he was also looking forward and speaking of the Christ. Jesus is not only the second Adam; He’s the second Israel. And as such, not only would He be cut off out of the land of the living; He would also be brought back in again: If the exile is a picture of Jesus’ death, the restoration points us forward to His resurrection.29

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There’s also more that we can learn from Israel’s exile and restoration. We saw earlier that the exile of Israel points us back to the exile of Eden. When Adam sinned, he was cast out of the garden; and all humanity along with him. Because of Adam’s sin, every one of us are born into a state of spiritual exile; alienated from God and cut off from His presence. But if Israel’s exile teaches us about our ruin in Adam, then their restoration to the land teaches us about our redemption in Jesus. Israel was utterly powerless to deliver themselves; they were as helpless and hopeless as dead men in their graves (Ezekiel 37). But God would do for them what they could not do for themselves: They were as dead men in Babylon, but God would raise them up from the dead, deliver them from their captivity, and bring back to the land of promise. And is this not exactly what God has done for us in building of His new city, and new spiritual temple, of both Jews and Gentiles, with surpassing spiritual glory. 3) This covenant assured them of pardon and cleansing, of justification and sanctification from all their idols and former uncleannesses. 4) This covenant assured them of a rich confluence of choicest spiritual blessings, from the saving influence of His Holy Spirit. 5) This covenant assured them, that David [namely], Jesus Christ the true David of God, should be their Prince and King forevermore. 6) This covenant assured them, that the Lord would be their God, and they should be His people, and that His tabernacle should be with them, yea He would set His sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore.” (pp1102-03). And again: “The Jews’ deliverance from Babylon, was a reviving of their dead bones, an opening of their graves, and a bringing them as it were out of their graves in Babylon. So the elect’s deliverance from their spiritual bondage, is their spiritual reviving and resurrection. . . The Jews were so delivered from Babylon, as that they were cleansed from their idols, detestable things and transgressions. And the elect are so delivered from their spiritual thraldom, that they are ‘washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.’ The Jews delivered from Babylon, were called to build the temple of God (Ezra 1:1-3). So the elect are redeemed by Christ out of their spiritual bondage, that at last they might return into the true Canaan, heaven itself, the eternal rest promised to God’s people, where they shall ‘sit together with Christ in heavenly places.’ (Roberts, pp1124-25). As Clowney notes: “God’s Servant was to be identified with Israel, and called by the name of Israel, yet He would also be distinguished from Israel, for He would bring back and restore those who would be preserved of Israel, and be God’s light to the Gentiles.” (p202). Isaiah may also give us a glimpse of Jesus’ “restoration to the land” later in the same chapter. After Jesus had endured the exile of the cross in Isaiah 53:8, God declares in verse 12: “Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great. . .” To receive an allotted portion can mean inheriting or coming into possession of a land (cf. Joshua 13:7). So, Isaiah may well be using the same imagery of exile and restoration here, telling us that the Messiah would be exiled at the cross, but that after death, He would be brought back into the land once again. There are also other parallels we can draw between the restoration and the resurrection is that the exile was completely shocking for God’s people, even though they had been told about it in advance. The only thing that seemed to surprise them more was when God brought them back to their land again—even though this was also precisely what the prophets had said would happen! In the same way, Jesus’ death was shocking for His followers, even though He had predicted it from the very beginning. The only thing that seemed to astonish Jesus’ disciples more than His death was His resurrection—though, again, this was precisely what Jesus had told them would happen. 29

| THE RETURN TO THE LAND AND THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Israel’s Physical Restoration from Exile | Jesus’ Physical Resurrection from the Dead |

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Christ? For just like Israel, we were dead in our sins, but God, being rich in mercy, “even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up with Him...” (Ephesians 2:5-6). And again, just as the Lord rescued Israel from Babylon, “He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son...” (Colossians 1:13-14). Truly, the temporal redemption God wrought for Israel when He brought them back from exile was always meant to point us forward to the eternal redemption He would accomplish for us in Christ.30

THE RETURN TO THE LAND AND OUR REDEMPTION IN JESUS

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<td>Israel's Physical Deliverance from Captivity in Babylon</td>
<td>Our Spiritual Deliverance from Sin and Death in Christ</td>
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Lastly, Israel’s being gathered home to their land from exile points us forward to the day when Jesus will gather His people home to glory. God’s people lived as exiles in Babylon; they had to stay there many years, but it was never their true home. They longed for the day God had promised, when He would “bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their

30 Roberts emphasizes this truth over and over again in his discussion of Israel’s restoration to the land. He says: “Most, if not all of Isaiah’s sermons after [Chapter 40 insist upon their Babylonian captivity...and under this type [lead] them on further, to the great spiritual deliverance of God’s people out of the woeful and more than Babylonian bondage under sin, Satan, [and] wrath, by the Messiah...” (p1089). And again: “This wondrous redemption of the captive Jews from Babylon had a spiritual mystery in it, shadowing out the greatest and spiritual redemption of God’s elect from the bondage of sin, Satan, death, [and] hell, into which they were plunged by the Fall of the first Adam, and out of which they should be restored by Jesus Christ the last Adam.” (p1121). And later, “there is a notable analogy, or proportion between the Jews deliverance out of the Babylonian captivity, and the elect’s deliverance from their spiritual captivity, for...there they were in as helpless and hopeless a condition, in reference to their deliverance, as dead bodies and dry bones in a grave. So the term from which the elect were delivered by Christ, is a state of sin, and a state of misery, under curse, wrath, death, [and] Satan; they being ‘dead in trespasses and sins’, ‘under the power of Satan’, and ‘children of wrath, even as others’. The Jews deliverance from Babylon, was a reviving of their dead bones, an opening of their graves, and a bringing them as it were out of their graves in Babylon. So the elect’s deliverance from their spiritual bondage, is their spiritual reviving and resurrection...” (p1124). And, “Hence, the great and wonderful redemption of captive Jews from Babylon to Canaan, was an eminent type of Christ’s greater and more wonderful redemption of captive sinners from sin to grace; from Satan to God; from death to life; from hell to heaven...The Jews of old might notably spell out their spiritual redemption from sin and misery, in their corporal redemptions from Egypt and Babylon. These were to them, not only mercies, but mysteries; not only restorations for the present, but instructions also for the future.” (p1207).  He concludes: “God in this covenant aimed at a higher end and advantage to His people than their present consolation; even their and their seeds’ eternal salvation. And therefore under their corporal redemption from Babylonian bondage to Canaan’s liberty and rest, He represents typically their spiritual redemption from sinful and hellish bondage to heaven by Jesus Christ.” (p1219).  For, again: “Those promises about deliverance from captivity in the earthly Babylon, and the restoration of the captive Jews to their earthly Canaan, did chiefly intends spiritual mysteries, [namely] Christ’s redemption of His spiritual captives from the bondage of sin and death, to life and heavenly glory...” (p1224). In his discussion of this truth, and aside from the things already quoted, Roberts also gives several reasons for taking our redemption in Christ to be the fulfillment of Israel’s restoration from exile, including these three: 1) “The promises of God touching His people’s deliverance from Babylon’s captivity, are jointly proposed and intermixed with His promises of restoring His elect from spiritual captivity (cf. Isaiah 49; Daniel 9:2,24), which notably insinuates thus much to us; that in their redemption from Babylon’s thraldom, God typ’d out their redemption from spiritual thraldom; and in that, they were especially to lift up their eyes to this.” Indeed, “Isaiah...assures the Jews of their deliverance by Cyrus...out of their sad Babylonian captivity (compare Isaiah 39:4-10 to 49:2) [and] he carries and raises them hereupon to behold and expect a far greater deliverance by Jesus Christ the Messiah, from spiritual captivity under sin, Satan, [and] wrath...” 2) “Unto God’s covenant of promises for return of His people the Jews from Babylonian captivity, there are immediately annexed precious promises of the Messiah, for effecting and full completing thereof. And therefore after the Lord had largely expressed his covenant touching their return from Babylon (Jeremiah 32:20ff and 33:1-13), He presently adds; ‘In those days, and at that time’ (namely) even in the days and time of this covenant with the captives, and before the expiration thereof’ will I cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David...’ In which expressions, the restoration of Israel, both from the Babylonian, and spiritual captivity, is ascribed to Christ, as to be accomplished by Him fully and finally.” 3) “Israel’s redemption of old from Egyptian bondage, was a plain type of the elect’s redemption by Christ from spiritual bondage, as the mystery or sacrament of the Passover then...does unquestionably evince...much more, this greater redemption of the Jews from Babylonian bondage...was a type also of the elect’s restoration by Christ from spiritual captivity. And therefore it is very observable, that when the Lord had promised, to gather his dispersed flock out of all countries, and to raise up to David a righteous Branch for saving Judah and Jerusalem, even ‘The Lord our Righteousness’, He presently adds, ‘Therefore behold the days come saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, “The Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, the Lord liveth which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north-country, and from all countries whither I had driven them, and they shall dwell in their own land.’ By which he gives us to understand...’[that] as Canaan whither they were to be brought, was a type of heaven, the eternal rest, so, both Egypt and Babylon, whence they were delivered, were types of their spiritual bondage and misery under sin, Satan, [and] death; and their redemption from Babylon was a type of their spiritual redemption by Christ, as well as their redemption from Egypt, and in some regards a more eminent type.” (see pp1121-23).
own land. . .” (Ezekiel 34:13), where the Lord himself would feed His flock and “lead them to rest” (34:15). Ezekiel declares that when God had gathered His people home, “They will live on the land” that He gave to Jacob; “they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever. . .” (37:25). And so, the rest that God was promising to give His people was an eternal rest. Though in some ways God did these things for His people when He brought them back into their land, these promises can only find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ, on the day when He gathers us home to eternal glory. Peter writes that we live as exiles here on earth (1:1; 2:11); he even refers to Rome as Babylon (5:13). Like Israel, we are exiles in Babylon. But just as Israel looked forward to a promise of restoration, we look forward to “the restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21), when the Lord will gather His people out of this present “Babylon” in which we live as exiles, and bring us home to our eternal rest in the new Jerusalem.31

The Return to the Land and the Restoration of All Things

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<td>Israel's being Gathered Home from Exile to Jerusalem</td>
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Summary: God's promise to return His people to their land was partially fulfilled when He brought Israel back from exile, but ultimately this promise looks forward to Jesus' resurrection from the dead, to Jesus' redeeming us from our sins, and to the day when Jesus will bring us home to eternal glory:

A Summary: Unpacking God's Promise of Returning Israel to Their Land

<table>
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<tr>
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Bi) JESUS AND GOD'S PRINCE: In the exile, the Davidic king had been dethroned; but when the Lord brought Israel back to their land, He told them: “I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.” (Ezekiel 34:23-24). A shepherd-king would lead God's people in the restoration. Jeremiah refers to this same king as “a righteous Branch” whom the Lord would “raise up for David” (23:5-6; 33:14-16). Along with being called a Branch, Ezekiel speaks of this Davidic king as God's servant: “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. . .and David My servant will be their prince forever.” (37:24-25). In the restoration, God would raise up a shepherd-king for His people Israel. He would be called “a branch”, He would be called God's “servant”; and He would be a descendant of David. Later, the prophet Zechariah tells us he wouldn't only be a king, but “a priest on His throne” (7:13).

When God brings Israel back to their land, He raises up a man named Joshua to help shepherd His people. Joshua is the high priest (Haggai 1:1), and at one point God instructs Zechariah the prophet to make a crown of silver and gold, set it on Joshua's head, and tell him: “Behold, a man whose name is Branch. . .” (Zechariah 6:12). Joshua is a priest, and he's called the branch, and yet he can't be the shepherd-prince God was promising, because he was neither king nor a descendant of David. There is another man during Joshua's day named Zerubbabel; he was appointed the governor of Judah, and

31 We quoted Roberts earlier: “The Jews delivered from Babylon, came into their own land, the land of Canaan, their typical rest. So the elect are redeemed by Christ out of their spiritual bondage, that at last they might return into the true Canaan, heaven itself, the eternal rest promised to God's people, where they shall 'sit together with Christ in heavenly places.' (p1123). The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible likewise says (on Amos 9:13): “The promise is made that once the restoration of God's people has reached its culmination, they never need fear exile again. . .The early returnees failed to reach this stage of restoration, and Israel was subjugated time and again. The New Testament explains, however, that this permanent possession of Canaan will take place when Christ returns and gives to his people, Jews and Gentiles alike, permanent possession of the entire new earth (Revelation 5:9-10; 21:1-7), of which Canaan was simply a type (Romans 4:13).” Robertson notes: “Some might insist that 'literal' fulfillment of new covenant prophecy requires the return of ethnic Israel to a geographically located Palestine. Yet the replacement of the typological with the actual as a principle of biblical interpretation points to another kind of 'literal' fulfillment. The historical return to a 'land of promise' by a small remnant 70 years after Jeremiah's prophecy encourages a final return to paradise lost by the newly constituted 'Israel of God.' As men from all nations had been dispossessed and alienated from the original creation, so now they may hope for restoration and peace, even to the extent of anticipating a 'land of promise' sure to appear in the new creation, and sure to be enjoyed by a resurrected people.” (p300).
not only was he a descendant of David (Matthew 1:12), but the Lord calls Zerubbabel His “servant”, and even tells him that He would take Zerubbabel and make him like a signet ring (Haggai 2:20-23). But Zerubbabel was only Judah’s governor—not their king he was never called “the branch”; and he certainly wasn’t a priest. And so, though Joshua and Zerubbabel both reflect some of the traits of the shepherd-king God had promised, neither one of them is able to meet all the qualifications entirely.

The Lord explicitly tells Joshua that he and those with him were “symbols” of the shepherd-king who was yet to come (Zechariah 3:8). In other words, Joshua and Zerubbabel were just pictures and types of the true shepherd-prince that God was going to raise up for His people: He will be one shepherd, not two; He will be both priest and king; He will unify God’s people into one flock (Ezekiel 37:21-22); and He will reign as their prince forever (Ezekiel 37:25). Ultimately, these things are only fulfilled in Jesus: He is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). He is the seed of David and yet our High Priest (Psalm 110:1-4); He reigns as king; yet He is “a priest on His throne” (Zechariah 6:13). He gathers both Jews and Gentiles into His fold, making them “one flock with one shepherd” (John 10:16). And it’s He who will reign as shepherd-prince over God’s people forever.32

### ZERUBBABEL AND JOSHUA AS TYPES OF CHRIST THE SHEPHERD-KING

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<th>ZERUBBABEL</th>
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<th>NEAR (PARTIAL) FULFILLMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>ZERUBBABEL</td>
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<tr>
<td>The true “Servant” and Davidic King</td>
<td>“a priest on His throne”</td>
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<tr>
<td>The true “Branch” and High Priest</td>
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32 On Ezekiel 34:23-24, Roberts notes: “David [is] their shepherd, prince, and king forever. Christ is the true David; of whom David himself was but a type” (p1109). And again: “Christ is a second David; yea, the only true David,” (Roberts, p1206). On Joshua and Zerubbabel as being types of Christ, Roberts says: “[Christ] shall not only, as a ‘branch of righteousness, grow up’ forever being a type and shadow of the High Priest and king, Roberts notes of Ezekiel 37:21: On Christ unifying His people, Roberts notes of Ezekiel 37:21: “Literally, they were thus united, at their return, under Zerubbabel, a son of David, and type of Christ; spiritually, they were thus united under Christ himself...that being a type and shadow of this” (p1123). And again, on Ezekiel 37:15-17: “When Solomon was dead, the kingdom which was united and one, as the nation one under David and Solomon, was divided into two in the days of Rehoboam...This division occasioned constant enmity between Judah and Israel...Now in this covenant God promises to unite this divided nation and kingdom into one, under one King David. So that thereby, the miseries of their divided state should be removed; and the ancient happiness of their united state, as in the time of David and Solomon, should be restored. This covenanted union of these two sticks, these two kingdoms into one, has a twofold accomplishment; literal, and mystical: 1) Literally this was fulfilled, when Judah was returned from their captivity in Babylon...[for it is] very probable that about the same time many of the dispersed of Israel came back from Media, Persia and other places of dispersion...and joined themselves to them of Judah. 2) Mystically and Typically this union of these two kingdoms has its accomplishment, partly in the uniting of the Gentiles (typified by the kingdom of the ten tribes dispersed into pagan countries) to the church of the Jews under one shepherd Jesus Christ [Ephesians 2:13; John 10:15-16]...partly, in the gathering together, uniting and perfecting the all the elect in one mystical body of Christ [Ephesians 4:12-13]...partly, in the day of judgement, when Christ shall gather corporally all His elect...up into his heavenly kingdom with himself to be ever with the Lord.” (Roberts, p1115). Rhodes draws out the implications that Israel’s shepherd is both God and “David” when he says of Ezekiel 37:24-25: “David is back as king, and this time it’s forever. Notice that the king is also called a shepherd. Earlier in Ezekiel, God has already given a long speech about these shepherd-kings. On the whole, they’ve been doing a duff job, so God announces, ‘I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God’ (Ezekiel 34:15). God will come as Shepherd-king. But didn’t he say that David was going to fill that role? He did: ‘I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David.’ One king only. And it’s God. And David. But one person. Beginning to get the picture?” (Chapter 7).
C) JESUS AND GOD'S PEOPLE: After Israel had been sent away to exile, the Lord declared that He was going to make a new covenant. We may tend to think this new covenant would also be with a new people. Now that Israel had been sent away to Babylon, God can start afresh with a people who will worship and serve and follow Him instead of constantly turn away from Him. But that’s not what God does. In Jeremiah 31, the Lord tells us that He would make this new covenant “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (verse 31). It was a new covenant, but God was going to make it with the same people; and He tells us why in verse 34: “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” The new covenant would be associated with forgiveness; indeed, the new covenant would be a covenant of forgiveness. As the Lord also told His people through the prophet Ezekiel: “Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord, so that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore. . . when I have forgiven you for all that you have done. . .” (16:62-63). This is what God did for His people in the restoration. When He brought Israel back into their land, He was pardoning them for everything they had done.

God’s promise to forgive Israel’s iniquities was partially fulfilled in the restoration, but ultimately, the forgiveness God alludes to here is the outworking of what He would accomplish for us in Jesus. The Hebrew word that’s translated here in Jeremiah 31:34 as “forgive” [Hebrew salah] is the word used to represent the effect or result of atonement in the Levitical sacrifices. We read over and over again in Leviticus: “Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.” (4:31). There’s a connection here: Forgiveness happens through atonement. And so, when the Lord declares that He will forgive Israel’s iniquity, we’re pointed forward to the atoning work of Christ. And this is what our Savior himself taught the night before His sufferings. For when Jesus took the cup, He gave it to His disciples, saying: “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:27-28). God could forgive Israel their iniquities, and He can forgive us ours, because He “has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.” (Isaiah 53:6).

What God would do for His people: The Lord would forgive His people

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<th>The Partial Fulfillment</th>
<th>The Ultimate Fulfillment</th>
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<tr>
<td>God Forgave His people in the Restoration</td>
<td>God Forgives His people through the cross of Jesus</td>
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God would forgive His people in the new covenant, but He would also change them. He would do a mighty work for them in atoning for their sins, but He would also do a supernatural work in them in changing their hearts. After God had brought His people back to their land, He tells them: “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.” (Ezekiel 36:25). There’s a very real sense in which God did this for His people in the restoration. God’s people struggled deeply with idolatry over the course of their entire history; from the days of the patriarchs, and in the desert under Moses, through the time of the judges, to the kings, all the way up to the exile. God’s people can’t seem to shake their addiction to idols. But when God restores Israel to their land, it seems as though they’re all at once entirely healed. We read no more of Israel’s idolatry. They’re not perfect; they still have other struggles—but their idols are gone.

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33 We’ve intentionally not addressed the question of whether or how the forgiveness God would bestow in the new covenant is different than the forgiveness He had extended to His people in the old covenant. We’ll come back to this in our study of Jeremiah 31. Here we’re just showing that God fulfilled this promise partially in the restoration but ultimately in Christ. Roberts notes: “Remission of sins is a most sweet and comfortable blessing. . .This blessing is more often spoken of, than well understood; and yet it’s better understood by many, than experimentally enjoyed.” (p1448-49). Again he says: “How excellency do God’s gratuitous mercy, and His justice meet in this great blessing of remission of sins! His gratuitous mercy, in that He remits freely, without any desert of the sinners, yea against all his desert; His justice, in that He remits righteously, upon expiation made by Christ’s blood, and satisfaction given to God’s justice. . .by His death.” (p1450). And again: “[God] flings away all His people’s sins into the depths of the sea. . .as the Egyptians were all swallowed up in the Red Sea, and never troubled, terrified or afflicted Israel any more after that day. . .so their pardoned sins shall be all drowned in the sea of God’s mercy and Christ’s merit forever; they (though never so huge an army) shall never trouble, terrify or afflict them any more to their condemnation; in that sense they shall never be found any more at all. . .” (p1456). Lastly, “The Lord God forgives sins to all His sincere federates, most freely, most fully, and finally. Freely, without, yea contrary to all their desert; fully, without exception of any one sin of theirs; and finally, without all revocation or annulling of pardon once vouchsafed.” (p1489).

34 As Roberts says: “No covenant dispensation so [thoroughly] cured God’s people of Judah and Benjamin of their idolatry, of their stony hardness of heart, and other evils; as did this covenant dispensation under their captivity.” (p1093). And again, of Ezekiel 37:23: “This has reference to God’s cleansing them by regeneration and sanctification, from the power and stain of sin,
And this is what God does for us *in Jesus*. The work God did in His people when He brought them back to their land is meant to point us to the work God would do in His people through Jesus in the new covenant. There's a sense in which the Lord did these things for Israel in the restoration, but the ultimate fulfillment of these promises is the work God would do in His new covenant people in the days following Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Whereas Israel suffered from a chronic unbelief and apostasy all their days leading up to the exile, God would perform a large-scale change in His new covenant people, for He would give them "a new heart" and put "a new spirit" within them (Ezekiel 36:26). So that, the Lord wouldn't only *forgive* them—but He would completely change them, giving them new hearts with new desires; this is called *regeneration*. And then He would put His Spirit within them, causing them to walk in His statutes (Ezekiel 37:37); this is a process called *sanctification*. God even promises their *perseverance*, for through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord not only says to His people: "I will not turn away from them", but also: "I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me." (32:40). God was not saying that His people would be perfect. They wouldn't. But in the new covenant, they would be changed.35

**What God Would Do in His People: The Lord Would Change His People**

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<tr>
<td>God changed Israel when He brought them back home</td>
<td>God changes His people when He brings us to Jesus</td>
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So then: God wouldn't just save His people from the *punishment* of their sin (forgiveness). He would also save them from the *power* and *pollution* of their sin (regeneration and sanctification). And once He claims them as His own, He'll never let them go (perseverance). Many of the other new covenant promises we've been looking at (*IE: Place, Prince*) are veiled: Jesus is there but we still have to open especially of idolatry, set forth here in three words: *idols, detestable things, transgressions*. Though formerly they were extremely addicted to idolatry, yet after their return from captivity, they should be thoroughly reformed from that sin; they should be given to idolatry no more." (p1127). And again, Roberts writes: "The family of Terah, Abraham's father, beyond the flood, worshipped other gods in Chaldea before Abram was called into Canaan. The family of Jacob, while with Laban, and afterwards, [was] tainted with idolatry. The Israelites served strange gods in Egypt, even the idols of the Egyptians. When they were newly brought out of Egypt, and had solemnly covenanted with God against idolatry, while Moses was in the Mount with God, they idolatrously trespassed in the golden calf which Aaron made. . .In the days of the Judges they served the gods of the heathens. . .In the days of the Kings, Solomon encouraged, and shared in the idolatry of all his strange wives (1 Kings 11:6-8). Jeroboam set up the idolatrous calves in Dan and Bethel, whereby he made Israel to sin (1 Kings 12:28), to the end. And what shall I say? Time would fail me to tell of their idolatry, in the days of Ahab, Jehu, Hoshea, Marasach, Amon, and of others till the very Babylonian captivity. Yea, they were very idolatrous even under their captivity. But now after they were brought out of Babylonian captivity, how did God wean them from their idolatry, detestable things, and prevarications! I read not, that I remember, of any of their idolatries afterwards. They alter that defiled themselves with their idols no more." (p1128). 35 As Roberts notes: "These captive Jews had the Spirit of God before, and under their captivity; but God promises a more plenary endowment of them therewith, after their return from Babylon (Ezekiel 36:27)." (Roberts, p1131). And as we quoted Roberts earlier: "The Jews were so delivered from Babylon, as that they were cleansed from their idols, detestable things, and transgressions. And the elect are so delivered from their spiritual thraldom, that they are 'washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'" (p1124). Roberts describes *this change in the following ways*: "More particularly, this newness of heart and spirit is the new creation or new supernatural frame of the whole soul, heart and spirit in part, wrought by the Holy Ghost, according to the image of God. The nature of it, as a new creation or new supernatural frame. The subject of this newness is the whole soul. The degree of it is imperfect—but in part. The author of it, is the Holy Ghost. The pattern according to which this great new work is fashioned, is the image of God. . .This is a transforming renovation from the corrupt image of Adam, to the pure image of God; from the old to the new man." (pp1134-35). 35 *On the new heart and new spirit* (Ezekiel 36:26): "These two words, *heart* and *spirit*. . .when they are mentioned jointly and applied to man, as they are diverse times in this prophet, then (as Calvin has well noted) they are put for mans whole soul and all the faculties thereof, [namely], the *spirit*, for...the mind and understanding...the *heart*. . .for the...will and affections. . .By *spirit*, therefore I understand here all the upper faculties, the intellectuals, chiefly seated in the head; by *heart*, all the lower faculties of the will and affections, chiefly seated in the heart." (pp1131-32). *On the one heart and one way of Jeremiah 32:38-40*: "By *heart*, understand all inward principles and religious dispositions in the whole soul; by *way*, all outward expressions and practices flowing from those principles. . .the Jews had formerly been a very divided people in heart and way. . .[and still there are] men [who] walk most unworthily of the calling wherewith they are called. . .like boat-men, looking one way but rowing another." (p1160,61,69). Roberts *on how this change would be complete but not perfect*: "Though these new supernatural principles and qualities are implanted in the whole soul and every part thereof, yet are they. . .incomplete in every part; as an infant has all the parts of a man, but none of them [completely] perfect. . .Perfection of degrees is reserved for the world to come. . .They that talk of their gradual and complete perfection in this life, are in a dream or fond delusion. [But] though these new endowments of the new heart and spirit are imperfect and incomplete, yet are they growing and increasing daily towards perfection. Our inward man is renewed day by day. . .Living trees grow and increase, when dead trunks decay and rot." (pp1136-37). And again: "Every part is in some measure renewed, though none completely." (Roberts, p1142).
up the outer husk to get to the gospel seed. But here, what God would do for His people in the new covenant is described with such gospel clarity it's almost as if there's no outer husk at all; the seed has already burst through the shell. In God's promise to forgive His people and give them new hearts, it's as if the shadows are giving way to the substance; the types and pictures are giving way to the reality.

**D) JESUS AND GOD'S PEACE:** The exile was the ultimate covenant curse, but in the restoration, God would bring about a cataclysmic reversal of the curse of sin. Instead of famine, there would be abundance; instead of drought, showers of blessing. *Ultimately, this reversal of the curse is meant to teach us all that God would do for us in and through Christ.* Earlier we saw that the exile symbolizes Jesus' death. So, it's only fitting that when the exile was complete, God abolished the curse from His people and began pouring out His blessing upon them. Until Jesus was exiled for our sins, we lived under the curse. But in and through Jesus' exile at the cross, we've come out from under God's curse and entered into His favor and blessing. Paul says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles...” When Adam sinned in the garden, he brought God's curse upon all of us; and we became the rightful inheritors of the covenant curses of famine, pestilence, and the sword; and ultimately, death. But at the cross, Jesus took God's curse for sin on our behalf; and in His resurrection, *He reversed the curse,* since “the resurrection is the ultimate reversal of the curse of sin.” So that, now, in Jesus, *instead of being inheritors of God's curse,* we're ever and only recipients of *His blessing.* Paul says in Romans 8 that as believers, we may still face “famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword” (v35), but in Jesus these things no longer come to us as curses for our sin, but rather as hidden blessings from the hand of our loving heavenly Father.36

**The Reversal of the Curse and the Cross of Christ**

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<td>God's reversal of the curse for His people at the cross</td>
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</table>

So, the reversal of the curse teaches us about the blessing God lavishes on His people in Jesus. This is true for us as individuals, as we mentioned, *but it's also true for the church corporately, as a whole.* In fact, when God promised to reverse the curse in the restoration, He wasn't making that promise to individuals as much as He was to the entire people of God, collectively. God was promising to pour out His blessing on the whole corporate church. *Now, God did this, to a degree, when He brought Israel back to their land.* But after just a few short years, God is already telling His people: “because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce. I called for a drought on the land...” (Haggai 1:10-11). And later, God even says to His people: “You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me...” (Malachi 3:9). We're left asking: What happened to God's promise that He would annihilate the covenant curses from His people and pour out His blessing on them? The answer is that *though these things were partially fulfilled when God brought His people back to their land; ultimately, this promise of blessing looks past Israel's day and ours to a day yet to come.* Here again, Israel's restoration points us forward to the restoration of all things. Jesus began to reverse the curse with His death and resurrection, but it's not until the new heavens and new earth that He brings this work to completion. It's true, as we said, that the resurrection is the ultimate reversal of the curse of sin. But though Jesus has been resurrected, it's not until He establishes the new heavens and the new earth that we as *God's people* receive the “redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:23). It's then, in the New Jerusalem, that Scripture tells us: “There will no longer be any curse” (Revelation 22:3).37

36 The quote is from Ligon Duncan; we referenced it earlier in section II.2: Overviewing the General Themes. In speaking of how God now, in Christ, turns curses into blessings for His people, Francis Roberts cites 1 Corinthians 3:21-22: “*all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death...*” and says this: “In and through Jesus Christ, the malignity, venom, poison, and mischief of death is removed; yea turned into great advantage unto God's covenant people. Not only the world, and life, but death also, with things present and to come, even all things are theirs, and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Death is theirs for good as well as life... What? Death theirs? Were it not better for them, death were not theirs? No. Death is their friend, not their foe... Of carnal men, it may be said, they are death's; they are death's slaves... But of Christians it may be said, death is theirs; theirs to serve them, to befriend them, to do them good...” (Roberts, p1559).
37 It may be tempting to say that these promises of reversing the covenant curses, though left unfulfilled in the days of Israel's restoration, find their fulfillment in the new covenant church. This may be true to a degree, in that there would be a much greater effect of the gospel on the hearers in the new covenant as compared with the old; and thus, whereas God was forced to send corporate judgment to a largely apostate church in the old covenant, the church of the new covenant would be marked by
E) JESUS AND GOD’S PRESENCE: In the exile, the temple had been destroyed. But when God restored His people, He promised that He would set His “sanctuary in their midst forever” and that His “dwelling place” would be with them (Ezekiel 37:26-27). These two Hebrew words that Ezekiel uses to describe God’s presence are significant. The Hebrew word that’s translated “dwelling place” in verse 27 (mishkan) is the same word used for the Old Testament tabernacle. God was promising that His tabernacle would be among His people. And the Hebrew word that’s translated “sanctuary” in verse 26 (miqdash) is most often used to refer to the temple. God’s temple had been destroyed in the exile, but here, the Lord is telling His people it would be raised up once again, and in such a way that this time, it would endure forever. In one sense, God did these things for His people when He brought them back to their land. He assures His people that He’s dwelling among them (Haggai 2:4-5); and He leads them in rebuilding the temple. But even this temple doesn’t last forever, as Ezekiel promised. And the reason is that ultimately, these promises only find their true fulfillment in Christ.

It’s when Jesus came into the world that Scripture tells us: “the Word became flesh, and dwelt [Lit. tabernacled] among us. . .” (John 1:14); for Jesus himself was and is God’s dwelling place among His people. And Jesus is not only God’s tabernacle, He’s also God’s temple. For indeed, in His life, Christ tabernacled among us; but in His death and resurrection, He was made to pattern Solomon’s temple. The temple of Solomon was destroyed; but it would be rebuilt once again. And is this not exactly the pattern our Lord followed in His death and resurrection? Indeed, as Christ told the Jews: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). And John tells us explicitly that “He was speaking of the temple of His body.” (2:21). Jesus’ body is God’s temple; destroyed, as it were, at the cross; but after three days raised up once again. And though Solomon’s temple was rebuilt, it didn’t last. But Jesus, having been raised from the dead, ever abides as God’s Sanctuary in the midst of His people forever (Ezekiel 37:26). Indeed, Moses’ tabernacle and Solomon’s temple were always meant to point us ahead to God’s true and lasting Sanctuary: “Immanuel. . .God with us.” (Matthew 1:23).

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The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible notes on John 1:14: “The verb translated ‘made his dwelling’ means ‘made his tent’ or ‘tabernacled.’ This language recalls Israel’s tabernacle, which served as the place of God’s presence on earth in the days of Moses (Exodus 40:34-33)—Jesus fulfilled that purpose in His incarnation.” And again, on Zechariah 6:13 it makes this note: “Jesus began to fulfill the rebuilding of the temple through the resurrection of his body (Matthew 12:6; John 2:18-21). . .”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>God annihilates the curse from Israel in the restoration</th>
<th>God annihilates the curse from His church in glory</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>THE PARTIAL FULFILLMENT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>God tabernacled with Israel in the restoration (Hag.1:4-5)</td>
<td>God tabernacled with us in Christ’s incarnation (Jn.1:14)</td>
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<td>God’s temple was destroyed but rebuilt again (Hag.2:7-9)</td>
<td>God’s temple is Jesus in His death/resurrection (Jn.2:19)</td>
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Table showing the partial and ultimate fulfillment of the temple and Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

Earlier we mentioned that Joshua and Zerubbabel were two men that God used powerfully after He brought His people back to their land. We also noted that both of these men reflected many of the traits that would characterize the coming Shepherd-king that God had promised to send; and indeed, it was for this reason that Scripture refers to Joshua and those with him as “symbols” of the Messiah who was yet to come (Zechariah 3:8). But there’s another way that Joshua and Zerubbabel prefigured Christ that we haven’t mentioned yet. At one point, God instructs Zechariah the prophet to make a crown of silver and gold, set it on Joshua’s head, and say: “Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord... and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.” (Zechariah 6:12-13). Zechariah is following her Lord, and thus, corporate blessing. But Jesus also disciplines His church in the new covenant, as we see clearly in Revelation 2-3. Indeed, Jesus’ words here mirror very closely God’s words of rebuke to Israel after the restoration in Haggai 1-2 and Malachi 3. So that though there may be a degree of change in this respect from the old covenant to the new, the change is one of relative comparison rather than stark contrast. Perhaps there is less judgment on the whole for God’s new covenant church, if you compare it with the old. But then again, we might argue, on the other hand, that judgment will be more severe for new covenant churches, since we have greater light than the old (Hebrews 10:29). So again, it seems that the main application here directs us forward to the complete annihilation of the curses in the new heavens and the new earth.

38 The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible notes on John 1:14: “The verb translated ‘made his dwelling’ means ‘made his tent’ or ‘tabernacled.’ This language recalls Israel’s tabernacle, which served as the place of God’s presence on earth in the days of Moses (Exodus 40:34-33)—Jesus fulfilled that purpose in His incarnation.” And again, on Zechariah 6:13 it makes this note: “Jesus began to fulfill the rebuilding of the temple through the resurrection of his body (Matthew 12:6; John 2:18-21). . .”
placing the crown on Joshua's head, but he's speaking of someone else. And yet, as he does, we learn another important way that Joshua was a symbol of the Christ who was yet to come: He will build the temple of the Lord. Joshua was one of the men who rebuilt the temple in the days of the restoration. And so was Zerubbabel, for the Lord declares in Zechariah 4:9: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it." And when Joshua and Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple after God had brought Israel back to their land, they were acting once again as symbols, prefiguring the work of the coming Messiah. For these two men rebuilt Solomon's temple in the days of the restoration; but Christ would set about the work of rebuilding the temple of the Living God.39

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Their Identity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Their Work</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZERUBBABEL</td>
<td>Son of David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOSHUA</td>
<td>High Priest</td>
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Jesus tells us in Matthew 16:18, "I will build My church..." And so, in one sense, Christ is building His church. But in another sense, He's rebuilding it. Jesus is building His Church just as Solomon built the temple of the Lord at the height of Israel's kingdom. But it's also true that Jesus' Church is something that's being rebuilt, as the temple was in the days of Joshua and Zerubbabel. Think about it this way: At the very beginning, God had built all humanity after His image (Genesis 1:27). All the glory and splendor of Solomon's temple couldn't have compared to mankind formed after the image of God. Humanity was like God's temple, carved with His own hand. But it wouldn't last; Adam's sin brought destruction to all of us. Like Solomon's temple at the exile, we became the ruins of what we once were. But now, in Christ, God is re-building humanity. For Jesus has drawn near to the fallen ruins of Adam, and He is now re-creating us after His glorious image once again (Colossians 3:10).

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<td>God would rebuild the temple through Joshua/Zerubbabel</td>
<td>God is now rebuilding humanity in and through the Savior</td>
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In Ezekiel 37:26-27, God had told His people: "I will... set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people." The final way this promise reaches its fulfillment is in the new Jerusalem. When the Apostle John sees a vision of the new heaven and the new earth in Revelation 21, he hears a loud voice from the throne, saying: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them..." (verse 3). Later in the same chapter, John writes more about this city, telling us: "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." (verse 22). In one sense, God dwells among us now, in and through His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16). But in another sense, as Paul writes: "while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord... and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). There's a very real sense in which as long as we remain pilgrims on this earth, we're absent from the presence of the Lord. This is partially because even the earth itself has been affected by Adam's sin. Paul tells us that “creation was subjected to futility” and “the whole creation groans...” (Romans 8:20,22). It seems even creation was made after the pattern of the temple. For the earth was formed by God to be a house for His glory; and though our world is now desecrated and devastated by sin, the day is coming when “the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption..." (Romans 8:21). The day is coming when the Lord will rebuild the earth itself; when this earth and its works will be burned up and our God will build “new heavens and a new earth...” (2 Peter 3:10,13); and the whole earth will be filled with His glory (Habakkuk 2:14).40

39 As Roberts had said: "This covenant assured them of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, with greater glory than formerly; and therein typically of the building of His new city, and new spiritual temple, of both Jews and Gentiles..." (p1102).

40 The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible brings all these aspects together when it notes on Zechariah 6:13: “The New..."
In this last section, we've been looking at what the Prophets announced to Israel during their time in exile. We've discussed the major themes in their prophecies (place, prince, people, peace, presence) and how each of these themes ultimately finds its fulfillment in Christ. And we've mentioned that the new covenant is associated with all these things God would do for His people when He brought them back from exile. But though all these passages are speaking of the new covenant, they don't use that particular phrase. In this next section, we're going to look at the one place in the Prophets that does.

**PART II: JEREMIAH 31 AND THE NEW COVENANT**

**The Temple and the New Creation**

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**PART II: JEREMIAH 31 AND THE NEW COVENANT**

31 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. 32 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 33 “They will not teach each one his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

1. The FIRST Question: *How do we make any sense of Jeremiah?*

Here in Jeremiah 31, God is declaring He would make a “new covenant” with His people. This new covenant would be different than the covenant He had made with Israel at Sinai. **How so?** It seems in two ways, especially: **First,** God would put His Law within His people. Whereas God had written His Law on tablets of stone at Sinai, now, in the new covenant, He would write it on the hearts of His people. Indeed, God’s people would no longer need to teach one another to know the Lord, for they would know Him already. **Secondly,** God would forgive Israel’s iniquity and remember it no more.41

In short: **God would forgive His people, and He would change His people.** We’ve already discussed both of these promises in the section above. And there we also saw how both of these promises find their fulfillment in Christ. But there’s a question that arises here: **Didn’t God already do these things for His people?** It sounds very poetic to say God wrote the Law on stone tablets at Sinai but now He would write it on human hearts. But didn’t the Lord write His Law on the hearts of His people in the Old Testament? What about David? Was not God’s Law in his heart (Psalm 40:8)? Or what about the composer of Psalm 119, who wrote: “Your law is my delight” (verse 174)? Further: Did the Lord

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Testament explains that Jesus began to fulfill the rebuilding of the temple through the resurrection of his body (Matthew 12:6; John 2:18-21), continues to fulfill it in the church (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22) and will ultimately fulfill it in the purification of the new heavens and the new earth as the dwelling place of God (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-3,22). And again in Ezekiel 40:1: “Christ came as God’s final temple in his first coming (John 2:19); the church is now the temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22) and in the new heavens and the new earth there will be no temple because the whole earth will be filled with his presence (Habakkuk 2:14; Revelation 21).”

41 Roberts dedicated over 200 pages to just these four verses in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (cf. pp1339-1355)! We’re not able to give an exhaustive exposition here; other resources can be consulted for that. Our purpose here is to give a succinct exposition and overview of the passage. Roberts finds four primary promises in vv31-34: “God promises: 1) His donation and inscription of His Laws in their inwards, mind and hearts. . . 2) The great federal relation, union, communion and interest between God and His federates. . . 3) His federate people’s more excellent and more universal knowledge of the Lord, than formerly under the old covenant. . . 4) Finally, God promises (as a foundation, ground or cause of all the former benefits), His own gratuitous propitiosity in Christ to them in the utter remission and oblivion, forgiving and forgetting all sorts of their sins. . . .” (Roberts, pp1342-44). We’ve simplified these into two (Roberts’ #1 and #4), as we’ve incorporated Roberts’ #2 and #3 into #1. As for #2, we’ve written elsewhere about this already and will come back to it again later in this lesson. Though we’ve incorporated #3 into #1, we will still deal with the question of what it means that “all” shall know the Lord in our discussion below. Here, we can just mention that the knowledge of the Lord in the new covenant would be much clearer and more abundant than it was in the old covenant. Roberts notes of this three-fold newness: “Here, the mediatory office of Jesus Christ is tacitly implied, in the proper and peculiar fruits of his priesthood, prophecy and kingship; namely remission of sins, wrought by His priesthood; knowledge of the Lord, by His prophecy; and conformity of mind and heart to the Law of God, by His kingship.” (p1346).
only begin to forgive His people in the new covenant? Was there no forgiveness for God's people in the Old Testament church? Had not Scripture already said: “there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (Psalm 130:4)? So then: If God had already been forgiving and changing His people long before Jeremiah 31, how are we to make any sense of what's “new” about the new covenant?

A) FORGIVENESS: We've mentioned that the Hebrew word translated “forgive” here in Jeremiah 31:34 represents the effect or result of atonement in the Levitical sacrifices. When an Israelite had sinned, he was to bring an animal without defect to the tabernacle, lay his hand its head, and slay it. The priest would then apply the blood to the altar, and Scripture tells us: “Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.” (Leviticus 4:26). We pointed out there's a connection here between forgiveness and atonement, specifically: Forgiveness happens through atonement. The way God forgives sins is through the blood of atonement. So far, so good. But now what we need to understand is what the author of Hebrews clarifies for us when he writes that “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins,” (10:4). In other words: The atonement that forgives sins was never wrought through the blood of bulls and goats. Why not? He tells us again: “For the Law . . . has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things. . .” (Hebrews 10:1).

Here's what Scripture's telling us: The atonement wrought in the old covenant with the blood of bulls and goats was only a shadow of the real atonement God would accomplish for us in Jesus. And that's why there was a sense in which it could never really forgive sins. It was only a picture of atonement; not the real thing. It's almost as if all the sacrifices of the old covenant were like God writing a check. When you write a check, you're promising to make payment—but you have to actually have money in the bank to cover the amount. Or think of a credit card: Under the old covenant, God's people had been forgiven—but they were forgiven on credit. For centuries, they had tallied up a massive amount of sin-debt, putting it on credit, as it were, all the while knowing that “one day the bill will have to be settled.” Well, if the old covenant was about God promising to pay for our sins, the new covenant is God actually making that payment. This is what the Lord meant when He said through the prophet Zechariah: “behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch. . . and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” (3:8-9). And it's for this reason that the author of Hebrews tells us: “but now once at the consummation of the ages [Christ] has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” This is how the forgiveness of sins would be something that's “new” in the new covenant.

This is indeed how the author of Hebrews clearly interprets the “newness” of forgiveness in Jeremiah 31:34, for he himself quotes Jeremiah 31:34 twice (in 8:12 and 10:17), and comes to this same conclusion as he exposit Jeremiah 31:34 especially in 10:1-18. Roberts notes: “God here promises . . . to be propitious to His people in another manner, and more perfectly, than of old.” (p141). And again: “The renewed sacrifices were a renewed accusation. . . In the old covenant sins were remembered again every year; but in this new covenant their sins should be remembered no more. . .” (p144). And later: “That remission of sins under the old covenant. . . did not in essence, substance and kind differ from remission under the new covenant. Remission of sins was essentially, substantially and specifically one and the same under the new covenant and the old. . . As they who lived in the days of Christ, when He was crucified, had remission of sins by faith in Christ then present, so they who lived before Christ was manifested, had remission of sins by faith in Christ, then future, and promised; and we who live since Christ is exalted at God's right-hand, have remission of sins in Christ, now past. . . [Yet] Remission of sins under the new covenant (though substantially the same, yet) accidentally differs from, and excels the remission of sins which was under the Old Testament. . . in diverse regards.” (Roberts, pp1481-83). Here, Roberts uses the word “accidentally” to mean that the difference between the old covenant and the new isn't one of substance/essence but of administration/form. Palmer Robertson explains Jeremiah 31:34, asking: “But how can the prophet make so much of the forgiveness of sins as an integral aspect of the new covenant? Was not elaborate provision made under the Mosaic covenant for the forgiveness of sins? . . . In what sense may Jeremiah suggest that the unique foundational principle of the new covenant will be the forgiveness of sins? In response to this very legitimate question, it may be indicated that it is just the elaborateness of the old covenant provision for forgiveness that makes understandable Jeremiah's emphasis on the uniqueness of forgiveness under the new covenant. The constant renewal of sacrifices for sins under the old covenant gave clear indication of the fact that sin actually was not removed, but only was passed over. If the sacrifice of the day of atonement actually had established a person once and for all as righteous in the sight of God, why then was the ceremony repeated annually? The blood of bulls and goats inherently had no power to remove sin in the framework of God's just administration of the world. The provisions of the old covenant, founded on such animal sacrifices, could not effect the actual removal of transgressions. Jeremiah anticipates the day in which the actual shall replace the typical. Instead of having animal sacrifices merely represent the possibility of a substitutionary death in the place of the sinner, Jeremiah sees the day in which sins actually will be forgiven, never to be remembered again. The continual offering of sacrifice to remove sin not only provided a symbolical representation of the possibility of substitution. It also inevitably functioned as a very real reminder that sins had not yet been forgiven. By saying that sins would be remembered no more, Jeremiah anticipates the end of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. . . That forgiveness of sins which was foreshadowed under the old covenant shall find consummate reality in the new.” (pp283, 286). Williams says: “We can liken this to writing a check. A check is a promise of payment, but there must be money in the bank to cover the check in order for
God wrote His Law on the hearts of His Old Testament people. There's no denying it. In fact, the Lord engraved His Law so deeply in the hearts of men such as David, that we can rightfully wonder if it's true to say God's Law is written in our hearts to a greater degree! But though many of God's people in the old covenant had God's Law written on their hearts, many more did not. Even going back to the day that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt, the people of God were characterized as "a perverse and crooked generation" (Deuteronomy 32:5). And even up to the brink of the exile, we still find the Lord protesting that "all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart." (Jeremiah 9:26). Though it was true there were many in the old covenant who had embraced the gospel from the heart, it seems this was the exception, rather than the rule. Though many in the old covenant knew the Lord—many more remained unchanged.

And this is what Jeremiah is saying would be different in the new covenant. The contrast he's making isn't absolute—it's comparative. Jeremiah's not saying God never wrote His Law on the hearts of His old covenant people. He's saying that whereas God's people in the old covenant were characterized as having uncircumcised hearts; God's new covenant people would now be characterized as a people who know the Lord. Whereas in the old covenant, there were comparatively few who were changed by the gospel; now in the new covenant, we wonder if any will be left unchanged. Whereas it seems to have been the relative minority that embraced Christ under the old covenant, the Lord would now apply His Word to the hearts of His people on a much greater scale. So again, it's not that God had never written His Law on the hearts of His people; He had. And it's not that there were never times when God poured out His Spirit on His people in remarkable ways; there were. But the comparison is between the old and new covenants in general: Scripture is contrasting the two dispensations on the whole; and the point is that whereas the old covenant was characterized by the writing of God's Word externally on stone, the new covenant would be characterized by the writing of God's Word internally on the hearts of His people. The same gospel was preached (Hebrews 4:2); but in the new covenant it will have a much greater effect; and it's precisely this effect that will be "new" in the new covenant.43

### B) INWARD CHANGE: God wrote His Law on the hearts of His Old Testament people. There's no denying it. In fact, the Lord engraved His Law so deeply in the hearts of men such as David, that we can rightfully wonder if it's true to say God's Law is written in our hearts to a greater degree! But though many of God's people in the old covenant had God's Law written on their hearts, many more did not. Even going back to the day that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt, the people of God were characterized as "a perverse and crooked generation" (Deuteronomy 32:5). And even up to the brink of the exile, we still find the Lord protesting that "all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart." (Jeremiah 9:26). Though it was true there were many in the old covenant who had embraced the gospel from the heart, it seems this was the exception, rather than the rule. Though many in the old covenant knew the Lord—many more remained unchanged.

And this is what Jeremiah is saying would be different in the new covenant. The contrast he's making isn't absolute—it's comparative. Jeremiah's not saying God never wrote His Law on the hearts of His old covenant people. He's saying that whereas God's people in the old covenant were characterized as having uncircumcised hearts; God's new covenant people would now be characterized as a people who know the Lord. Whereas in the old covenant, there were comparatively few who were changed by the gospel; now in the new covenant, we wonder if any will be left unchanged. Whereas it seems to have been the relative minority that embraced Christ under the old covenant, the Lord would now apply His Word to the hearts of His people on a much greater scale. So again, it's not that God had never written His Law on the hearts of His people; He had. And it's not that there were never times when God poured out His Spirit on His people in remarkable ways; there were. But the comparison is between the old and new covenants in general: Scripture is contrasting the two dispensations on the whole; and the point is that whereas the old covenant was characterized by the writing of God's Word externally on stone, the new covenant would be characterized by the writing of God's Word internally on the hearts of His people. The same gospel was preached (Hebrews 4:2); but in the new covenant it will have a much greater effect; and it's precisely this effect that will be "new" in the new covenant.43
2. The SECOND Question: What are the things that are old in the new covenant?

This passage in Jeremiah 31 is incredibly rich; but it's also easy to misunderstand. It's such a familiar section of Scripture that we tend to assume we know what it means without actually thinking through it. But if we want to understand this passage on the new covenant, we need to pay close attention to what Jeremiah is saying—and to what he's not saying. In particular, if we want to understand the new covenant, we need to begin by taking note of all the things in this covenant that aren't new. The best way to understand Jeremiah 31 is by asking: What are the things in the new covenant that are old?

A) The ESSENCE of the Covenant: For some of us, when we read through Jeremiah 31, we tend to automatically assume that the contrast Jeremiah's making is that of Law and gospel. It's a no-brainer! What's the difference? The old covenant was a covenant of Law, but the new covenant is about the gospel. But look at the text. Notice, first of all, that it's actually the old covenant that's associated with redemption. When the Lord refers back to the old covenant, He describes it as "the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (verse 32). Now, the old covenant was formally inaugurated after God had brought His people out of the land of Egypt; with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. But here, when the Lord refers back to the old covenant, He doesn't even mention Sinai. Instead, the Lord traces the old covenant back to the redemption He wrought for His people when He delivered them from Egypt. Isn't that amazing? It's the old covenant, not the new, that's being associated with redemption. And notice, secondly, that it's actually the new covenant, not the old, that's associated with the Law. It's of the new covenant that the Lord declares: "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it..." (verse 33). We automatically think of the old covenant as being the covenant of Law. But here in this passage, it's the new covenant that's being identified with the Law; not the old. So then, Jeremiah's not telling us that whereas the old covenant was a covenant of Law, the new covenant would be about redemption and the gospel. No, the old covenant was just as much about redemption, and the new covenant is just as much about the Law. But in the new covenant, that same Law would be written in a different place.44

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44 Palmer Robertson notes how it's the old covenant that's associated with redemption: "Interestingly, in contrasting the new covenant with the old in Jeremiah 31:32, the prophet does not refer specifically to the formal inauguration of the covenant that occurred at Sinai. Instead, he refers to the covenant established on the day in which the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt." (Robertson, p280). And again: "the 'old' covenant with which the 'new' covenant is being set in contrast was a redemptive covenant. Jeremiah mentions specifically that this covenant was established on the day that God redeemed Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. This old covenant cannot be characterized simplistically as a legalistic works-righteousness covenant. But here, when the Lord refers back to the old covenant, He describes it as "the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt." (p282). As for how the Law continues to be upheld in the new covenant, Roberts notes: "The Law which God promises here to write in their hearts, is God's Moral Law formerly written upon tables of stone..." So that Jesus Christ, and the moral law are not (as some weakly imagine), inconsistent, incompatible and irreconcilable; but most consistent, suitable and sweetly agreeable one to another... [Hence] God's Moral Law is not abolished, but established by His new covenant. Why? Because God's writing of His Laws in the hearts of His federates, is a primary promise, yea the very first article of His new covenant: 'I will give My Laws into their mind, and write them in heart hearts.' Had God intended by His new covenant to have abolished His Moral Law, He would not have new written it, but utterly have expunged it. But in that God undertakes to write His Laws again, and to write them more durably and indelibly than they were written before, not in the long-lasting tables of stone, but in the everlasting tables of mind and heart, hereby He eminently confirms and establishes the Moral Law, as that which shall never be reversed or repealed till the end of this world..." (pp1392-93). Roberts further elaborates: "The Lord has taken care to write His Moral Law, for the perpetuating thereof, three several ways, [namely] 1) Naturally, in the heart of Adam before his fall, under the Covenant of Nature, or of Works. 2) Literally, upon tables of stone, and that twice under the old covenant given at Mount Sinai. 3) Spiritually and most efficaciously, upon the spiritual fleshly tables of His people's minds and hearts, under the new covenant. The first writing was perfect, but not durable. The second
We know there's a contrast between the old and new covenants. That's the easy part. God is going to make a new covenant with the house of Israel that is not like the covenant He made with them when He brought them out of Egypt. The question is: What's the nature of this contrast? And what we just discovered is that the contrast Jeremiah's making is not one of Law and gospel. Jeremiah's not saying the old covenant was about Law, but the new covenant is about redemption and the gospel. Because again, the covenant that's most associated with Law here in Jeremiah 31 is actually the new covenant; not the old. And the covenant most associated with redemption is actually the old covenant; not the new. The truth is, both the old and new covenants are established upon redemption and yet branded with the eternal will of God as expressed in His Law. They're both crafted after the same pattern: In the old covenant, God redeemed His people, then gave His redeemed people His Law. It's the same thing in the new covenant. Indeed, there's both Law and gospel in both the old and new covenants; and they function in exactly the same way. So, when we read in verse 32 that God's people broke the old covenant, we're not to think the meaning is that they broke the Law. It's not that the old covenant with Israel was a strict arrangement of Law, wherein the Lord was like a task-master—but that now He enters into a new covenant with us based upon grace and redemption. No, God wasn't a task-master to Israel in the old covenant; He was “a husband to them” (verse 32). The covenant Israel broke was a covenant of gospel mercies. So, when Jeremiah tells us they broke the covenant, he's not saying they broke the Law—but that they failed to embrace the covenant from the heart, by faith. And this is what will be different in the new covenant, for God will now write His Law on their hearts. So then, it's not that the old covenant differed from the new in its essence; the way they differed was in their effect.\(^{45}\)

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was complete, but ineffectual. The third is entire, efficacious, and permanent.” (p1394). And again: The first writing was not continuing, but quickly obliterated by the fall; the second writing was not effectual, but only discovered their sin and duty. . . The third writing is both effectual and continuing. . .So that this last inscription of God's Laws in the minds and hearts of the new covenant federates, does far excel all that went before.” (pp1374). John Murray says: “the new covenant is not indifferent to law. It is not contrasted with the old because the old had law and the new has not. The superiority of the new does not consist in the abrogation of that law but in its being brought into more intimate relation to us and more effective fulfillment in us; ‘I will put my laws into their mind, and upon their hearts will I write them’ (Hebrews 8:10).” (Covenant of Grace). And Robertson clarifies: “Indeed, God shall write his will on the fleshly tablets of the heart, in contrast with the older engraving of his law on stone tablets. But it will be essentially the same law of God that will be the substance of this engraving.” (pp281-82).

\(^{45}\) Calvin notes of 31:33, I will put My Law: “By these words he confirms what we have said, that the newness, which he before mentioned, was not so as to the substance, but as to the form only; for God does not say here, 'I will give you another Law,' but 'I will write my Law,' that is, the same Law, which had formerly been delivered to the fathers. He then does not promise anything different as to the essence of the doctrine, but he makes the difference to be in the form only.” (on Jeremiah 31:33). Francis Roberts says: “Negatively, He declares what manner of covenant this new covenant should not be, [namely] not such a covenant as was the Sinai covenant, that old covenant: ‘not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, . . .’ (Hebrews 8:9). This new covenant should not be according to that covenant. . .In all this negative the Holy Ghost seems to have respect to the form and administration, . . not to the matter and substance of the new covenant, . . .” (pp1340-41). And again: “Before the time of this new covenant there was some kind and manner of God's writing His Laws in the hearts of His people. . .David himself was a man after God's own heart and himself confesses: 'I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy Law is within my heart,' (Hebrew: 'in the midst of my bowels', Psalm 40:8). . .Notwithstanding all this, thus granted, till the time of this new covenant God's Laws were not so written in His people's hearts, as since they have been. . .The efficacy of former administrations, was very weak and small, in comparison of this new covenant administration which is great and powerful. Under those, the Holy Spirit was but as it were sparingly sprinkled upon them. . .But under this, the Holy Spirit is plentifully poured forth as in streams and rivers upon them, and into them... Hence, the Spirit is said 'not to be given, till Christ was glorified' (John 7:39); not as if it had not been given at all; but because it was bestowed so sparingly and slenderly, in comparison to what is now, that it might seem not to be given at all.” (Roberts, pp383-86). And: “The new covenant agrees with the old in matter and substance, although they differ in manner and circumstance. For, 1) The matter and substance of them both, is God's Moral Law. . .2) The manner and circumstance of writing this Moral Law by God is very different under these two covenants. In the old covenant God wrote it in tables of stone; in the new covenant He writes in the fleshly tables of mind and heart. . .In the old covenant it was written more imperfectly, weakly, literally, ineffectually; though the people's hearts had some impression thereof upon them, yet they remained very stony, stubborn, untractable notwithstanding; but in the new covenant it is written more perfectly, strongly, spiritually, effectually, . . .” (Roberts, pp1393-94). And Robertson says: “While the new covenant will be at radical variance with the old covenant with respect to its effectiveness in accomplishing its goal, the substance of the two covenants in terms of their redemptive intention is identical.” (Christ of the Covenants, p282).
B) The EXTENT of the Covenant: Some take the contrast Jeremiah's making in a different way; as being that of corporate versus individual. What's the difference between the old and new covenants? The old covenant was made with Israel as a corporate whole; it was established with the entire nation collectively; and as a result, it was also mixed. Since it was established with the whole nation, the old covenant was made up of both believers and unbelievers. But this is what would be different with the new covenant, for in the new covenant, “they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (verse 34). So, this is how others understand Jeremiah's contrast: Whereas the old covenant extended to a mixed multitude, the new covenant is limited to elect believers. And at first glance, this may seem to be what Jeremiah is saying. But notice, first of all, that this passage explicitly tells us that the new covenant is a corporate covenant. In fact, the only covenant in Jeremiah 31 that is explicitly corporate is the new covenant; for it's the new covenant—not the old—that's said to be made “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. . .” (verse 31; cf. v33). This is corporate language. So we can't say that whereas the Lord had established the old covenant with His people collectively, the new covenant is now only made with individuals. No, the new covenant is no less corporate than the old. And notice, secondly, that the new covenant is no less mixed than the old. No one would argue that this passage about the new covenant properly begins in verse 27. And in the opening verses of 27-29, we find the Lord describing the abundance of blessing that would rest upon His people in the days of the new covenant. But in the same breathe, the Lord also says in verse 30: “But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge.” The Lord is using a metaphor here to convey the truth that He will judge His people individually in the new covenant. But as He does so, we learn something extremely important: Even in the new covenant church, there will be mixed in among God's people those who yet eat the sour grapes—and die for their iniquity.46

If this is all true, how are we to understand verse 34, where the Lord tells us that in the new covenant, “they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. . .”? Well, even in the phrase being used here, Scripture itself is giving us a clue. This isn't the only place where Jeremiah uses this phrase, “from the least of them to the greatest of them”; and it's in discovering how the prophet uses this idiom elsewhere that we come to understand what he means as he uses it here. Along with using this phrase in 31:34, Jeremiah also uses this same idiom in two other places: Speaking of the people of Judah, Jeremiah says in 6:13, “For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for gain, and from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely.” And again, the Lord declares to Jeremiah in 8:10: “Therefore I will give their wives to others, their fields to new owners; because from the least even to the greatest everyone is greedy for gain; from the prophet even to the priest everyone practices deceit.” Now, when we see this same idiom used in Jeremiah 6:13 and 8:10

46 We could say that Jeremiah's broadest context in speaking of the new covenant extends to the entirety of chapters 30-31. As Robertson notes: “The theme binding together the prophecies of Jeremiah 30 and 31 is indicated plainly in the first 3 verses of chapter 30. The prophet is told to write the words the Lord has spoken to him in a book, for the Lord would restore the fortunes of his people. The two chapters [Jeremiah 30-31] are bound together not only by their common theme, but also by a common introductory phrase: 'For behold, days are coming, says Yahweh. . .’” (cf. Jeremiah 30:3; 31:27, 31, 38). (Robertson, p279). In that sense, we might say that the new covenant passage of Jeremiah properly begins with chapter 30. But in the immediate context of 31:31-34, we can't be faithful to the text without beginning with verse 27. Not only is vv27-30 just before vv31-34, and not only does vv27-30 focus on the same subject and theme of vv31-34, but Scripture itself intentionally binds them together with the same opening phrase: "Behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord. . .” On the danger of taking the corporate element out of the new covenant, Robertson says: “It is rather tempting to set the individualistic dimension of this covenant over against a corporate concept, and to find the distinctiveness of the new covenant in this specific area. . .But this passage of Jeremiah should not be cited to prove the substitution of the individual for the people of God as a whole in the new covenant. Jeremiah does not set a personal faith-relationship in the new covenant in opposition to a corporate relationship. He maintains both of these features with equal emphasis. The prophet explicitly states that the new covenant shall be made corporately. Not just with individuals, but fully in accord with the whole pattern of God's dealing with his people throughout redemptive history, this new covenant shall be made 'with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah' (Jeremiah 31:31). . .If the new covenant is being fulfilled today, it should be expected that both the corporate and the individualistic elements currently are finding realization. The corporate dimension which played such a vital role in God's old covenant dealings with his people must not be omitted from the present realities of the new covenant.” (pp268-87). The idiom of verse 29 was evidently used by the Jews in or before the exile, and carried the meaning of something like: “We're being punished now because of the accumulated sins of our fathers.” In other words: They're the ones who sinned but we're being punished. Engaging in a sinful lifestyle is akin to "eating the sour grapes" and reaping the punishment of that lifestyle akin to having one's teeth “set on edge.” These Jews were just as much to blame as their ancestors, but they were blaming their punishment on their fathers, hypocritically and falsely protesting their own innocence. God does not affirm this statement as in any way having been true; but only alludes to it being what the Jews had said, declaring this would no longer be repeated in the new covenant.
to describe the wickedness of the people, it becomes much clearer what it means and what it doesn't mean. Surely Jeremiah isn't saying there wasn't a single person who knew the Lord. Surely Jeremiah isn't telling us that each and every individual in Judah, without exception, had turned away from God. This can't be true; because we know that—at the very least—Jeremiah himself, along with Baruch the scribe as well as a faithful man named Ebed-melech knew and trusted the Lord (cf. 39:13-18; 45:1-3). No, when Jeremiah declares that God's people in the old covenant had turned away from Him “from the least even to the greatest”: he's making a relative contrast in absolute terms. Jeremiah's not saying that every single person without exception had turned away from the Lord; he's rather characterizing the vast majority of them. The idiom is meant to generalize the people as a whole, collectively. And this is exactly what Jeremiah is saying in 31:34 about the new covenant: He's not telling us there were no individuals who knew God in the old covenant, nor that every individual would know Him in the new. But that, whereas on the whole, God's people had turned away from Him in the old covenant, they will know Him now in the new. It's not the extent of the covenant that will differ; but the effect.47

### The Difference Between the Old and New Covenants

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<td>God's people will largely embrace it</td>
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3. The THIRD Question: **So what is it that's new about the new covenant?**

So far, we've been focusing mainly on what isn't new about the new covenant. And what we saw, first of all, is that the benefits of the new covenant aren't something that are new; for the Lord doesn't just forgive sin and change His people in the new covenant. God forgave His people and changed them in the old covenant as well. Neither is the content of the new covenant anything new, since both the

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47 We referenced Jeremiah 6:13 and 8:10; but another passage where we see the same principle is Jeremiah 44:11-14, 27-28. Here, the Lord is addressing the people through Jeremiah; and though He has clearly commanded them not to flee to Egypt (in order to escape from the hand of the Babylonians, as their captivity was imminent), He knows many of them will not listen, but will flee to Egypt regardless, in order to seek safety and refuge in Pharaoh (rather than in the Lord). And so, as the Lord addresses them through Jeremiah, He tells them: “Behold, I am going to set My face against you for woe, even to cut off all Judah. And I will take away the remnant of Judah who have set their mind on entering the land of Egypt to reside there, and they will all meet their end in the land of Egypt; they will fall by the sword and meet their end by famine. Both small and great will die by the sword and famine... So there will be no refugees or survivors for the remnant of Judah who have entered the land of Egypt to reside there and then to return to the land of Judah, to which they are longing to return and live; for none will return except a few refugees.” (44:11-14). Notice how emphatically the Lord declares over and over again in this passage that they will all be cut off and perish. And yet look how the Lord qualifies it at the end: “…except a few refugees.” And the same truth is repeated once again in 44:27-28: “Behold, I am watching over them for harm and not for good, and all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt will meet their end by the sword and by famine until they are completely gone. Those who escape the sword will return out of the land of Egypt to the land of Judah few in number...” So in both passages, the Lord declares that all will perish. But then immediately we're told that “all” doesn't mean every single individual, for there would still be a few who would escape. And so, “all” and “both small and great” here in Jeremiah 44 is clearly meant to signify the great majority, rather than every single individual. It's the same principle in Jeremiah 31:34: Jeremiah's not saying that it was a mixed multitude in the old covenant but that in the new every single individual among God's people will know Him. That's not a responsible way to interpret Jeremiah's own usage of the phrase “from the least of them to the greatest of them” (cf. again 6:13 and 8:10). No, what Jeremiah's saying is that in the new covenant, the tables would be turned. This is also confirmed by what we read in 31:28, where we're told that in the old covenant, the Lord “watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to overthrow, to destroy and to bring disaster...” God didn't always do this in the old covenant (cf. 1:10), but on the whole. And in the same way, the Lord will not only build up and plant in the new covenant, but on the whole, for Revelation 2-3 teaches us that He also sees fit at times to pluck up new covenant churches when necessary; as also branches in the new covenant that bear no fruit He sees fit to cut off and throw into the fire (John 13:2-6). So here in verse 28, we see the same principle in relation to the old covenant, that we do in verse 31 with the new: This isn't an absolute contrast but a comparative one. There were both believers and unbelievers in the old covenant, and there will be unbelievers also mixed in with the new covenant church (v30). But in the days of the new covenant, God will cause those who know Him to be the many rather than the few. What we're guarding against in this section is the notion that in the new covenant, God has abolished the distinction between the visible and invisible church. Some hold to the view that the old covenant church was made up of both true believers (the invisible church) as well as empty professors (included in the visible church but not part of the invisible church), but that in the new covenant, the only members of the church are true believers. We know simply from experience this isn't true, but some are confused about what else Jeremiah could be saying here; and this is why an understanding of this text is so crucial. The truth is, the Lord has in no way done away with the distinction between the visible and invisible church in the new covenant. Again, Jeremiah's not saying that whereas the old covenant church was made up of a mixed multitude, the church of the new covenant would be limited only to elect believers; the contrast doesn't have to do with the extent of the covenant but it's effect.
old covenant and the new are comprised of both the Law and the gospel. It's not as though the Law is what was written in the old covenant, whereas the gospel will be written in the new—but that a new covenant would be made in which that same Law would be written, though in a different place. And lastly, it's not the extent of the new covenant; that's new, as if the old covenant extended corporately to a mixed multitude, but the new is just limited to elect believers. For even in the new covenant church there will be mixed in among God's people some who eat the sour grapes, and die for their iniquity. So, when Jeremiah contrasts the old and new covenants, he's not telling us the new would be different than the old because forgiveness would be new. Nor is he saying the new would be different because God writing His Law on the hearts of His people would be completely new. Jeremiah's not telling us the new would be different because now God will only deal with individual believers as opposed to dealing with His people collectively, as a whole. And, just in case you may be wondering, Jeremiah's not telling us the new would be different because now we won't need teachers anymore (v34); for not only has the Lord clearly appointed some as pastors and teachers in the new covenant church (Ephesians 4:11-12), but we're also called to teach one another (Colossians 3:16).  

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48 On the meaning of verse 34 about teaching, Roberts notes: “The word not here, is not a simple and absolute negative, as if hereby the new covenant excluded all human teaching; for that is most repugnant to new covenant doctrine... But it is rather a comparative, importation, that the former teaching under the old covenant should be comparatively as no teaching at all...” (Roberts, p1543). And again, Roberts writes: “Hereby God intimates, that under His old covenant, His people were taught to know Him, by human instruction for the most part, they had comparatively very little of His immediate divine instruction, because His Spirit was very sparingly given till Christ's glorification. But under His new covenant, the knowledge which His federates should have of God should be more divine: God himself would more immediately teach them; All their children should be taught of God.' (Isaiah 34:13 with John 6:43). Not that God ever intended by this promise to lay aside all human teaching, public or private, under His new covenant; for God commands and calls for such teaching frequently and vehemently now under His new covenant administration: Ministers must teach the Church and people of God, publicly (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 4:1-5). Parents must teach their children, and Christians must teach one another, privately (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 3:13). But under the new covenant His people should have more of the Spirit of God poured forth upon them, and more teaching immediately from God, than under the old covenant. Moses face was veiled... But now under the new covenant...the veil is done away...and we all with unveiled open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image... Notable is that of our Savior's, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things that ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them’ (Luke 10:23-24). Hereby (as Clavin observes) Christ intimates, that God has shined out more fully by the doctrine of the gospel than formerly. In like sort Christ says, He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John [the] Baptist' (Matthew 11:1), who yet excelled all the Prophets. John [the] Baptist in his office was more excellent than all the Prophets, and surpassed them in understanding, and yet says Christ, 'the least professor and witness of the gospel is greater than he.' This is not only referred to their persons, nor ought only to be restrained to them, but rather to the clear and plain manner of teaching which is found in the gospel. Now we have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God' (1 Corinthians 2:12). Under the old covenant the federates were as children under age (Galatians 4:1-4); brought up and instructed in rudiments and first elements of divine doctrine,... they had but an imperfect and child-like understanding of God and divine things; they understood as children; they were but alphabetarians in knowledge,... But under the new covenant the federates are as grown men come to maturity, put up to a higher form and harder lesson, having a more ripe and complete knowledge of God. They have such an anointing as teaches them all things (1 John 2:20,27).” (Roberts, pp140-47). And Calvin also observes of Jeremiah 31:34: “the Prophet does not wholly deny that they would teach one another, but his words are these, They shall not teach, saying, Know the Lord; as though he had said, Ignorance shall not as heretofore so possess the minds of men as not to know who God is.” (Calvin on Hebrews 8:11). And Calvin again notes: “Here is mentioned another difference between the old and the new covenant, even that God, who had obscurely manifested himself under the Law, would send forth a fuller light, so that the knowledge of Him would be commonly enjoyed. But He hyperbolically extols this favor, when He says that no one would have need of a teacher or instructor, as everyone would have himself sufficient knowledge. We therefore consider that the object of the Prophet is mainly to show, that so great would be the light of the gospel, that it would be clearly evident, that God under it deals more bountifully with His people, because its truth shines forth as the sun at noon-day. The same thing Isaiah promises, when he says that all would become the disciples of God (Isaiah 34:13). This was indeed the case also under the Law, though God gave then but a small taste of heavenly doctrine; but at the coming of Christ He unfolded the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so that under the gospel there is the perfection of what had been begun; for we know that the ancient people were like children, and hence God kept them in the rudiments of knowledge; now, as we are grown up, he favors us with a fuller doctrine, and he comes, as it were, nearer to us.” (Calvin on Jeremiah 31:34). Ligon Duncan draws out the meaning of Jeremiah 31:34 from 1 John 2:26-27, as he writes: “What is one of the fundamental differences, John says, between those Christians who have continued to abide in the Apostolic teaching and those who have left the teaching of the Church to go back to this Gnostic era? Those who remain are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and hence, taught of the Lord. Now, what is he picking up on? Jeremiah's promise that from the least of them to the greatest, they will not need a teacher to teach them the law of God, it will have been written on their hearts by God. Himself. Now does that mean that John doesn't need to teach them anything? No, he wouldn't have written the book, if he hadn't had to do that. He is speaking at a much more fundamental level, of the spirit of discernment which is gained only by those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.” (Duncan).
God forgave His people in the old covenant. But the newness has to do with how, and in what way He does so now in the new covenant. For again, whereas in the old covenant there was a promise of forgiveness—it's the new covenant that provides the actual payment. The Lord forgave His people in the old covenant, but He did so on credit. The bulls and goats, whose blood was shed under the old covenant, only had value in that they pointed forward to Christ. They were only shadows—but He is the substance. In the same way, God wrote His Law on the hearts of His people in the old covenant. But the newness has to do with how, and to what degree He does so now in the new covenant. For though the Lord did this in the old covenant, it was on a much different scale, and to a much smaller degree. For under the old covenant, it was the few that were truly changed—but it's the many that will embrace the covenant from the heart in the new. And whereas the Lord wrote His Law in the hearts of His old covenant people, but in a smaller proportion—He will now do so on a much greater scale.

So, what is it that's new about the new covenant? As other theologians have said, it's not the nature of the new covenant that's different from the old—but it's administration. It's not the essence of the new covenant that's being contrasted with the old—but it's form. It's the same Covenant of Grace. The old covenant is no less about Jesus and the gospel than the new. But in the new covenant, Jesus and His gospel are set forth with such clarity, that the knowledge of God among His new covenant people will almost be to such a degree that they won't need any teaching—in comparison with the old. Indeed, if the clarity of gospel knowledge in the old covenant was as a candle—it will be like the sun in the new. And in the new covenant, the forgiveness that Jesus ushers in through the blood that He shed on the cross is as different from the old covenant as a picture is to reality, or as a shadow is to the substance. Indeed, all the pictures and shadows of the old covenant are worthless on their own, for though they promised forgiveness—they never actually purchased it. Lastly, in the new covenant, Jesus now writes His Law in the hearts of His people and pours out His Spirit upon them in such an unprecedented measure and to such a greater degree that it's incomparable with how He did so in the old covenant. Indeed, the old covenant included God's Law written internally on hearts; and the new covenant also includes God's Law written externally on the pages of our Bibles—but the difference is that whereas so few were changed in the old that it was marked and characterized by the external writing on stone, now so many are being changed in the new that it is marked and characterized by the internal writing on our hearts. Again, it's the same Covenant of Grace. The new covenant doesn't differ from the old in its nature or essence. The way it differs is in how, and in what way and degree it's administered.49

49 Francis Roberts summarizes the differences between the old and new covenants in a succinct way when he writes: “These new covenant promises are so expressed, as virtually to contain in them, the agreement and difference between the old and new covenant, yea the preeminences of the new above the old. This agreement, difference, and preeminence may thus in brief be evidenced, from the words of the covenant: I. The agreement between the old and new covenant, for substance of them, is expressed in two particulars especially, [namely] 1) In the sum and glorious abstract of the covenants: I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.’ This is the sum of both old and new covenant in express terms. 2) In the Laws of this covenant promised to be written in their hearts: ‘And I will give my Laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts.’ What Laws? Even the same Moral Laws which were given for a covenant to Israel at Mount Sinai, which was the old covenant. God does not say (as Calvin excellently observes), ‘I will give another Law’; but I will write my Law, [namely] the same which was anciently given to the fathers. . . II. The difference also between the old and new covenant is here purposely expressed, and this, more generally, and more particularly: 1) More generally, in those words, ‘I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.’ Here the Lord plainly declares in the general, that He would make a new covenant with them, which should be another manner of covenant, a very different covenant from that old covenant. 2) More particularly, He states this difference in three points expressly, as Calvin has very well noted: A) In the inscription of God's Laws: In both old and new covenant there is a writing of God's Laws; but, in the old covenant they were written in tables of stone, in this new covenant upon the fleshly tables of their mind and heart. That, was only a literal and ineffectual writing, that showed duty but gave no ability; this, is a spiritual and efficacious writing that affords ability for the required duty. B) In the instruction of the federates: In that old covenant they had mostly a human instruction, and that but in principles of the knowledge of the Lord; they were alphabetarians, children under age, capable only of elements and rudiments. But under this new covenant the generality of the federates have a more than human, even a divine teaching promised them touching the Lord, they are come to age, shall be put up into a higher form, and have in sight into higher mysteries. C) In the ablation or taking away of sins: In the old covenant there were many sacrifices for expiation of sin which were repeated every year, every day, being unable to take away sin, but rather becoming renewed remembrances of sin, year by year, day by day; but in this new covenant, Christ by that one sacrifice of himself once offered, and never to be repeated, has purged away the sins of His elect forever, so that they shall need no more sacrifice for expiation, and that God will remember them no more. III. The preeminence of the new covenant also above the old, does stand in all those three points of difference fore-expressed; in all which this new covenant far excels.” (Francis Roberts, Mystery and Marrow, pp1365-66).
The New Covenant (Part 2)
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I. The Inauguration of the New Covenant

1. INTRODUCING the New Covenant: How do the Gospels Introduce Jesus?

When you’re introducing one friend to another, most of the time you try to give some context to the relationship: This is my friend Brett; he’s the one I roomed with in college. Or, this my friend Seth; we got to know each other really well at seminary. In a similar way, when we get to the gospels, each of the gospel writers are seeking to introduce us to Jesus; and as they do so, they’re also trying to give us some context, so that we might have a better understanding of whom it is they’re introducing us to.

Well, as each of the gospel writers introduces us to Jesus, the context they give us is God’s covenantal dealings throughout redemptive history; starting from the end, back to the beginning. Mark wrote his gospel before Matthew, Luke, or John; and he introduces Jesus by quoting some of the last words in the entire Old Testament: “Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way” (Mark 1:2). This is a quote from Malachi 3:1. And not only does Mark quote from Malachi; he also combines this with a quote from Isaiah: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.’” (Mark 1:3; cf. Isaiah 40:3). So, as Mark introduces us to Jesus, he quotes from both the first and the last of the prophetic books; and in doing so, gives us an important context: Mark’s gospel account about Jesus picks up right where the prophets had left off.

Matthew traces the roots of the new covenant a little further back. He begins writing his gospel in the first verse by introducing us to Jesus in this way: “The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” (Matthew 1:1). So then, the context Matthew gives us traces Jesus back from the prophets to David and Abraham; and in describing Him as the son of David and Abraham, Matthew is declaring that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Davidic and Abrahamic covenants.

Luke traces the ancestry of Jesus even further back, for in Luke’s genealogy, not only is Jesus the son of David and the son of Abraham, but also “the son of Adam” (Luke 3:38). Luke is identifying Jesus here with that descendant of Eve whom God had promised would crush the head of the serpent, all the way back in Genesis 3:15. This was the very first promise of the Covenant of Grace. Not only is Jesus the true fulfillment of the Davidic and Abrahamic covenants—but He’s also the second Adam.

John goes the furthest back as He introduces us to Jesus. In the opening sentence of his volume, he writes: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (1:1); going on to tell us: “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (v 14). Jesus isn’t only the son of David or the son of Abraham, or the seed of the woman from Genesis 3:15. He is God himself.

2. ASCERTAINING the New Covenant: When exactly does the New Covenant Begin?

The new covenant begins with Jesus. But one question that still arises is: When exactly is it that the new covenant begins? On the one hand, it seems that the new covenant must have begun with Jesus’ birth. But some Scriptures seem to tell us the new covenant didn’t properly begin until the preaching ministry of John and Jesus’ earthly ministry (Matthew 11:12-13; Luke 16:16); which was many years afterwards. Other Scriptures seem to convey that the new covenant wasn’t inaugurated until Christ’s death, for it wasn’t until the Last Supper that Jesus said: “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.” (Luke 22:20). But even after Jesus’ death and resurrection, it seems that the inauguration of the new covenant is still something yet to come, for Christ tells His disciples that

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1 The truths from this section are largely adapted from the new covenant chapter in Jonty Rhodes’ Covenants Made Simple. I’ve found this short book by Jonty Rhodes to be a very helpful introduction to understanding the covenants of Scripture.
the Holy Spirit will not come upon them until He ascends to His Father (John 16:7); and it's for this reason they are told to wait in Jerusalem until they're *clothed with power from on high* (Luke 24:49). So then: Did the new covenant properly begin with Jesus' birth? Or with His earthly ministry? Or was it not established until He poured out His Spirit at Pentecost? Thankfully, we don't have to pick one of these options over against the others. As one writer put it: “the kingdom of heaven did not directly and all at once attain to its full state of maturity, but by slow degrees acquired strength.” In other words, the new covenant wasn't established in a single moment of time, all at once; but, rather, it unfolded organically, beginning with the events surrounding Christ's birth and culminating with the sending forth of the Spirit at Pentecost. The inauguration of the new covenant was, in some ways, like *a mountain range with many peaks*. There are over fifty mountains in the Himalayas—but though each of these mountains has its own distinct name and its own distinct peak—they're all part of the same range. And it's the same principle with the inauguration of the new covenant: Each of these events has its own distinct place—but the new covenant includes them all.  

3. OVERVIEWING the New Covenant: *What Events Mark the Inauguration of the New Covenant?*

**A) The PREPARATION of the New Covenant:** Perhaps the first place to begin in considering the inauguration of the new covenant is the preparation that took place in and through the birth and life of John. In the days of Herod, king of Judea, an angel was sent to a priest named Zacharias with this message: “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. . .And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:13-17; cf. 1:76-77). The angel was harkening back to the last two verses of the entire Old Testament; where Malachi foretold that God would send “Elijah the prophet” before the coming of the Lord. The angel clarifies that it's not Elijah himself who would come again. But the Lord would raise up another prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah; and that prophet was John. This is why Christ said, “John himself is Elijah who was to come” (Matthew 11:14); and again, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him. . .” (Matthew 17:12). Just as Elijah was the forerunner for Elisha, so too, John would be the forerunner for the Messiah. And just as God raised up Samuel as the last of the judges to anoint David; so too, John came as the last of the prophets to usher in the coming of Christ. John's life and ministry was God's preparation for the new covenant.  

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2 John Ball says: “From the birth of Christ, the things foretold in the Old Testament pertaining to the constitution of the new, began to be fulfilled; and that first by his coming in the flesh, afterwards by his administration, and then by his death; by whose death the Old Testament was abolished, and the new did succeed in the room thereof. . .[and yet] properly the beginning of the new covenant is to be fetched from that time, wherein Christ has fulfilled all things, which were shadowed of him in the Law, or foretold in the Prophets, that is, after that Christ was corporally ascended into heaven, and had sent down the Holy Spirit in the visible shape of fiery tongues upon His Apostles, at the solemn feast of Pentecost. . .From this time properly the New Testament took its beginning.” (pp196-98). And Roberts notes: “The new covenant administration began, when the old covenant administration ended, and was abrogated. . .[and] the old covenant administration ended and was abrogated at and near upon the death of Jesus Christ. . .[Still,] when I fetch the date or beginning of the new covenant from the death of Christ, I understand the death of Jesus Christ . . .as comprising also his resurrection, ascension, session at the right hand of God, and his pouring forth his Spirit on the feast of Pentecost. . .” (pp1233-34). And again: “The term of the new covenant's beginning comprises in it three things; [namely], 1) the preparation to it, which was by the ministry of John [the] Baptist, of Jesus Christ and his disciples; 2) the dedication or sanction of it, which was properly by the death and blood of Jesus Christ, the great new covenant's sacrifice; [and] 3) the solemn publication of it, which was on the solemn feast-day of Pentecost. . .when the Holy Ghost fell upon the Apostles. . .” (Roberts, pp1233-34). And Witsius writes: “Some begin the New Testament from the birth of Christ, because of that expression of the apostle (Galatians 4:4), in which he asserts the fulness of time was come, when God sent his Son made of a woman; to which they add, that on that very day the angels proclaimed the Gospel concerning Christ was manifested (Luke 2:10-11); Others begin the New Testament from the year of Christ's preaching, alleging Mark 1:1, where the evangelist seems to refer the beginning of the Gospel to that year in which John and Christ began to preach, which is more clearly taught in that passage just cited from Luke 16:16; Others again place the beginning of the New Testament at the moment of Christ's death, upon the authority of the apostle, who says, that the New Testament was ratified by the death of Christ the testator (Hebrews 9:17). Some. . .on the day of Pentecost, or the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, on which the New was as it were sealed, and its law came out of Zion (Isaiah 2:3). But all these things are easily reconciled, if we allow some latitude to that fulness of time, in which the New succeeded the Old Testament. . .the kingdom of heaven did not directly and all at once attain to its full state of maturity, but by slow degrees acquired strength” (V1, pp315-16).

3 What do we make of the fact that John himself denies he is Elijah when he is asked by the Jews in John 1:21? Calvin says:
B) The INCARNATION of the New Covenant: But if John’s birth was the preparation for the new covenant, then the birth of Christ embodies its formal inauguration. Indeed, if there’s one event that signifies the inauguration of the new covenant, surely it’s the incarnation. So it’s no surprise that the Prophets often associated the birth of the Messiah with the beginning of the new covenant age. This is precisely what the prophet Micah is saying when he writes that God would give His people over to their enemies “until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child” (5:3). Micah’s telling us that the days of the new covenant would begin with the birth of Christ. And Paul seems to be saying the same thing when he contrasts the old and new covenants in Galatians. For after telling us that we were, in some respects, “held in bondage” under the old covenant, Paul describes the inauguration of the new covenant in this way: “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law. . .” (4:4). For Paul, “the fullness of the time” is a reference to the new covenant; and the new covenant dawned upon the world when God sent forth His Son. Indeed, it was in contemplating the birth of the Messiah that Zacharias lifted up his voice and said: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant—as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets. . .to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father. . .” (Luke 1:68-74). All the old covenant promises find their fulfillment in the Messiah’s birth.

C) The PUBLICATION of the New Covenant: Though in some respects, the new covenant seems to have been inaugurated with the birth of Christ, in other respects it seems to have been more fully inaugurated with the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. Jesus himself says in Luke 16:16: “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.” John lived and ministered in a unique period of redemptive history; sometimes it seems his ministry belongs to the end of the old covenant; other times it seems to belong to the beginning of the new (cf. Matthew 11:11-13). It’s almost as if he stood with one leg on each side. But if John’s ministry was in-between the two different administrations, the ministry of Christ ushered in the beginning of the new covenant age. Jesus tells us that since the time of John, “the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached. . .” But what is He saying? Wasn’t the gospel preached in the old covenant as well? It was. But not with the same clarity; not with the same effect; and not yet in such a way that the substance had come to replace the signs and shadows. In other words, Jesus is telling us that ever since the time of John, the preaching of the new covenant began dawning upon the world. And it’s this preaching that Christ inaugurated at the commencement of His earthly ministry. When Jesus came, declaring, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15), He was announcing the old covenant administration was passing away—and the new covenant age had already begun to bloom. The fullness of time had come; the old was giving way to the new. In a very real sense, the new covenant was inaugurated with Jesus’ public ministry.\(^4\)

*But the question is founded on a false opinion which they had long held; for, holding the opinion that the soul of a man departs out of one body into another, when the Prophet Malachi announced that Elijah would be sent, they imagined that the same Elijah, who lived under the reign of king Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) was to come. It is therefore a just and true reply which John makes, that he is not Elijah; for he speaks according to the opinion which they attached to the words; but Christ, giving the true interpretation of the Prophet, affirms that John is Elijah (Matthew 11:14; Mark 9:13).* (Commentary on John 1:21).

\(^4\) Calvin notes: “John stands between the Law and the Gospel, holding an intermediate office allied to both. For though he gave a summary of the Gospel when he pronounced Christ to be ‘the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,’ yet, inasmuch as he did not unfold the incomparable power and glory which shone forth in his resurrection, Christ says that he was
D) The DEDICATION of the New Covenant: Just like the Himalayas, there are many peaks in the inauguration of the new covenant. But if the highest peak of the Himalayan range is Mount Everest, the greatest and most important event in the inauguration of the new covenant is the death of Christ. On the night in which He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus sat to eat the Passover with His disciples; and after breaking the bread, Jesus took a cup; and after giving thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:27-28). There are at least three things that we can take away from this passage:

1) First, Jesus is making it clear that His blood is the INAUGURATION of the new covenant. We know this because of the context. When He utters these words, Jesus is pointing us back to another passage of Scripture. In Exodus 24:8, after God had declared His covenant to Israel, we’re told that Moses took some of the blood of the calves and the goats, and “sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you.’” And what was happening in Exodus 24:8? Scripture tells us later this was the inauguration of the old covenant (Hebrews 9:18). In other words, it wasn’t just any ordinary sacrifice—this was the blood that inaugurated the entirety of the old covenant administration. And this is the passage Jesus is quoting. The only difference is that whereas Moses had said, “this is the blood of the covenant”, Jesus now declares, “this is My blood of the covenant.” As Jesus gave the cup to His disciples, He was telling them: What I’m doing now with My blood is the fulfillment of what was being pictured then with the blood of the calves and the goats. That was the shadow—but this is the substance. For indeed, that blood did serve to inaugurate the old covenant. But as Jesus shared the Passover with His disciples the night that night, He was inaugurating something even greater: He declares, “This cup, . . . is the new covenant in My blood.” (Luke 22:20).

2.9.5. And again, he notes in his commentary on Matthew 11:13: “Christ does not class John with the ministers of the Gospel, though he formerly assigned to him an intermediate station [cf. v12] between them and the Prophets. But there is no inconsistency here; for although John’s preaching was a part of the Gospel, it was little more than a first lesson.” Calvin’s comments here also shed some light on how he understands the meaning of Christ’s phrase “the kingdom of heaven” and “the kingdom of God” in the context of these particular passages (Matthew 11:11-13 and Luke 16:16). In the first reference, he tells us that the kingdom of heaven is a designation for “the preaching of the Gospel”; but it’s clear that he means by this the clarity of the Gospel that only came after John with the inauguration of the new covenant preaching of Christ. According to this, Calvin explicitly notes of Matthew 11:11, that “The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God denote the new condition of the Church...” In other words, according to Calvin, “the kingdom of heaven” and “the kingdom of God” in Matthew 11:11-13 and Luke 16:16 are short-hand for the administration of the new covenant. This doesn’t mean, however, that we should interpret this phrase in this particular or limited way every time it’s used in the Gospels, for it’s clearly given a broader range of meaning in other passages where the kingdom of heaven seems to convey the realities of the Covenant of Grace more generally (cf. Matthew 13:44, etc).

3. Duncan says of Matthew 26:27-28: “this phrase, ‘this is my blood of the covenant’ (to haima mou tes diathekes), recalls the words of the sacrificial inauguration of the synoptic covenant recorded in Exodus 24:8. Moses inaugurating the covenant at Sinai speaks words almost identical. . .Here, Moses sacrificed young bulls, and after reading the book of the covenant in the presence of the people, he sprinkled the blood of these slaughtered beasts on the people, declaring that sprinkled blood, to be the blood of the covenant. Thus, the covenant was ratified. In Matthew’s narrative, then, the significance of the cup, or its contents, that which it is setting forth, is relating, . . .to the blood sprinkled in ratification of the Mosaic Covenant.” Ainsworth writes of Exodus 24:9: “Thus the first covenant (or testament) was not dedicated without blood (as the apostle observes in Hebrews 9:18-23), and the patterns of heavenly things were purified by the blood of these sacrifices; signifying that Christ by his death should sanctify himself for his people, and them unto himself, by the blood of a better covenant (John 17:19; Hebrews 9:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2). . .Thus the sacrament of the Old Covenant, confirmed by the blood of beasts, had a resemblance unto the New Covenant, established upon better promises, and confirmed by the blood of Christ.” And Calvin notes on Exodus 24:5: “This offering, . . .composed in it a ratification of the Covenant. . .for, in order to increase the sanctity and security of covenants, they have in all ages. . .been accompanied with sacrifices. To this end Moses, the victims being slain, pours half the blood upon the altar, and keeps half in basins to sprinkle the people, that by this symbol the Covenant might be ratified, whereof he was the mediator and surety... [T]he case of this sacrifice was peculiar; for God desired the Jews to be reminded of the one solid confirmation of the Covenant, which He made with them; as if He had openly shown that it
2) Secondly, Jesus is clearly declaring that His blood is a propitiation for our sins. Christ says to His disciples in Matthew 26:27-28: “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.” We mentioned that the first part of what Jesus says here is a reference to Exodus 24:8, where Moses takes the blood of the covenant and sprinkles it on the people. But why did Moses do this? Hebrews 9 explains that this blood represented the need for and the provision of atonement, for “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (v22); and it’s for this reason that “even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood” (9:18). But if “the first covenant” was inaugurated with the blood of atonement, then much more “the second”, for the blood of the old covenant was merely a “copy” of God’s true provision of atonement that would come through the blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:23ff). Jesus’ blood would be shed as a propitiation for our sins. And this is what the Lord continues to emphasize in the second part of what He shares with His disciples; for He tells them that His blood “is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins” (v28). The imagery of “pouring out” is the same language used in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, when the priest would pour out the blood of the offering at the base of the altar (cf. Leviticus 4:7; 8:15). In the same way that the blood of those Old Testament sacrifices was poured out, so too, Jesus is saying, His blood was to be poured out; and it would be poured out “for forgiveness of sins.” What Christ is sharing here with His disciples is the very same truth we’ve already encountered many times before: forgiveness happens through atonement. Jesus’ atoning blood is what results in forgiveness of sins.6

would then only be ratified and effectual, when it should be sealed with blood... And again: “The sum is, that the blood was, as it were, the medium whereby the covenant was confirmed and established. . . Hence we gather that the covenant of gratuitous adoption was made with the ancient people unto eternal salvation, since it was sealed with the blood of Christ in type and shadow... For this reason Christ in the Holy Supper commends His blood as the seal of the New Covenant... for it is obvious that Christ compares with the figure [Exodus 24] the truth which was manifested in Himself... The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible says on Exodus 24:8: “Jesus proclaimed the fulfillment of this symbolism when he offered the cup at the supper, saying, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). And the ESV Study Bible says on Hebrews 9:18-21: “[T]he Mosaic covenant also began with blood. The Mosaic covenant-initiation ceremony (Exodus 24:3-8) is recalled in Hebrews 9:19-20.” And again on Hebrews 9:23: “Covenantal structure, and the need for purification, requires an inaugurate sacrifice. Here the locus is on the purification of the place of holy worship. The lesser copies (IE, the Mosaic tabernacle and vessels) are patterned after greater heavenly realities (which represent the very presence of God), and these heavenly realities require a greater purification sacrifice (the blood of Jesus). On the difference between Matthew and Luke, Ligon Duncan notes: “Luke identifies the cup with the new covenant. Matthew [and] Mark take you to Exodus 24, while Luke identifies the cup with the new covenant. . . looking back to Jeremiah 31, verses 31-34.” When you put them together, it seems they are stressing two aspects of the same truth: Matthew emphasizes the fact that Jesus’ death was a covenantal inauguration; Luke is emphasizing the covenant His death inaugurated is the new covenant. 6 On the connection of atonement between Jesus’ words and Exodus 24:8, Ligon Duncan says: “This explicit connection between Jesus’ blood and the blood sprinkling at Sinai points to an understanding of Jesus’ death as a covenantal sacrifice... You see the richness of Jesus’ words now. What is He doing? He is giving a pre-explanation of what is going to start happening on the next day to his disciples. . . [Also,] in Matthew’s [account] alone, we find the phrase, ‘for forgiveness of sins,’ (eis aphasis hamartion), which serves to indicate the purpose of the shedding of the blood of the covenant, and perhaps suggestive of Isaiah 52:15, or of Jeremiah 31:34. Both passages, of course, connect the covenant idea. . . Here again we have a connection between the covenant idea and the forgiveness of sins.” The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible likewise notes: “The blood dashed on the altar signified God’s acceptance of this as a covenant offering and thus of the covenant with Israel through the blood of atonement.” (on Exodus 24:6). And again: “The people were sprinkled with the blood of the covenant, the blood that put the covenant into effect... The blood signified cleansing from sin so that the people could enter into the covenant. It also marked the covenant relationship as accomplished only through atonement (Hebrews 9:21-22)...” (on Exodus 24:8). On the significance of Jesus’ language of “pouring out”, Robertson writes: “The ‘pouring out’ (ekkheo) of Christ’s blood reflects the sacrificial language of the Old Testament, and the process by which the curses of the covenant were heaped on a substitutionary victim.” (p144). Robertson elaborates further on ekkheo with a footnote, saying: “Note the usage of the term in the Septuagint in relation to Israel’s sacrificial system as found in Leviticus 4:7,12,18,30,34; 8:15; 9:9; 17:4,13.” Ligon Duncan also sees a connection between Jesus’ language of “pouring out” and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, writing: “It has been suggested that this is a word of explanation, reminiscent of Isaiah 53:12 [because He poured out Himself to death], . . . This points to the eminent vicarious death that Jesus by which Jesus would establish the covenant.” Finally, we could also say a few words here on the meaning of “diatheke” in Hebrews 9:16-17: Though it’s disputed as to whether these verses are referring to a “covenant” or a “testament”, it does seem that the surrounding context should inform how we interpret these two verses. And if we look to the surrounding context, the author is clearly speaking of a covenant—not a testament. As Robertson notes: “The
The Propitiation of the New Covenant

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3) Thirdly, Jesus is emphasizing the necessity of PARTICIPATION in His blood. We've seen that the words of Christ here in Matthew 26:27-28 are a reference to the inauguration of the old covenant back in Exodus 24:8. Well, there's one last thing we can note about this passage in Exodus: Not only is this passage unique because it's the inauguration of the old covenant; but it's also unique because of what Moses does with the blood of the sacrifice. We read in Exodus 24:8: "So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people..." This is the only occurrence in the entire Old Testament when the blood of a sacrifice is sprinkled on the worshippers. And so, not only is Christ connecting His death with the reality of propitiation—He's also connecting it with the necessity of participation. There must be a personal participation in the blood of Jesus for us to share in its benefits. Christ himself seems to echo the same truth when He gives His disciples the cup, saying, "Drink from it, all of you" (v27). Now, in one sense, there's an external participation that all God's people collectively share. Just as all the worshippers in the old covenant were sealed with blood under Moses, so too, all God's people in the new covenant are sealed through their participation in the body and blood of the Lord. Indeed, it seems that the Lord's Supper, now, in the new covenant, serves the same function as the sprinkling of the blood did under Moses in the old covenant administration. But there's also a word of warning here. The whole nation was sprinkled under Moses; indeed, if the blood of the old covenant was like a sacrament, they all partook. Paul tells us they "were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink..." (1 Corinthians 10:1-5). The author of Hebrews has a similar warning for us in the new covenant, for crucial factor for deciding between these possible meanings of the term in Hebrews 9 is the relation of death to diatheke throughout the passage. The connection between death and a 'last will and testament' is obvious. Yet death is as inseparably related to 'covenant' as to 'testament'. Both 'testament' and 'covenant' involve death. Death activates a testament. Death inaugurates and vindicates a covenant. Clearly the opening verse in this section of Hebrews is concerned with the relation of death to 'covenant'. A death has taken place for the redemption of transgressions committed under the first covenant [v15]. This verse speaks of Christ's death as the factor which removes transgressions committed under the first diatheke. In no way does the death of a 'testator' remove transgressions committed against a last will and testament. The death of a testator is not a vicarious, substitutionary death. But the death of Christ the maker of the new covenant provided redemption from the curses incurred due to the violation of the old covenant. Diatheke in Hebrews 9:15 refers clearly to 'covenant,' not 'testament.' (pp138-140). And then speaking of verses 18-20, which are immediately subsequent to the passage in question, Robertson says: "Blood' and diatheke' in these verses recall the inauguration ceremony of Sinai. By sprinkling the blood, Moses did not institute a last will and testament. God did not die in order to activate a 'will' for Israel. Instead, the ceremony at Sinai instituted a covenantal relationship. The sprinkled 'blood of the covenant' solemnly consecrated God and Israel to one another for life and death. The 'blood' of Sinai as discussed in Hebrews 9:18-20 represented a covenantal rather than a testamentary arrangement. Death sealed the covenant." (p141). This is confirmed by what the author of Hebrews goes on to assert in verse 22, where still in the context of the inauguration of the old covenant, he declares, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." So, the context surrounding verses 16-17 clearly supports a rendering of diatheke as "covenant." But even more than just the evidence of the immediate context, the whole section of vv15-24ff seems to be presenting a particular argument: This section is telling us that we ought to interpret what is happening in the second covenant (the new covenant) precisely by what happened in the first (the old covenant). This is especially clear in 9:18 and 9:23. The author of Hebrews is telling us in these verses that what was happening in Exodus 24:8 with the old covenant is a type or shadow or copy of what Jesus was going to accomplish for us in the new covenant. In other words, the two things are analogous. They worked in the same way. Exodus 24 was the fore-picture; Matthew 26 is the fulfillment. So we go back again to Robertson's question: Was the beast who was slaughtered and his blood then sprinkled on the people in Exodus 24:8 a testament? Was that how his blood functioned? Did the beast simply happen to die, and the people somehow became the inheritors of all that belonged to this beast, so that now that the beast is dead they may inherit all the possessions of the beast? Of course not. It was a sacrifice of atonement. The beast didn't just die; he was sacrificed, and he was sacrificed as an offering of atonement, so that through the blood of atonement sprinkled on the people they might receive forgiveness of sins. Well, if Hebrews 9 is telling us the two covenants worked the same way, we have our answer: As it was a covenantal sacrifice in the old covenant—so it is in the new. If we take diatheke as "covenant" in vv16-17, we could read it in this way: "For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be represented the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only over dead bodies..." It is true that the natural reading of the text alone would give preference to a rendering of "last will and testament" in vv16-17. But we should also take into account the immediate context and flow of thought of the passage, as well as the fact that, "Of the 31 times in which the term [diatheke] occurs outside these two verses, 31 times the word means covenant rather than testament." (Robertson, p141).
he speaks of the punishment of those who have “trampled under foot the Son of God” and regard as unclean “the blood of the covenant” by which they were “sanctified” (Hebrews 10:29). How can one prove to be an unbeliever who has been “sanctified” by Christ’s blood? Because they were sprinkled outwardly—but never inwardly. They were sealed with blood sacramentally—but never savingly. They were under the realm of the covenant—but never embraced the reality. So then, when Jesus tells His disciples to drink of the cup, He's urging us to partake of the reality the sacrament only represents.7

| OLD COVENANT | Matthew 26:27 | All drink from the cup | Hebrews 10:29 | External participation not enough now |
| NEW COVENANT | Exodus 24:8 | All sprinkled by the blood | 1 Corinthians 10 | External participation not enough then |

E) The CULMINATION of the New Covenant: We said that the greatest and most important event in the inauguration of the new covenant is the death of Christ. But though it’s true this is the “highest peak” among many in the inauguration of the new covenant, that doesn’t mean it’s the last one. After Jesus had risen from the dead and spent forty days with His disciples, He gathered them together and “commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised,” saying to them, “for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:4-5). Christ had died, He had risen, and He was about to ascend back to His Father, but there was still something else that was needed to complete the inauguration of the new covenant.

Pentecost is taken from a Greek word (pentaecostae) meaning “fiftieth”; it refers to the festival that's celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover, also known in the Old Testament as the Feast of Weeks. There were actually three celebrations that took place during the course of these fifty days: The first was Passover; which celebrated the Lord's saving of His people from death through the blood of the Passover lamb. Passover took place on the 14th day of the first month (Leviticus 23:5). The second celebration took place three days later; it was the celebration of “the first fruits”, and it was to happen “on the day after the sabbath” (Leviticus 23:11), which would have always been on a Sunday. Finally, God’s people were to count off fifty days from the Passover, at which time they would celebrate the Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost), which was a celebration of the very beginning of the ingathering of the harvest (Exodus 23:16). All three celebrations point us to Christ: For Jesus is our Passover lamb who has been sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). And three days later, His resurrection is said to be the first fruits of those who are asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20). But it wasn’t until the day of Pentecost that there was, in a very real sense, the inauguration of the harvest of Jesus' new covenant work of redemption.8

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7 As Ligon Duncan notes: “It has been pointed out, that the narrative of Exodus 24 is the only sacrificial ritual recorded in the Old Testament in which the blood was sprinkled on the people. . .It is not, therefore, with an ordinary sacrifice that Jesus connects His death, but with a unique atoning sacrifice that emphasizes the ultimate involvement of those who participate.” On Hebrews 10:29, The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible notes: “This description indicates that apostates were counted among the people of the covenant. . .and thus were set apart by the blood of Christ—but in a non-saving way.” And Calvin says of the reference to the blood of the covenant, “The apostle. . .alludes to the ancient rite of sprinkling, which availed not to real sanctification, but was only its shadow or image.” And David Dickson, in asking of Hebrews 10:29, “But how can the reprobate be said to be sanctified by the blood of the covenant?”, answers in this way: “I answer, there is a sanctification to the purifying of the flesh, and a sanctification to the purifying of the conscience. . .The sanctification, external, to the purifying of the flesh, consists in the man’s separation from the world, and dedication unto God’s service, by calling and covenant, common to all the members of the visible church; and it is forcible thus far, as to bring a man into credit and estimation as a saint, before men, and unto the common privileges of the church; whereupon, as men, so God also speaks unto him, and of him, as one of his people, and deals with him, in his external dispensation, as with one of his own people. In this sense all the congregation of Israel, and every one of them, is called holy, yea Cora also, and his followers (Numbers 16:3). . .For as the blood of Christ has virtue to cleanse the conscience, and renew the soul which comes unto it truly and spiritually, so it must have force to do what is less; that is, to purify the flesh, and external condition, of the man who comes unto it outwardly only, as the types did under the law; whereupon, a hypocrite in the Christian church must be accounted one of the congregation of the saints. . .Or we may say more shortly, there is a sanctification by consecration. . .and a sanctification by inhabitation of the Holy Spirit. . .”

8 We might say there were actually four Feasts in the span of the fifty days, as the Passover was also the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (See Leviticus 23:5-6. Deuteronomy 16:1-8 shows the intimate connection between the two). The three great feasts of Israel were the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of the Harvest (which is another name for the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost), and the Feast of the Ingathering, which was also called the Feast of Booths (cf. Exodus 23:14-17). All Israel was to travel down to Jerusalem for these feasts three times a year. The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted for an entire week, from the 15th to the 21st of the first month. If the Passover signifies what Christ has done for His people, then the Feast of Unleavened Bread signifies how God is calling us, His people, to live in light of Christ's sacrifice. Paul says in 1 Corinthians...
Well, after Christ had ascended to the Father, all His disciples were together in Jerusalem when the day of Pentecost came. And we know the rest! There was a loud rushing noise from heaven; and it filled the house, and tongues of fire distributed themselves on each of them, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other dialects and languages; so that the Jews that rushed to see what was happening could each hear them in their own mother tongue “speaking of the mighty deeds of God” (Acts 2:1-11). When Peter took his stand to explain what was happening, he told the crowd, “this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'that I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. . .'” (Acts 2:16-17). In other words, Peter was saying, this very moment is the fulfillment of what Scripture foretold in Joel 2:28-32. And indeed, it’s God's own testimony that the days of the new covenant have arrived; for the pouring out of God’s Spirit was one of the certain signs of the beginning of the new covenant administration.9

This doesn’t mean the Holy Spirit wasn’t at work in the old covenant. He certainly was. Those who penned the Old Testament Scriptures did so in and through the Holy Spirit who was moving within them (1 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Peter 1:21). The Lord's prophets were filled with the power of the Spirit as they declared the Word of God to His people (Micah 3:8). God’s Spirit gifted certain individuals in the old covenant for particular tasks (Exodus 31:2-6). The Spirit of the Lord also came upon certain leaders that the Lord raised up, to empower them to deliver His people from their enemies (Judges 3:10; 6:34; 15:14-15). Later in Acts, Stephen tells the Jews they “are always resisting the Holy Spirit” even as their fathers did (7:51); and Isaiah helps us understand what Stephen meant when he testifies

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5:7-8, "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” What feast is Paul talking about here when he says, “let us celebrate the feast”? The Feast of Unleavened Bread! Paul is connecting the Passover with the Feast of Unleavened Bread and telling us that this is the feast we are to observe for the whole of our lives. Yeast or leaven represents sin in Scripture. So Paul is telling us that as Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed for us, our lives, in turn, are to be unleavened; that is, sanctified, set apart, holy for the Lord. The Feast of Booths (or Feast of Tabernacles, or Feast of the Ingathering) also lasted an entire week, being celebrated on the 15th to the 21st of the seventh month. It commemorated the full gathering of the harvest. It also looked back and remembered God’s faithfulness to His people through their wanderings through the wilderness under Moses. If you calculate from Exodus 19:1, it appears Moses comes down from Sinai the seventh time with his face shining in Exodus 34:29 on the first day of the Feast of Booths. If Pentecost celebrates the beginning of the ingathering of the harvest, the Feast of Booths celebrates the completion of the harvest. It signifies the resurrection. As Moses came down from the mountain with his face shining, so too, this feast looks to the day that Christ will come again. On that day He will gather His people as wheat into barns, but the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire. If our present life now is a continual celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, then the life to come in eternal glory with the Lord will be a continual celebration of the Feast of Booths, as we similarly look back on our pilgrim journeying through the wilderness of this world and wonder at the Lord’s mercies in providing all of our needs, protecting us from evil, and bringing us safely home to glory.

9 As Ferguson notes: “Pentecost publicly marks the transition from the old to the new covenant. . .and inaugurates the new era in which the eschatological life of the future invades the present evil age. . .That which is 'new' in the new covenant ministry of the Spirit is therefore inextricably related to the significance of the Pentecost event.” (The Holy Spirit, pp37-38). On Peter's reference to Joel, he takes some liberty at the beginning of the quotation: Joel 2:28 begins: “It will come about after this”; while Peter quotes Joel as beginning: “And it shall be in the last days. . .” The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible explains what Peter is doing in this way: “The words 'in the last days' (cf. Isaiah 2:2; Hosea 3:5; Micah 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1) are Peter's way of associating the Hebrew and Greek words of Joel 2:28 (and afterward). Peter interpreted 'and afterward' as referring to the days of the new covenant in contrast to the former days of the old covenant,” (from note on Acts 2:17-21). And again on Joel 2:28-29: “By introducing this prophecy with the words 'in the last days' (Acts 2:17), Peter connected it with other prophecies regarding Israel's Messianic future and so taught that Pentecost was critical to the inauguration of the promised new age.” (A Treatise of the Covenant of God, p238). In other words, when the Old Testament prophets looked forward and spoke of New Testament realities, they explained those New Testament realities using Old Testament language, since it's the only language they had. Others have compared this to a father and son who lived in the late 1800s. When the son is a boy, the father promises to give him a horse on his 18th birthday; but when the boy turns 18, his father gives him a (newly invented) car instead. When Joel speaks of visions and dreams, he's using the only language he knows to explain new covenant realities.
how God’s people “grieved His Holy Spirit” when they rebelled against Him in the wilderness (Isaiah 63:10). And this also teaches us salvation itself has always been the special gift of the Spirit. Whether living in the old covenant or the new, the only way anyone is ever saved is through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5). So, it’s quite clear that the Spirit was at work in the old covenant as well. But if all this is true, then in what sense is the pouring out of the Spirit “new” in the new covenant?10

1) At Pentecost, there’s a newness in the CORPORATE EFFECT of the Spirit: We mentioned this earlier in our study of Jeremiah 31. Though there were many in the old covenant who embraced the gospel from the heart, by faith; it seems this was the exception rather than the rule. For though many in the old covenant had God’s Law written in their hearts, many more remained unchanged. But this is precisely what’s different now in the new covenant, and the reason it’s different is the greater effect in the working of the Holy Spirit. When God gave the Law to Moses, He did so out of the midst of the fire on the mountain. But now, when the Lord sends the Holy Spirit, He puts the fire of heaven into the very hearts of His people. Again, it’s not that the Lord hadn’t done this at all before—but now it would be on a much greater scale—so that when Peter preaches his first sermon after Pentecost, three thousand souls are saved all at once. The old covenant had been characterized by God’s Law written on stone; but now the new is marked by that same Law written on the hearts of His people. And the reason is, at Pentecost, there’s a newness of effect in the working of the Spirit.11

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10 The Spirit of the Reformation Bible notes: “To understand the New Testament ministry of the Spirit, it is essential to be aware that He ministered in the Old Testament period in ways that anticipated what was to come in the New Testament. He 1) brought order to the primeval chaos (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 33:6); 2) imparted revelation and wisdom (Deuteronomy 34:9; Micah 3:8); 3) fell upon special servants of God to enable them for service (Exodus 31:2-6; Judges 6:34; 15:14-15; Isaiah 11:2); and 4) brought about inward renewal in believers (Ezekiel 36:26-27; cf. Romans 8:9-16). In these and similar ways, the Holy Spirit was revealed in the Old Testament as the power and presence of God with His people.” (p1755). Ligon Duncan cites John 7:39, “for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”, and explains it in this way: “Radical discontinuity is emphasized in this passage. . .the language of discontinuity there has to be understood as a relative contrast in absolute terms. . .” Referencing similar passages, Duncan concludes: “the Holy Spirit is said by New Testament writers to be active in the Old Testament. . . nevertheless, the change from old covenant to new covenant is often described in the New Testament itself, as fundamentally being seen in just this: That the new covenant is uniquely the era of the Holy Spirit.”

11 Ferguson notes: “Pentecost was the fiftieth day from the Passover. It was the Feast of First-fruits, celebrating the offering of the harvest (Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:15-21). But Pentecost was also. . .increasingly viewed as a commemoration of the giving of the law at Sinai,” (The Holy Spirit, pp63-64). And again: “Moses had ascended the mountain. When he descended he had in his possession the Ten Commandments, the law of God. Christ too had recently ascended. At Pentecost he comes down, not with the law written on tablets of clay, but with the gift of His own Spirit to write the law in the hearts of believers and by his power to enable them to fulfill the law’s commands. Thus the new covenant promise begins to be fulfilled (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 8:3-4; 2 Corinthians 3:7-11).” (p61). Roberts writes: “As the Lord God, fifty days after the sacrificing of the first Passover, appeared to all Israel like devouring fire, and spoke His Law that old covenant to them out of the midst of the fire on the mountain. But now, when the Lord sends the Holy Spirit, He puts the fire of Heaven into the very hearts of His people. Again, it’s not that the Lord hadn’t done this at all before—but now it would be on a much greater scale—so that when Peter preaches his first sermon after Pentecost, three thousand souls are saved all at once. The old covenant had been characterized by God’s Law written on stone; but now the new is marked by that same Law written on the hearts of His people. And the reason is, at Pentecost, there’s a newness of effect in the working of the Spirit.” And yet, we are compelled to say that the Spirit’s work in the new covenant is more powerful and prevailing than in the old.”
2) At Pentecost, there's a newness in the INDIVIDUAL GIFTS of the Spirit: There's a story in the Book of Numbers about two men named Eldad and Medad. When the Lord sends His Spirit to rest upon seventy elders who are chosen to assist Moses, God's Spirit also comes to rest upon them; and when it does they begin to prophesy in the camp. Joshua doesn't like what's happening. But Moses says to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” (Numbers 11:29). Well, in the new covenant, God is pleased to grant Moses' request. This is what the Lord meant when He foretold through the prophet Joel: “It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.” (2:28-29). Here, God is speaking about extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. These things were rare in the Old Testament. The Lord gifted those seventy elders under Moses with a special unction from the Spirit. He had gifted another man with a special measure of wisdom in craftsmanship for constructing the furnishings of the tabernacle (Exodus 31:1-5). And God had gifted His Spirit to particular judges and kings whom He had raised up in Israel's past in order to equip them in a special way to lead and govern His people. But every time the Lord did this, it was the exception, rather than the rule. These unique gifts of God's Spirit were only given to the few, not the many. But this is what Joel is saying would be different in the new covenant. In the old covenant administration, it was only certain individuals that were gifted at select times in order to fulfill particular functions. But now, in the new covenant, the Lord has poured out all kinds of unique spiritual gifts (IE, Joel's imagery of prophesy, dreams, visions) upon all His people (literally on “all flesh”: young men and old, male and female servants). In the new covenant age, each one of us has received a special gift (1 Peter 4:10) for the building up of the whole (Ephesians 4:12).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE NEWNESS OF THE SPIRIT'S INDIVIDUAL GIFTS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IN THE OLD COVENANT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>God granted only certain kinds of gifts</td>
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<td><strong>IN THE NEW COVENANT</strong></td>
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12 Ferguson writes: “The long-looked for day of the Lord had arrived; the powers of the age to come were now released. The characteristic feature of this was a distinction in the distribution of the Spirit. He now was 'poured out' by Christ in unrestrained measure, and distributed without geographical or ethnic limitation, on all people.” (The Holy Spirit, p62). And again: “Now all of the Lord's people possess the knowledge of God formerly experienced only by the prophets...That which came to the people by and large through official channels in the Mosaic economy (via prophets, priests and kings) now belongs to all the Lord's people by Christ through his Spirit.” (p63). On Joel 2:28-29, Francis Roberts notes: “This passage in Joel has special reference to the times of the new covenant; the scope whereof, is, to show, that God will more plentifully for measure, and more generally for extent, bestow his Spirit and the effects thereof upon his people under the new covenant, than He did under the old. For measure, they should have his Spirit in prophecy, visions and dreams; that is, they should have all sorts of the manifestations of the Spirit upon them, and this should not be as formerly an extraordinary, but an ordinary and common thing. For extent, all flesh, that is, all sorts of God's people, male, female, young and old, bond and free (as here Joel expounds himself) should partake of this Spirit of God. So that they shall equalize, yea in some sort excel the ancient old covenant prophets themselves...This promise was most signally and eminently fulfilled by God's miraculous pouring forth His Spirit upon the Apostles on the Feast of Pentecost, and afterwards by His extraordinary and ordinary shedding forth of His Spirit upon others.” (Roberts, pp1423-24). And Calvin says of Acts 2:29, “[W]hen God is said to pour out his Spirit...it must be thus understood, that he makes manifold variety and change of gifts to flow unto men from His Spirit...” And again: “[T]he prophet does signify that there shall be no difference of age or kind, but that God admits all, one with another, unto the partaking of his grace. It is said, therefore, 'all flesh,' because both young and old, men and women, are thereby signified...[F]or we must here note a double contrariety, between the time of the Old and New Testament; for the pouring out (as I have said) does signify great plenty, when as there was under the law a more scarce distribution; for which cause John also does say that the Holy Ghost was not given unto Christ ascended into heaven. 'All flesh' does signify an infinite multitude, whereas God in times past did vouchsafe to bestow such plenty of his Spirit only upon a few. Furthermore, in both comparisons we do not deny that under the law the people were partakers of the self, same grace whereof we are partakers; but the Lord does show that we are above them, as we are indeed.” (Calvin). And the Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible notes on Joel 2:28-29: “As Moses prayed for the Israelites to serve as God's prophets (Numbers 11:29), Joel predicted that this desire would be experienced in Israel's glorious future. Peter proclaimed that this vision's fulfillment began at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21)...” And once again: “[T]he prophet Joel predicted that in the last days the Spirit would be poured out on every class and race of people (Joel 2:28-32). This is one noteworthy way in which the Spirit's ministry in the Old Testament was less dramatic than in the New. In the Old Testament, only a select few were gifted in special ways to accomplish extraordinary tasks for God; in the New Testament, however, the Spirit gifts all believers (Acts 2:16ff). [T]he Spirit's work is now spread much more widely than in the past, and all believers are gifted in some way (1 Corinthians 7:7; Ephesians 4:7; 1 Peter 4:10). In this sense Jesus promised a greater distribution of the fulness of the Spirit when he promised 'another Counselor' (John 14:16)” (p1735).
3) At Pentecost, there’s a newness in the UNIVERSAL SCOPE of the Spirit: When Joel prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit on “all flesh” (2:28) in the new covenant, he was saying the Lord would grant unique gifts to each of His people. But He may have been saying much more than that as well. For when God poured out His Spirit at Pentecost, not only was there a newness as it related to the Spirit’s individual gifts—but there was also a newness as it related to the Spirit’s universal scope. In the old covenant, God had singled out one particular people to be the objects of His mercy. It’s not that the Lord never saved any Gentiles in the Old Testament; but when He did so, this was definitely the exception rather than the rule. The vast majority of God’s people in the old covenant were ethnic Jews. And even when Christ went about His public ministry, He made clear this was something that hadn’t changed—at least not yet. For when a Gentile woman comes to Jesus about her daughter, He tells her: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). And when Christ sends out His disciples to preach, He forbids them from going to the Gentiles (Matthew 10:5-6). In the old covenant, the extent of the Spirit’s influence was effectively limited to the Jews. But now, with the new covenant outpouring at Pentecost, the Spirit’s influence has taken on a universal scope. And it’s for this reason that Christ tells His disciples just before His ascension: “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8). From now on, the gospel is to be proclaimed to all nations. And the reason is that the Spirit’s influence is no longer limited to just one particular people. At Pentecost, the Lord has given a new manifestation of the Spirit fit for a new covenant. And He’s also given us a new missional power that corresponds to this design; for the Spirit himself empowers us to testify of Jesus (1:8). We no longer need to sit, waiting for the Spirit to show up (1:4). He’s already come. We rather go forth in His power, declaring the gospel of Jesus.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the Old Covenant</th>
<th>What We See</th>
<th>What It Means</th>
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<tr>
<td>In the New Covenant</td>
<td>The scope of the Spirit’s influence was limited</td>
<td>The gospel was mainly preached to Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Old Covenant</td>
<td>The scope of the Spirit’s influence is universal</td>
<td>The gospel is now to be preached to all</td>
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13 Of the phrase, “all flesh” in Joel 2:28, Matthew Henry writes: “The Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, not as hitherto upon Jews only, but upon Gentiles also. . .Hitherto divine revelation was confined to the seed of Abraham, none but those of the land of Israel had the Spirit of prophecy but, in the last days, ‘all flesh shall see the glory of God’ (Isaiah 40:5) and shall come to ‘worship before him’ (Isaiah 66:22).”  And John Gill likewise says: “That is, all sorts of men, Jews and Gentiles, men of all nations; and such there were on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured down upon the apostles, and the grace of the Spirit was given to many of all nations; though that was only the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy, which quickly had a further accomplishment in the Gentile world. . .”  Calvin notes: “[U]ntil the advent of Christ, the Lord set apart one nation within which to confine the covenant of his grace. . .Israel was then the Lord’s darling son; the others were strangers. Israel was recognized and received into confidence and safekeeping; the others were left to their own darkness. Israel was hallowed by God; the others were profaned. Israel was honored with God’s presence; the others were excluded from all approach to him. . .The calling of the Gentiles, therefore, is a notable mark of the excellence of the New Testament over the Old. Indeed, this had been attested before by many very clear utterances of the prophets, but in such a way that its fulfillment was postponed until the Kingdom of the Messiah. Even Christ at the beginning of his preaching made no immediate progress toward it. He deferred it until, having completed the work of our redemption and finished the time of his humiliation, he received from the Father the name which is above every name’. . .Paul with good reason, therefore, proclaims this a great ‘mystery hidden for ages and generations’ (Colossians 1:26; Ephesians 3:9), and says that it is wonderful even to the angels (cf. 1 Peter 1:12).”  (Institutes, 2.11.11). And Ligon Duncan says: “The new covenant is the era of the Spirit because in it, the Spirit of God is poured out upon all flesh. It is a central idea of the new covenant that it is worldwide in scope. . .The worldwide kingdom of God is now inaugurated and now the Spirit is to be poured out upon all flesh. . .now, the barrier of the nation and the nations has been broken down. And all peoples will now come to Mt. Zion.”  Duncan goes on to say: “The new covenant is the era of the Spirit, because now, for the first time, the object of the Spirit’s work is to recover the world from sin.”  He quotes B.B. Warfield, saying: “Of course [recovering the world from sin] was the Spirit’s ultimate object from the beginning, but during the period of preparation, it was only its ultimate and not its proximate object.”  Duncan concludes: “Its proximate object was preparation. Now, in the new covenant, it is performance. Then it was to preserve a seed, sound and pure for the planting; now, it is for the reaping of the harvest. . .The Spirit is the leaven which leavens the world. In Israel, it was the leaven laid away in the closet until the day of leavening came.”  On the empowering of the Spirit, Ferguson says: “The fulfillment of the Great Commission takes place in the power of the Spirit.” (p59). And John Murray writes: “[T]he Holy Spirit came in the fullness of his grace and power in world-wide activity for the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham (Gen. 22:18) and that given to Christ (Psalm 2:8), in fulfillment of the world-wide redemptive design and accomplishment. There was the coming of the Son by a distinctive mode and for a distinct undertaking. This is also the coming of the Holy Spirit by a distinctive mode and for a distinctive function. . .This the age of Pentecost. . .This is why we have the gospel. It is because the utmost part of the earth has come within the scope of the Holy Spirit’s activity.” (The Power of the Holy Spirit, p138).
II. The Head of the New Covenant

1. The IDENTITY of JESUS: Who is Christ?

   A) The REALITY of the PICTURES: Who is Jesus? He's the reality that all the pictures of the old covenant had pointed to. Jesus is the Greater Adam. For as all in Adam die on account of his sin, so too all in Christ shall live on account of His righteousness. For whereas Adam was tempted and fell, Christ in the wilderness was tempted and stood. For as the first Adam brought ruin upon the world, the second Adam has wrought redemption. Jesus is the Greater Noah. For as Noah's entire family was saved from judgment in and through and because of Noah, so it is with Christ. And just as God appointed Noah to be the founder of a new humanity, so that, all who were safe with him in the ark would afterwards inherit a new and purified earth, so it is with Christ. Jesus is the Greater Isaac. For just as Isaac was the long-awaited child of promise; and just as his birth was miraculous, so it was with Christ. And indeed, as Isaac, in obedience to his father's command, submitted to climb the hill with the wood on his back, in order to do his father's will, so did Christ. Jesus is the Greater Joseph. For as he was the unique, beloved son of his father; and yet because of this, his own brothers were jealous of him and hated him, and sold him into the hands of the Gentiles, so it was with Christ. And being falsely accused, he suffered, though he had done no wrong; and yet after his sufferings, he was highly exalted and given all authority and honor and dominion, so that before Joseph every knee did bow, just as it shall be with Christ. Jesus is the Greater Moses. For he was born the child of a slave though he himself was free from the slavery of his brothers, as it was with Christ. And as he forsook a palace in order to free his people from their bondage, so did Christ. But even so, his own kinsmen failed to realize God had chosen him to grant them deliverance. In time though, God redeemed His people through him, and raised him up as their mediator, and spoke only to His people through him, just as with Christ. Jesus is the Greater Joshua. For they share the same name, "the Lord saves"; and it's no wonder; for if Moses pictured Christ in his redeeming Israel from bondage, Joshua pictured Him as their victorious warrior who gave them possession of the land. Jesus is the Greater David. For as the first king of Israel failed, there was need for another who would do all God's will. Like David, Christ is the shepherd king of Israel; whose sufferings came before glory; who wore a cross before a crown.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Picture</th>
<th>The Reality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADAM</td>
<td>The covenant head whose actions determined the fate of all his posterity</td>
<td>Jesus is the Greater Adam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOAH</td>
<td>The founder of a new humanity who led his household to a purified earth</td>
<td>Jesus is the Greater Noah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISAAC</td>
<td>The long awaited child of promise who submitted to the will of his father</td>
<td>Jesus is the Greater Isaac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOSEPH</td>
<td>The unique and beloved son who wrongly suffered yet was highly exalted</td>
<td>Jesus is the Greater Joseph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOSES</td>
<td>The chosen prophet who forsook the palace to redeem his own kinsmen</td>
<td>Jesus is the Greater Moses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOSHUA</td>
<td>The victorious warrior who brought Israel into their promised inheritance</td>
<td>Jesus is the Greater Joshua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID</td>
<td>The second-king and shepherd-king whose sufferings came before glory</td>
<td>Jesus is the Greater David</td>
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   B) The FULFILLMENT of the PROMISES: The old covenant pictured Christ over and over again in his birth and death, in his sufferings and exaltation, and in his covenantal headship for His people. But there wasn't just pictures of Christ throughout the old covenant—there were also promises. And just as Christ is the reality of the pictures, He’s also the fulfillment of the promises. Jesus is the seed of the woman. After Adam's sin, God drew near and made a promise to the man and the woman in
Genesis 3:15. From the woman, Eve, would come a descendant who would deal a death blow to the snake, though he himself would be struck by the serpent in the process. It’s the first gospel promise; God would send a Messiah into the world who would destroy the snake and his work. He would be bruised, yet He will conquer. The first Adam had failed, but God would send a second. There was now enmity between God and man. As a result of Adam’s sin, spiritual death was unleashed into the world; the snake and man were now united against their Creator. But through the seed of the woman God would reconcile man to himself—putting the enmity back between the woman and the serpent.

Jesus is the seed of Abraham: In Genesis 12, God called Abraham to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's house, in order to journey to the land which He would show him. At the same time, God also made several promises to him; and among those promise, the Lord told him: “And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3). What did it mean that all nations would be blessed “in” Abraham? Thankfully, God later clarifies the meaning when He comes to Abraham again and tells him in Genesis 22, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. . .” (v18). God's blessing would come to the nations through the seed of Abraham; that is, only through a very special and particular descendant of Abraham. And it’s Jesus. Jesus is the seed of Abraham through whom God’s blessing of salvation comes to the nations. If Christ’s genealogy in Luke emphasizes the fact that He is the seed of the woman as “the son of Adam” (3:38); then Matthew’s genealogy seeks to emphasize the fact that Jesus is also “the son of Abraham” (1:1). Abraham’s special “seed” is Christ.

And Jesus is the seed of David. Matthew’s genealogy emphasizes this too, for in the very first verse of his gospel, he writes: “The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of Abraham.” Christ is the seed of the woman; He is the seed of Abraham; and He’s the seed of David. God made a promise to David in the context of His covenant with him in 2 Samuel 7:12-13: “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you. . .He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” We might have thought this descendant must be Solomon. But Solomon’s kingdom certainly didn’t last forever. No, as the prophets later help us understand, God was looking past Solomon to a greater seed of David when He made these promises to him. Indeed, this seed of David was the Messiah. And it’s for this reason that Jesus is called the Son of David throughout the gospels. Christ was known as David’s Son because He was being rightly identified as David’s seed.

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<tr>
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<th>SCRIPTURE</th>
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<th>FULFILLMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>The seed of THE WOMAN</td>
<td>Genesis 3:15</td>
<td>The One who would crush the snake and his work</td>
<td>JESUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The seed of ABRAHAM</td>
<td>Genesis 22:18</td>
<td>The One who would bring blessing to the nations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The seed of DAVID</td>
<td>2 Samuel 7:12-13</td>
<td>The One whose kingdom will endure forever</td>
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C) The SUBSTANCE of the SHADOWS: As we’ve seen, Christ is pictured in various ways through God’s old covenant people; and He’s also promised as the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, and the seed of David. But apart from all these things, Christ is also typified in and through the old covenant ordinances and institutions. Paul writes to the Colossians in 2:16-17, “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” Here, Paul is helping us understand that all the ordinances and institutions of the old covenant were meant to give us a foretaste of the person and work of Christ. In our English translation, he uses the words “shadow” and “substance”; but in the original Greek, Paul uses the terms “shadow” and “body” as he

15 Roberts says: “All former covenants [have] their great accomplishment in [Jesus Christ]. So that under this covenant the seed of the woman came, to bruise the serpent's head. . .the seed of Abraham came, to bless all the nations and kindreds of the earth; the great prophet, like Moses, came, to reveal completely all the blessed counsels and contrivances of God necessary to be known unto salvation; the primary seed of David came, to sit upon His throne forever; yea, now Christ, the true David, the son of the Highest came, to possess the kingdom of His father David, and to reign over the house of Jacob, the Church, forevermore.” (p1226). And again: “In this new covenant. . .we may see, this seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head (Colossians 2:14-15 with Genesis 3:15). This true Noah saving His elect remnant by water (1 Peter 3:21 with Genesis 6:7). This blessed Seed of Abraham, blessing all nations (Acts 3:25-26; Galatians 3:13-14 with Genesis 12:3). This true Prophet like Moses raised up from among the people Israel (Acts 2:22-23 and 7:37 with Deuteronomy 18:15-20). This Seed and Son of David, sitting upon His throne, and ruling the house of Jacob forever (Luke 1:31-33 with Psalm 132).” (Roberts, p1715).
compares the old covenant to the new. The old covenant ordinances and institutions were shadows; but Christ himself is the body from which those shadows are cast. All the provisions and ceremonies of the old covenant are simply shadows of Jesus. But in the new covenant, Christ himself has come.\(^{16}\)

**Jesus is the true ark of Noah.** For when God’s wrath fell on all mankind, it was only those safe in the ark who were protected from judgment. Indeed, the ark saved those inside by absorbing upon itself the full force of the judgment being poured upon it from the outside. There was only one door on the ark, and it was held open for all until the day that it was finally slammed shut; just as Christ is now freely offered—but the day is coming when the head of the house will get up and shut the door. **Jesus is the true Manna** from heaven, for His flesh is true food and His blood is true drink and it’s He who has come down out of heaven to give life to the world. **Jesus is the Rock** which followed Israel in the wilderness; for indeed, when God’s people disobeyed, it was the Rock that was struck with the staff of judgment instead of them, and it poured forth living waters for them and their little ones. **Jesus is the Bronze Serpent** in the wilderness. For as all those who were struck with the fiery serpents could look upon this sign which God himself had provided as the only cure, so too, Christ was lifted up, that all who look to Him in faith will have eternal life. **Jesus is the Lamb of God.** For as the sacrifices of the old covenant testified to the truth that forgiveness can only come through atonement, and as a sinner among God’s people would lay his hand on the head of the animal, and slay it, and the blood would be applied to the altar, so too, Christ’s blood was shed on the cross as a sacrifice of atonement. **Jesus is the true Tabernacle.** For He forsook the joys of heaven in order to tabernacle among us, and He has promised to set His dwelling place in our midst forever. **And Jesus is the true Temple.** For it’s only in Him that we rightly worship God; for He himself is Immanuel, God with us. And though the temple of His body—like Solomon’s temple—was destroyed; after three days it was raised up again.\(^{17}\)

**Jesus is the Substance of the Old Testament Shadows**

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<th>The Substance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOAH’S ARK</td>
<td>The only place of safety on the day of God’s judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MANNA</td>
<td>The bread sent from heaven that sustains and preserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ROCK</td>
<td>The unchanging stronghold who provides for His people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOSES SERPENT</td>
<td>The appointed sign lifted up to heal all who look upon it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE SACRIFICES</td>
<td>The innocent lamb that’s slain as a sacrifice of atonement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE TABERNACLE</td>
<td>The dwelling place of God in the midst of His people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLOMON’S TEMPLE</td>
<td>The only appointed place to worship and meet with God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\(^{16}\) Paul’s language of shadow and body (Col. 2:17) is reflected in the KJV; special thanks to my father-in-law for pointing it out.

\(^{17}\) Roberts says: “The same Christ is revealed in all the covenants since the fall. They are as many cabinets one within another; but Christ the jewel within them all. All their promises lead to him, and center in him; all their commandments refer to him; all their threats drive to him; all their ceremonies typify him; all their sacraments signify him; all their ordinances magnify him ... But in every one of them how differently is the same Christ represented.” (Preface, V.1). And again: “He is the true Passover that is sacrificed for us. **He is the true bread of life**, that true manna that came down from heaven whereof a man may eat and not die. **He is the true Rock** that affords living water indeed to his Church in the wilderness of this world. ‘That Rock that followed them was Christ.’ And that manna and water are called spiritual meat and drink, because they were types and sacraments representing Christ unto them. **He is the True Serpent** lifted up in the wilderness to heal the mortal stings of the old serpent the Devil, ‘that whosoever believeth in him’, looks up to him by the eye of faith, may not perish but have eternal life.’ ... And what shall I say, He is the mystery and substance of all the Levitical ceremonies, ... the body and substance of the types of old. ... For those figures and types were God’s way of revealing Christ unto his people, till he was exhibited.” (p.1587). Again: “All passages, occurrences and events of providence towards Israel, in the wilderness, in Canaan, or in their enemies’ lands, did singularly cooperate, by the wisdom, faithfulness, power and goodness of God, to the full accomplishment of this covenant, in Jesus Christ the Mediator, who was the foundation, center, and scope thereof. In the wilderness, the Pillar of cloud and fire that guided them day and night; the Manna from heaven, and water out of the Rock, wherewith they were fed 40 years together; the Brazen Serpent; the Tabernacle erected in the wilderness with the utensils thereof; Moses’ mediation, and kingly government over them; Aaron’s Priesthood; and their frequent Sacrifices; what were they but types of Christ, and of better things in Christ? In Canaan, the land of Immanuel, heaven was represented as prepared for them by Christ for their Everlasting Rest; their Conquering of Canaanites under Joshua, shadowed out their spiritual victories in Christ Jesus; the Temple and Sacrifices there, pointed out Christ the true Temple and Sacrifice. In Babylon, their 70 years Captivity, wherein they were as men dead and buried, and yet afterwards their deliverance, God as it were opening their graves, pointed out their natural, dead and hopeless state under sin and their supernatural recover by Christ even beyond hope. ... Thus God by all his providential dispensations took them by the hand, to lead them on to Christ; till at last John Baptist pointed out Christ in person already incarnate; Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” (Mystery and Marrow, pp.904-05).
2. The TASK of JESUS: What did Christ come to do?

A) Jesus came to be our MEDIATOR: In the book of Hebrews we're told that Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant (12:24). But what exactly does that mean? Well, the best way to understand the function of mediator in the new covenant is to understand that same function in the old covenant. In Galatians 3:19, we're told that the old covenant also had a mediator; and it was Moses. This passage also helps us understand the first function of a mediator, for it says that it was “in the hand” of Moses that God gave His people the Law. In other words, when God gave His people the Law—it was only in and through Moses. We remember the story: God came to all Israel at Sinai, but it was too much for them to bear. They trembled, and stood at a distance, and said to Moses: “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.” (Exodus 20:19). And so, Moses stood between God and Israel; God spoke to Moses, and Moses declared His Word them (Deuteronomy 5:5). What we see is that a mediator REPRESENTS GOD to the people. Like Israel, we can't bear to hear or see God face to face outside of a mediator. He's too holy. Most of us would never want to come face to face with a lion in the wild—it's far too dangerous. But we take our children to see them at the zoo, because there's all the difference in the world between seeing a lion face to face, directly; and seeing that same lion through the safety of a protective, middle glass window. John 1:18 tells us: “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” This is who Jesus is for us in the new covenant. Outside the agency of a mediator, we're undone. It's only in and through Christ that we can safely behold the Living God face to face.18

As the mediator of the old covenant, Moses represented God to the people. But that wasn't the only thing he did. He came before the people on behalf of God—but he also came before God on behalf of the people. We often find Moses up on the mountain, pleading with God to turn from His anger and forgive the sins of His people. At one point, Moses even says: “But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!” (Exodus 32:32). What this tells us is that a mediator doesn't just represent God to the people; he also RECONCILES THE PEOPLE TO God. He stands in the gap on behalf of sinners. Or, perhaps more accurately, he stands in the middle—between God and sinners—offering up his own body as a shield to take the blow that's due for sin. This is the truth that Paul seems to be emphasizing about Christ our Mediator when he writes in 1 Timothy 2:4-5, “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all...” Apart from a mediator, there can be no peace with God; for by nature we're at war with Him. We need someone to stand in the gap on our behalf; and this is exactly what Christ has come to do for us as mediator of the new covenant. Jesus is in every way “in the middle” between God and man; for He himself is, in one person, the God-man. No mere man could ever stand as a mediator before God; nor could God draw near to man outside the agency of a mediator. But like Jacob's ladder, Christ reaches both heaven and earth. It's in Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, that a way has been opened for sinners to be reconciled to God.19

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18 As Roberts says: “Israel extremely terrified by God's immediate voice and presence, could not endure it, but desired Moses to pass between God and them, and God approved their desires, and so the Law was ordained in the hand of a mediator; [IE.] Moses. In which Mediator office Moses typified Christ the true Mediator...” (Francis Roberts, Mystery and Marrow, p782). And again: “[Lapsed sinners cannot endure a covenant fellowship with the Great, the dreadful, the holy and righteous God, immediately, without a Mediator. This is evident in Israel; for, when God immediately by his own voice promulgated and uttered his covenant out of the midst of the fire on Mount Sinai, Israel trembled and fled back afar off, being unable to endure that which was commanded, and fearing that they should be consumed by that great fire. And therefore they desire Moses to speak from God unto them. They could not bear God's manifesting his Covenant to them immediately by himself alone. But mediately, by a Mediator.” (Roberts, p806). Lastly, Roberts notes: “Israel's extreme fear and terror, by reason of God's mighty voice and dreadful promulgation of His Law, so that they removed and stood afar off; and being unable to hear the voice of God any more immediately, they desired that God would speak to them by a Mediator...” Thus [the people] are brought to see the necessity of a Mediator between God and them, and pitch upon Moses for that Mediator. Hence, the sinful creature is not able to approach to God, or to converse with God immediately, without the intervention of a Mediator. The distance and disparity between God and sinners is so infinite. God is holiness and purity in the highest; sinners are mere lumps of impurity. They are as chaff or stubble; but God, without a Mediator, is to them a consuming fire.” (pp910-911).

19 On the mediator reconciling man to God, Boston says, “The breach between God and man was greater than to be done away by a mere inter-messenger, who traveling between parties at variance, reconciles them with bare words. There could be no covenant of peace between God and sinners, without reparation. done to the honor of God through sin. Now, the effect of this was, that [Christ] was constituted. . .official mediator, or mediator in respect of office, between God and man: 1 Timothy 2:5-6, There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all...
We saw that one of the primary tasks of Christ as our mediator is to reconcile a sinful people to God. But how does Jesus do this? Well, if the last section teaches us about what Christ came to do, here we learn how it is He would do it. Jesus came as our mediator to reconcile us to God. But it's in becoming our Surety that He accomplishes this task. There's only one passage in the New Testament that speaks of Christ as our surety. Hebrews 7:22 says; “so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee [or surety] of a better covenant.” But though this word is just used once in the entire New Testament, it has a rich heritage in the Old Testament Scriptures. When Jacob was afraid to send Benjamin along with his other sons to go back to Egypt to purchase grain, it was Judah who stepped forward and said: “Send the lad with me and we will arise and go. . .I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you may require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever.” (Genesis 43:8-9). What was Judah saying? He was taking it upon himself to do anything and everything that was needed in order to bring Benjamin safely back home to his father. From that moment on, Benjamin's well-being was Judah's responsibility. Benjamin's safe return was entirely dependent on his older brother. Judah was single-handedly taking upon himself complete responsibility for bringing Benjamin safely back home. And friends, this is exactly what Jesus does for us as Surety of the new covenant. Just like Judah, He's bound himself to us in such a way that whatever is needed for our salvation is now required of Him.20

The two families of heaven and earth being at war, there could be no peace between them, but through a mediator.” (p39). Roberts writes: “A true, fit and sufficient Mediator was necessary under the New Covenant. True; that is, more than typical; fit, that is, equally middle between God and man; sufficient; that is, being every way able to reconcile God and man. Moses under the Old Covenant was Mediator; but neither true, fit, nor sufficient. Not true, but typical; being herein a dark type and figure of Christ. Not fit, but very unfit; being no equally middle person, but a mere man, nearer to man than to God. Not sufficient, but very insufficient; being utterly unable to reconcile God and the people, yea himself needing reconcilement to God by a higher Mediator.” (p1566). Roberts also notes that all the promises in Scripture “are either promises of a Mediator, or promises in and through a Mediator; in whom all the promises of God are yea, and Amen.” (p1567). On the Mediator needing to be both God and man, Roberts says: “Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant. . .The Greek word in all these places [of Scripture] does most properly signify, a mediator; or, a middler (that I may so express it) because he is, both a middle person, and a middle officer between God and man, to reconcile and reunite God and man. . .[Jesus Christ] is the only middle person between God and man, being in one person God-man. And he is the Middle Officer, intervening, or interposing, or coming between God and man by office, satisfying God's justice to the full for man's sins by his obedience to the death, and continually interceding for his elect; to whom he reveals and effectually applies this his satisfaction, intercession, [and] redemption. . .for their actual reconciliation unto God. Hence (as one observes) Jesus Christ as a true Mediator. . .suffered in the world, that is, at Jerusalem. . .He was crucified in the midst between the two thieves; [and] He died in the air on the cross, in the midst between heaven and earth’. . .Thus Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and man; middle in person, and middle in office. Yea Jesus Christ is Mediator of the New Covenant, and that more peculiarly and eminently than of any other covenant. Moses was a typical mediator under the Old Covenant; he went between God and Israel, he typ out Christ the only true Mediator (1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 13:8; Galatians 3:19). But Christ is the true Mediator of the New Covenant, the better Covenant most eminently and singularly. . .” (pp1389-90). And Boston notes, “the Son of God was constituted substantial Mediator, or Mediator in respect of nature, between God and man. Being from eternity God equal with the Father, he so stood related to heaven; and having from eternity consented to become man, he so stood related to earth. . .A type of this his substantial mediation was Jacob's ladder, which was set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven (Genesis 28:12). A clear emblem of the divine and human nature in Christ, through whom, as substantial Mediator, there was a way opened, towards a communication for peace, between heaven and earth.” (p39). And again: “The two families of heaven and earth being at war, there could be no peace between them, but through a mediator. But where could a mediator be found, to interpose between such parties, who would not either have been too high, or else too low, in respect of one of the parties at variance? Man or angel would have been too low, in respect of God; and an unfolded God would have been too high, in respect of sinful men, unable to bear intercourse with such heavenly majesty. Wherefore, the Son of God, that he might be fit to mediate; as he being God equal with the Father, was high enough in respect of the party offended; so he consented to become low enough, in respect of the party offending, by his becoming man.” (Boston, p39).

20 The NASB text translates Genesis 43:9 as: “you may hold me responsible for him”; but it notes in the margin that the literal translation is indeed the same wording that we have rendered above; namely, “from my hand you may [or shall] require him.” Thomas Boston has a very insightful chapter on Jesus' suretiship in his View of the Covenant of Grace, pp46-38. Towards the beginning of this section, he notes: “In. . .Hebrews 7:22, the only text wherein Christ is expressly called a surety, it is evident, that his suretiship therein mentioned, respects his priestly office, wherein he deals with God for us. . .the suretiship is not to the sinner, but for him. . .as in the case of Judah's suretiship for Benjamin, to his father (Genesis 43:9 and 44:32).” (pp46-47).
Often, when someone becomes surety for another, it has to do with **taking on a debt.** And this aspect also helps to further clarify what Jesus has undertaken for us in the new covenant. Proverbs uses the same word that Judah had used in warning of the dangers of becoming a surety for a stranger's debts (22:26); for when you do so, you're pledging to pay that debt yourself. And in Philemon, when Paul writes with his own hand that he will repay any debts that Onesimus had owed, he was becoming his surety (v19). In the new covenant, Jesus has bound himself as our surety to do whatever is required for our salvation; and in pledging himself to do this, He's taken on himself the sole responsibility of making payment for two debts we could never pay ourselves: **1) Jesus became surety for our DEBT OF PUNISHMENT.** There was a debt of blood that was owed to God, on account of our sins. But when Christ became our surety, that debt was charged to **His** account. And this is, indeed, the reason it was necessary for Him to make such a payment at the cross. The reason that our debts were being so strictly **required of Him,** was that our debts had been, in fact, **legally transferred to Him.** Indeed, the payment of blood was demanded of Christ because He himself had become our Surety. **2) Jesus became surety for our DEBT OF OBEDIENCE.** In Galatians 5:3, Paul tells us that we are debtors to the whole Law. For indeed, the Law requires **dying** as the penalty for sin, but it also requires **doing** as the condition for life. Because of our sin, there was now an added debt of passive obedience—but the Law has always bound its hearers to a personal, perfect and perpetual active obedience. If Christ had paid the debt of our punishment but not the debt of our obedience, He would have left us in the same condition as Adam in the garden before the fall: **Our sin would be removed, but our condition would be perilous!** He would have given us a second chance—but in no way brought us safely home. Praise God that as our surety, Christ didn't just pay the debt for our sins, but He paid the debt for our obedience. In the new covenant, Jesus didn't just make salvation possible again—He made it certain.21

21 Roberts says: "A surety is properly one that willingly promises and undertakes to pay and discharge the debt, if the debtor fail and be not able to make satisfaction himself. Thus Paul willingly and spontaneously, from the love that he had to his converted Onesimus, promised and undertook to make satisfaction to Philemon for any wrong that Onesimus had done to him: 'If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.'" (p1591). And Boston writes: "A surety is one who undertakes for another, obliging himself whether for paying his debt, civil or criminal, or for his performing a deed." (p16). Boston lays out the two ways Christ has become our Surety: "1) He became surety for their debt of punishment, which they, as sinners, were liable in payment of. . .That was the debt owing to the divine justice, for all and every one of their sins, original or actual. . .This was their debt of punishment; a debt which they themselves could never have cleared, though paying to the utmost of their power, through ages of eternity. But this debt, which Christ became surety for. . .Here is a suretiship that never had a match! David, in a transport of grief for the death of his son Absalom, wishes he had died for him (2 Samuel 18:39); Reuben will venture his own son for him (43:9) while yet there was hope that all would be safe. But our Lord Jesus deliberately pledges his own life for sinners, when it was beyond all peradventure, the precious pledge would be lost in the cause, and that the death he would suffer, would be a thousand deaths in one. . .Now, in the second Adam's suretiship for the criminal debt of his spiritual seed, there was not an ensuring of the payment thereof one way or other only. . .but there was an exchange of persons in law; Christ substituting himself in their room, and taking the whole obligation on himself. . .And, in virtue of that substitution, Christ became debtor in law, bound to pay that debt which he contracted not; to restore that which he took not away (Psalm 44:4). For, becoming surety for them, to the end there might be laid a foundation, in law and justice for exacting their debt of punishment from him, their guilt was transferred on him (Isaiah 53:6, 'The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all'). This was pointed at, in the laying of the hand on the head of the sacrifices under the law, especially on the head of the scape-goat (Leviticus 16:21). . .All the sins of all the elect were at once imputed to the Surety, and so became his, as his righteousness becomes ours, namely, in law-reckoning. . .He was indeed without sin **inherdent** in him, but not without sin **imputed** to him. . .This relation of our sin to Christ, is necessary from the nature of suretiship for debt; in which case, nobody doubts but the debt becomes the surety's, when once he has stricken hands for it. And how else could the law have justly proceeded against Christ? How could our punishment have been, in justice, inflicted on him, if he had not had such a relation to our sin? If the law could not charge our **sin** on him, in virtue of his own voluntary undertaking, it could have no ground in justice to inflict our **punishment** on him. 2) He became surety for their debt of duty or obedience, the which also is a debt according to the style of the holy Scripture; Galatians 5:3, 'A debtor to do the whole law.' The law as a covenant of works, though it was broken by them, and they had incurred the penalty thereof, yet had neither lost its right, nor ceased to exact of them the obedience which at first it required of man, as the condition of life. . .Christ became surety for this debt of theirs too, namely, the debt of obedience to the law as a covenant, which was, and is the only obedience to it for life; obliging himself to clear it, by obeying in their room and stead, and fulfilling what the law [did] demand of them. . ." (Boston, pp49-51). As it was necessary for our Mediator to be both God and man, this is true of our Surety as well. **Our Surety had to be God,** for no mere creature could be trusted by the Father with the task of doing all His will perfectly, as it was required of the Surety to do. And because no mere creature's blood was valuable enough to save its own soul, let alone billions of other souls. Further, salvation could not come through man, for salvation is from the Lord (Jonah 2:9). Boston explains: "The demands in this covenant were high, and quite above their ability to answer; and besides, they themselves were false and fickle. They broke their word in the first covenant, when able to have kept it; how could they be trusted in this new bargain, when their ability was gone? So there was an absolute necessity of a surety for them in it." (p48). And Witsius says: "for man to glory in
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He looked down from heaven, and saw that we for His task as Surety was to obey the same. Our Surety had to be man, and in Old Testament Israel, there were blessing of Abraham might come upon us...this he could not do as mere man." (Roberts, sacrifice of himself, purge our conscience from dead works, redeem us from the curse and wrath of God, and that the faults; this he could not do as God; He must be God, that he might undergo the wrath of God without sinking, satisfy God's suffering; and at the same time God, that the subjection, obedience, and suffering, of this person God-man, might on account of have obeyed, nor suffered; if mere man, his obedience, subjection, and suffering, would not have been of sufficient value for to man the and say to him, 'thou art lord of my soul'; is an honor to which no mere creature can have the least claim. 'In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.' (Isaiah 63:5). 'My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior,' (Luke 1:47). It appears then, that none but he who is true God, could possibly be Surety...it is necessary...that his own arm should bring salvation unto him' (Isaiah 63:5).” (V1, pp199, 201). Our Surety had to be man, for His task as Surety was to obey the same covenant of works—as a man, born under the Law—which Adam had failed to obey. As Calvin writes: 'The second requirement of our reconciliation with God was this: that man, who by his disobedience had become lost, should by way of remedy counter it with obedience, satisfy God's judgment, and pay the penalties for sin. Accordingly, our Lord came forth as true man and took the person and the name of Adam in order to take Adam's place in obeying the Father...to pay the penalty that we had deserved.” (Institutes, 2.12.3). And Witsius notes: “The legal covenant entered into with the first man [IE, as the head of the Covenant of Works], is founded on the very nature of God...So that it would be a contradiction if these precepts of the law of nature should not be proposed to [the second] man [IE, as the head of the Covenant of Grace]...I therefore proceed...[it] can be nothing else but the performing the same precepts...I add, that as those precepts were given to man, so no creature but man could perform them. This appears, 1) Because the law, which is suited to the nature of man, requires, that he love God with all his soul, and serve him with all the members of his body...None can do this but man...2) The same law requires the love of our neighbor; but none is our neighbor but man, who is of the same blood with us...All these things put together, incontestably prove that our Surety ought to be man; that he might satisfy the law for us. This is what the apostle means when joining these two together by an inseparable connection, Galatians 4:4, 'made of a woman, made under the law.' For he intimates, that the principal and immediate scope and end of Christ's incarnation was, that in the human nature he might be subject to the law, to which it is under obligation; and so that God, according to the same right, might renew with him the same covenant which he had before entered into with the first man...” (V1, pp199-201). And so our Surety had to be both God and man; for, as Calvin says, “neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it.” (Institutes, 2.12.3). And as Witsius declares, "Had he been God only he could neither have been subject, nor have obeyed, nor suffered; if mere man, his obedience, subjection, and suffering, would not have been of sufficient value for the redemption of the elect...And therefore it behoved our Surety to be man, that he might be capable to submit, obey, and suffer; and at the same time God, that the subjection, obedience, and suffering, of this person God-man, might on account of his infinite dignity, be imputed to others, and be sufficient for saving all, to whom it is imputed.” (V1, p200). And indeed, as Roberts likewise declares, "He must be man, that he might as our Surety suffer for us, shed his blood and die for our offenses, become a curse and sin for us, it being most congruous that he should have some communion with us, who suffers for our faults; this he could not do as God; He must be God, that he might undergo the wrath of God without sinking, satisfy God's justice to the full by his suffering; obtain eternal redemption for us, reconcile us to God by his death, put away our sin by the sacrifice of himself, purge our conscience from dead works, redeem us from the curse and wrath of God, [and] that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us...this he could not do as mere man.” (Roberts, Mystery and Marrow, p1579).
to uphold; so My own arm brought salvation to Me” (Isaiah 63:5). No other could help, for all of us alike are under the same bondage. Only God could redeem; for only He is able to pay such a price.

And yet, only man could redeem, for our redeemer must be a near kinsman. “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law...” (Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus came as our kinsman and He has redeemed us at the cost of His own blood (1 Peter 1:18ff). 1) Christ has REDEEMED OUR LOST INHERITANCE. Our father Adam had in his possession the inheritance of eternal life, but he sold it away for a bite of forbidden fruit. And when he did so, we were left destitute. But Christ has come into the world as our kinsman-redeemer, to purchase back for us the inheritance that Adam had lost (1 Peter 1:4). 2) Christ has RANSOMED US FROM SLAVERY. For just as Adam sold away our inheritance—he also sold us into bondage. When he sinned and became the slave of sin, we too were sold into bondage together with him as his children. So that, by nature, we have become the slaves of sin. But Christ has come into the world as our kinsman-redeemer, to pay the price of our ransom, in order to “set us free” (Galatians 5:1). 3) Christ has RAISED UP FRUITFULNESS for God. When Adam sinned, and spiritually died, there was a pervasive infertility that swept across the entire human race, so that we were left desolate and barren. But Christ has now come as our kinsman-redeemer, taking us as His own bride; so that, joined with Him, we might yet bear fruit for God (Romans 7:4).

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22 Boston writes: “Under the law, when a man was not able to act for himself, to assert and use his own right, one that was akin to him, had a right to act for him, coming in his room, and standing up in his right. And such a one was called his Goel; which properly signifies a kinsman-redeemer. Hence that word is sometimes rendered a kinsman; as Numbers 5:8, ‘If the man have no kinsman (Goel) to recompense the trespass unto; Ruth 3:12, I am thy near kinsman (Goel); howbeit there is a kinsman (Goel) nearer than I.’ Sometimes it is rendered a redeemer; as Proverbs 23:11, ‘Their Redeemer (Goel) is mighty; Isaiah 47:4, ‘As for our Redeemer (Goel), the Lord of hosts is his name. One’s acting in that capacity is called ‘doing the kinsman’s part,’ or ‘redeeming,’ to wit, by right of kin (Ruth 3:13 and 4:6). However, such a one might refuse to do the kinsman’s part; as Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer did, who resigned his right to Boaz, and in token thereof drew off his own shoe, and gave it to him (Ruth 4:6-8). Now, Christ the second Adam saw sinners, his ruined kinsmen, quite unable to act for themselves. Not one of them all was able to redeem himself, and far less his brother. If he should have declined it, and drawn off his shoe to them. . .there was none who durst have ventured to receive it, or put his foot in it. ‘I looked,’ says he, ‘and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation’ (Isaiah 43:5). He took on himself the character of their kinsman-redeemer. . .” (Boston, p42). And later, Boston notes the following things which “the kinsman-redeemer was to do for his kinsman, unable to act for himself; all which Christ the second Adam undertook in the covenant: 1) He was to marry the widow of his deceased kinsman, to raise up seed to his brother [Ruth 3:9; 3:10-13 and 4:10 with Ezekiel 16:8. . .Our nature was in a comfortable and fruitful condition, while the image of God, impressed thereupon in Adam, remained with it; but that image being removed, in the spiritual death caused by his sin, there ensued an absolute barrenness, as to the fruits of holiness, in our nature thus left. But our kinsman-redeemer consented to marry the widow. . .It was a low match indeed for him; and would have been so, even if the family of Adam had been in its primitive state and splendid; but now it was considered as in the depth of poverty and disgrace. . .And the great end, in subordination to the glory of God, for which this more intimate union and match with our nature was gone into by our kinsman-redeemer, was to render it yet again fruitful in the fruits of true holiness. . . 2) He was to redeem the mortgage inheritance of his poor kinsman [Leviticus 25:25]. . .Our father Adam waxing poor, through the deceitful dealing of the tempter with him, quite sold away the inheritance of eternal life, for a morsel of forbidden fruit; and his children waxen more poor still, through their own personal fault, had set themselves farther and farther from it. They could not have raised, amongst them all, what would have redeemed so much as one man’s part of it. . .Therefore the second Adam, as kinsman-redeemer, took the burden of the redemption on himself, and agreed to pay the price of that purchase; dying for us, that we might live together with him (1 Thessalonians 5:10). 3) He was to ransom his poor kinsman in bondage, paying the price of his redemption [Leviticus 25:52]. . .Being sold in the loins of our first father, we were brought into bondage under the curse of the first Law. So we are by nature the Law’s bondmen, and consequently slaves to sin and Satan; never to have been released without a ransom, the full worth of so many souls. This ransom was stated in the covenant; to wit, that the kinsman-redeemer should give himself a ransom for his poor kinsmen; and he agreed to it, for purchasing their liberty (1 Timothy 2:5-6). The ransom was great, soul for soul, body for body; a person of infinite dignity, for his poor kinsmen in bondage...” (Boston, pp43-45). Ball notes: “He must be God that he might bear the weight of God’s wrath without sinking under it...He must be man, our near kinsman, that he might have right of redemption...” (Ball, p265). And Roberts writes: “He must be man, our near-kinsman, that he might have the right of redemption, be a merciful and faithful high priest, being in all things like his brethren; and he must be God, that he might be fully able to redeem us, to destroy death, and him that had the power of death, the devil, deliver us from the guilt of sin, and curse of the Law, and preserve us safe to his heavenly kingdom.” (Roberts, Mystery and Marrow, p1579).
3. The OFFICES of JESUS: How did Christ come to serve?

The term “Christ” is an English transliteration of the Greek title Christos; which, in turn, comes from the Greek Chrístos (“to anoint”). It means, “anointed one.” This Greek title, Christos, was designated as the translation for the Old Testament Hebrew word with the same meaning. And in the Hebrew, the term “anointed one” is literally, Mashíah (which is, in turn, where we get the title “Messiah”). To put it another way, the term “Messiah” is actually a Hebrew word (Mashíah), which means “anointed one”; and “Christ” is the Greek translation. So, both “Christ” and “Messiah” mean “anointed one”. It’s just that the Hebrew term is Mashíah and the Greek translation for the Hebrew word is Christos.

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<tr>
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<td>“Anointed one”</td>
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In the Old Testament Scriptures, particular individuals were to be anointed with oil for one of three distinct purposes: God was commissioning this individual to service as either a prophet, a priest, or a king. God had made clear in the Law that priests were to be consecrated with oil at the beginning of their service (Exodus 29:7; 30:30). And though it wasn’t explicitly commanded in the Law, the Lord later makes it clear that kings and prophets were to be anointed in the same way (1 Samuel 9:16; 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kings 19:15-16; 2 Kings 9:1-3). This anointing served as a testimony of God’s calling to the particular office an individual was being commissioned, and it symbolically represented the provision of God’s Spirit for the wisdom and power needed for faithful service to the Lord. In many ways, this is exactly the function that ordination serves now in the new covenant. But though there were many priests or prophets who were ordained at any given time, the term Mashíah—or “anointed one”—was reserved for one person in particular. The Mashíah-priest was the High Priest (cf. Leviticus 4:3,5,16; with 21:10); just as the Mashíah-king was the only king (cf. 1 Samuel 24:6; 2 Samuel 1:16). The term Mashíah, “anointed one,” was very specific, and it was reserved for The Priest among priests, and for the only and rightful King of God’s people. And it’s for this reason that this same term, Mashíah, also came to describe the unique, divinely commissioned Anointed One still to come (Psalm 2:2; 132:17). This coming Mashíah was the hope of God’s people from the very beginning. They knew One was coming who was anointed above all the rest by God himself (Psalm 45:6-7). For though many served as prophets, priests, and kings in Israel—they all looked forward to the Anointed One yet to come.  

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<tr>
<td>The Anointed Ones</td>
<td>Many Individuals</td>
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<td>The Anointed One</td>
<td>One Individual</td>
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When Jesus began His public ministry and was given the opportunity to preach in the synagogue, He took the scroll that was given to Him, found the place that He wanted, and began to read these words from Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” (Isaiah 61:1-2). Luke then tells us: “And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Luke 4:17-21). In Jesus’ first recorded sermon, He’s telling us exactly who He is. How could He have made it any clearer? Jesus was declaring that He is God’s Anointed One. Indeed, Christ had been freshly anointed just prior to this; at the baptism of John. But it wasn’t John who anointed Jesus. For Scripture had to be fulfilled, and as the passage in Isaiah reminds us, God's

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23 See Berkhof's Systematics on The Names and Nature of Christ. On the High Priest, Henry Ainsworth notes on Leviticus 4:3: “Anointed [priest]: That is, the high priest (as both Gr. and Chald. do expound it); for the high priest only, in the ages following was anointed (Leviticus 21:10; and 16:32; Exodus 29:29).” And again on Leviticus 21:10: “Oil of Anointing: A holy oil, wherewith only the high priests and kings in Israel were anointed, and ordained to their office. . .” (from his Annotations). One example of how God’s people longed for the unique and divinely commissioned Anointed One, and indeed understood this term Mashíah to refer to him is Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:10. For even before kings began to exist in Israel, Hannah lifted up her voice and sang: “The Lord. . . will give strength to His king, and will exalt the horn of His anointed [Mashíah].”
true Mashiah was to be anointed—not by another man—but by God himself (cf. Psalm 45:6-7). In the same way, the High Priests and kings who had served as pictures and types of God’s true and coming Mashiah were anointed with oil; a symbol of God’s Spirit. But in Matthew 3:16, we’re told that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit himself, when “the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him” (cf. Acts 10:38). Jesus is God’s Anointed One. He is the Mashiah. And He is the One whom God has anointed prophet, priest, and king of His people.  

A) JESUS is God’s PROPHET: Most of the passages in the Hebrew Bible that refer to Mashiah are speaking of either the High Priest or the Anointed King. But Mashiah was associated with the office of prophet as well (Psalm 105:15). And the role of a prophet was to speak the Word of God. This is why we find the prophets constantly declaring: “Thus says the Lord . . .” (Isaiah 43:1). The prophets expounded the true meaning of the Law and called God’s people to live accordingly, submitting their lives to His revealed will. Their message was one of salvation and judgment—salvation for those who demonstrated true faith and repentance, but judgment for those who refused to listen to the voice of the Lord. There were many prophets in the old covenant, but we’re told that the greatest of them was Moses. At the end of his ministry, Deuteronomy 34:10 tells us: “Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses . . .” God would speak His Word to Moses up on the mountain, and he, in turn, would come down to deliver God’s Word to His people. But Moses himself prophesied of another prophet yet to come who would be greater than him. In Deuteronomy 18, he said: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.” And again, “The Lord said to me. . . I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.” (v1.5-19). Who is this prophet God would raise up, who would speak God’s words, and to whom we must listen? God himself tells us at the Mount of Transfiguration. For when Peter offers to make booths for Moses and Elijah, who had appeared to them, a cloud formed and a voice thundered from heaven, declaring of Jesus: “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” (Luke 9:35). Jesus is God’s Anointed Prophet, who, like Moses, came down in order to speak God’s .

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21 As Calvin writes: “Now it is to be noted that the title ‘Christ’ pertains to these three offices: for we know that under the law prophets as well as priests and kings were anointed with holy oil.” (Institutes, 2.15.2). And thus: “the office enjoined upon Christ by the Father consists of three parts. For he was given to be prophet, king, and priest.” (Institutes, 2.15.1). Roberts says: “For, as in former times men were anointed with material oil, with the Holy Anointing Oil, denoting their designation and vocation to, their endowments and qualifications for, those three eminent offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; so Jesus Christ was anointed with the true spiritual immaterial oil, with the oil of gladness above his fellows [Psalm 45:7], [namely] with the Holy Ghost and with power [Acts 10:38] most plentifully and abundantly, whereby he was most plenarily and transcendently qualified for, and most authentically called unto his triple office of Prophet, Priest and King to his Church. . .” (p1601). Of the Spirit coming upon Jesus at His baptism, Calvin says of Matthew 3:16: “But here two questions arise. The first is, why did the Spirit, who had formerly dwelt in Christ, descend upon him at that time? This question is answered by a passage of the prophet Isaiah. . . ‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord God hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted’ (Isaiah 61:1). Though the grace of the Spirit was bestowed on Christ in a remarkable and extraordinary manner (John 3:34) yet he remained at home as a private person, till he should be called to public life by the Father. Now that the full time is come, for preparing to discharge the office of Redeemer, he is clothed with a new power of the Spirit, and that not so much for his own sake, as for the sake of others. . .” And finally, as the Westminster Larger Catechism asks in question #42: “Why was our Mediator called Christ? Our Mediator was called Christ, because he was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure, and so set apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability, to execute the offices of prophet, priest, and king of his church, in the estate both of his humiliation and exaltation.” The declaration of the Father at Jesus’ baptism by John is significant: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matthew 3:17). The first clause harksens back to Psalm 2:7, which also affirms Jesus as God’s Anointed One, since, in the Psalm, the Son of verse 7 and the Anointed Mashiah of verse 2 are the same individual. So, when the Father declares Jesus to be His Son, alluding to Psalm 2:7, He’s also declaring Him to be the Anointed Mashiah of Psalm 2:2. This also helps to clarify how the Pharisees already understood from the Hebrew Bible that the Mashiah was indeed God’s Son (cf. Matthew 26:63). The second clause of Matthew 3:17 harksens back to Isaiah 42:1, which connects Jesus the Anointed One also with the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah; for the passage reads: “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. . .” Another helpful insight from this passage is it goes on to say in Isaiah 42:1: “. . .I have put My Spirit on Him . . .” This serves to clarify with what, specifically, God’s Anointed One would be anointed. Psalm 45:6-7 says God’s Mashiah would be anointed with “the oil of joy.” But was this to be literal oil? The only other place in the Hebrew Bible that uses this same expression is Isaiah 61:3, where God’s Anointed One is now, in turn, anointing God’s people with “the oil of joy.” And surely no one would argue in the context that here, “the oil of joy” is literal. So, in the same way, we ought not to think the Mashiah was to be anointed with literal oil in Psalm 45:6-7. Rather, Isaiah 42:1 clarifies what Isaiah 61:1 had seemed to infer; namely, that the Christ of God would be anointed with God’s Spirit. So, to summarize: The Mashiah would be anointed by God himself, and He would be anointed with God’s Spirit; and this, of course, is exactly what we see happen at Jesus’ baptism.
Word, in His name, to His people (John 5:43); performing also signs and wonders to testify He had come from the gods (John 5:36). His teaching wasn’t His, but the One who sent Him; for He spoke only the words that were given to Him by the Father (John 7:16; 12:48f). And Jesus didn’t only proclaim the word of God, He himself was and is the Word of God; for in Him the Word of God has put on flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Moses foretold that our eternal destiny hinges entirely on our response to God’s Prophet. And Jesus tells us, Moses was speaking of Him (John 5:46; Acts 3:22f).25

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<tr>
<th>Moses</th>
<th>The signs and wonders he performed (Deut.34:11)</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Proof God had Sent him as His Prophet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christ</td>
<td>The signs and wonders He performed (Acts 2:22)</td>
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<td>The Task God had Given him as His Prophet</td>
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**A Prophet Like Moses: Jesus is God’s Anointed Prophet**

B) Jesus is God’s Priest: As God’s Anointed One, Jesus isn’t only commissioned to the office of Prophet—He’s also consecrated as the Lord’s Great High Priest. But Jesus’ role as Priest would take on a unique function that was distinct from his role as Prophet. For indeed, if the Lord Jesus fulfilled His work as Prophet primarily in His life—then He accomplished His role as Priest predominately in His death. The High Priest was the only one who had access to the holy of holies, and even He could enter only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, in order to atone for the sins of God’s people. He brought the blood of the sacrifice with him and sprinkled it seven times on the mercy seat (which was a slab of gold that rested on the ark of the covenant). It was at the mercy seat that God met with the High Priest (Exodus 25:22), and it was in and through the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat that the sins of God’s people were atoned for (Leviticus 16:1–30). Jesus is both the sacrifice and the priest. As the Lamb of God, He offered up His body once for all as a propitiation through His blood; and as our High Priest, He has ascended into heaven—the true holy of holies—in order to present himself to God, in all things concerning their edification and salvation.

25 Sadly, Jesus also resembles Moses in another way as well. For just as the Jews rejected Moses whom God had sent to them, when he appeared to them the first time, so it was with Christ (Acts 7:25). Boston includes the following in the office of Christ as Prophet: “In the capacity of Prophet, he was constituted 1) the Messenger of the covenant (Malachi 3:1), to bring the good tidings of that treaty of peace into the world; and not only so, but by the authority of heaven, to proclaim the treaty to sinners. . . 2) In the same capacity he was constituted the Witness of the covenant (Isaiah 55:4), ‘Behold, I have given him for a Witness to the people.’ God knew the world to be a guilty world, whose consciences witnessed their demerit of death; and that therefore they would be very slow to believe the good news from heaven, touching the covenant of peace; and for this cause he would give them one competent to witness the truth thereof; and pitched upon Jesus Christ for that effect. . . He came down from heaven, where the covenant was made, unto earth, in favor of which it was made; wherefore he could witness in the earth, what he had seen in heaven about it (John 3:31-32). . . 3) He is in the same capacity constituted the Interpreter of the covenant (John 3:29), to teach it unto men. . . We are not only slow to believe the covenant, but it is hard for us to understand it. . . we cannot understand it in a saving manner, unless ‘the Son of God hath given us an understanding (a supernatural one) that we may know him that is true’ (1 John 5:20).” (View of the Covenant of Grace, pp207-09). The Westminster Larger Catechism #43 informs us: “How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet? Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in his revealing to the church, in all ages, by his Spirit and word, in diverse ways of administration, the whole will of God, in all things concerning their edification and salvation.” Scripture tells us that God’s Anointed Prophet would resemble Moses. But it seems he would also resemble Elisha. As we mentioned earlier in our study, God had declared in Malachi 4:5-6, the last two verses in the entire Old Testament, that He was going to send “Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.” And in Luke 1:17, the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that it would be his son, John, who would “go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah. . .” So then, John was to be a prophet like Elijah. But if we look back to Elijah’s ministry, we discover that, though he himself was a great prophet, he was followed by a prophet even greater than him, clothed with a double portion of his spirit (2 Kings 2:9-10). As Elijah had been the forerunner to Elisha, so too, John would be the forerunner to God’s true Anointed Prophet. And so, we might also reason, if John’s ministry was to resemble that of Elijah, then the ministry of the Messiah would, in turn, resemble that of Elisha. And this is exactly what we find in Jesus’ ministry; it so closely patterns that of Elisha that it’s uncanny: 1) Elisha possessed a supernatural knowledge both of people (2 Kings 8:10-15) and future events (2 Kings 7:1-20); even as Jesus does, who not only predicted his own death and resurrection, and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, but knew what Nathaniel was doing under the fig tree and told the woman at the well everything she had ever done (John 1:43-51; 4:15-30). 2) Elisha cleansed the leper Naaman, healing him completely in a miraculous way (2 Kings 5), even as Jesus miraculously cleansed the lepers (Luke 17:11-17); as He also raised up from the dead the daughter of the synagogue official (Luke 7:40-50). 4) Elisha multiplied loaves of barley and ears of grain in order to provide food for the many (2 Kings 4:42-44); as Christ multiplied bread and fish for the multitudes (Matthew 14:13-15). 5) Elisha defied the rules of nature when he divided the waters of the Jordan (2 Kings 2:14) and when he caused an iron axe head to float to the top of the water (2 Kings 6:1-7), as Christ also did when He walked on water (Matthew 14:22-27). 6) Elisha opened blind eyes (2 Kings 6:20) even as Christ was accustomed to do (John 9; Luke 19:14-37). Lastly, 7) Elisha’s grave was a source of resurrection for others (2 Kings 13:20-21), as Jesus’ death has brought us to life (John 12:24).
God on our behalf (Hebrews 9:23-24). And Jesus is both the priest and the mercy seat. For not only did He present His own blood to God as our High Priest, but He himself is the sprinkled mercy seat through whom we now have free access to God. Indeed, it was only the High Priests who were able to enter the holy of holies under the old covenant; but we are now beckoned to come boldly into the very presence of God, because God meets with us in and through Jesus (Hebrews 10:19-22). In the former times, the High Priests entered into the holy place year after year; but Jesus dealt with our sins once for all when He offered up himself (Hebrews 7:27; 9:26). And having ascended to heaven, He has taken His blood within the veil (Hebrews 6:19), where it now perpetually cries out to God on our behalf (Hebrews 12:24). And even Jesus himself cries out to God on our behalf. For having finished His work of atonement, He now engages in His priestly work of intercession (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). In the old covenant, the High Priests were taken only from Aaron's descendants, and they all eventually died. But as David looked ahead and spoke of the Christ, he prophesied that it would be different for God's Anointed One. In Psalm 110:4 he says, "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" Unlike the other priests, Christ's priesthood wouldn't come from Aaron; indeed, like Melchizedek, His priesthood began long before Aaron existed. And Christ's priesthood will never end, for He serves as God's Priest forever.26

26 The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question #44 informs us: "How doth Christ execute the office of a priest? Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his own offering himself a sacrifice without spot to God, to be reconciliation for the sins of his people; and in making continual intercession for them." Boston writes, "The first covenant was made without a priest, because then there was no sin to take away; the parties therein represented, as well as the representative, were considered as innocent persons. But the second covenant was a covenant of peace and reconciliation between an offended God and sinners, not to be made but by the mediation of a priest, who should be able to remove sin, and repair the injured honor of God: Zechariah 6:13. He shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." (pp29-30). Ball notes: "Now Christ's obligation was the truth prefigured in the priests sacrificing of the beast, and his entrance into heaven was the truth prefigured in the priests carrying of the blood into the holiest of all," (p295). On Christ as our sacrifice, Boston also says: "His blessed body suffering and bleeding to death on the cross, and his holy soul scorched and melted within him with the fire of the divine wrath, both in the mean time united to his divine nature, were the sacrifice burning on the altar, from the which God smelled a sweet savour, to the appeasing of his wrath, and satisfying of his justice fully." (p62). And of His applying the blood as High Priest, Roberts writes: "[Christ's] presenting his obedience and death, together with the infinite satisfaction and merit thereof, before His Father in heaven, desiring continually that for the same all His elect in their persons and sacrifices may be fully and eternally accepted of God (1 John 2:1-2; Romans 3:34; Hebrews 7:25). . .was notably typified in the action of the High Priest of old. He killed the sin-offerings, and then brought the blood of them within the veil into the holiest of all, and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat. This was one continued action of the High Priest; his act was not complete, till the blood was represented within the veil, before the mercy seat. Thus Christ first shed His blood, and offered himself by dying; and then entered as our intercessor within the veil, into heaven itself, there to present His blood before God, to sprinkle it as it were on and before the mercy seat, and to present His satisfaction and merit perpetually there for us." (p1619). Concerning Christ's priestly work of intercession, Ball says: "As the high priest went into the sanctuary with the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast, so Christ entered into the holiest of all with our persons in our behalf, and does carry all his people upon his breast, and presents his desires unto his Father for them." (p297). Boston also draws out the following concerning Christ as our intercessor: "Now, Christ administers the covenant, as Intercessor thereof, these following ways chiefly: [First,] Effectually procuring, by his interest in heaven, the actual in-bringing of his elect, at the time appointed, into a state of union, communion, peace, and favor with God (John 17:20). . .His intercession is the spring that puts all the wheels in motion. . .Providing manages favorably towards the conversion of the man; the word powerfully affects him, while on others it falls like rain on a rock, running off as fast as it comes on; the business of eternal salvation is closely laid to heart with him; the law does its office upon him, and so does the gospel also in its turn; and these things cease not, until he is brought into a new state, and is become a new creature. Whence did all this take its rise? Why, the man had an unknown friend in the court of heaven, who spoke for him to the King; and all this is the fruit of that intervention made for him. . .[Secondly,] Maintaining the peace between God and them, while they are here in this world. Having purchased their peace with heaven by the sacrifice of himself, and by his intercession brought them into a state of peace, he does not leave it to themselves to maintain it. If it were so, it would soon be at an end. . .but Christ intercedes for them. . .upon the ground of his satisfaction for them, he answers all accusations against them [1 John 2:1; Romans 8:33-34]. . .Wherefore, their state of peace with God is inviolably maintained. . .[Thirdly,] Procuring them access by his interest in heaven, they are accepted in the beloved [1:6]. And in him they have an altar that sanctifies their gifts (Hebrews 13:10). So that their spiritual sacrifices, howbeit they want not their blemishes, yet are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). Their prayers made in faith, though smelling rank of the remains of the corruption of nature, yet being perfumed by the Intercessor with the incense of his merit, are accepted in heaven. . ." (pp223-26). Lastly, we might mention here that if Jesus' death shows forth the work of His priesthood, then His resurrection attests to the proof of His priesthood: In the wilderness, there were some who rose up against the Lord, questioning whether or not God had really appointed Aaron as the High Priest. So, in Numbers 17, God himself interposes with a sign, in order to testify to all Israel who is the High Priest that He had chosen. Each tribe was to give Moses a staff with the name of the tribe written on it; the staffs were, in turn, to be placed in the holy of
A PRIEST LIKE AARON: JESUS IS GOD’S ANOINTED PRIEST

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<th>THE PRIESTLY WORK OF INTERCESSION (PLEADING)</th>
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<tr>
<td>AARON</td>
<td>Entered holy place with the blood of atonement (Lev.16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHRIST</td>
<td>Entered heaven to present His blood to God (Heb.9:24)</td>
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C) JESUS is God’s KING: In His life and ministry, Christ served as God’s Prophet. In His suffering and death, He engaged as God’s Priest. But it was after Jesus’ birth that magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem asking, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:1-2). The magi’s question reminds us that God’s Anointed One would not only serve as a prophet and priest, but also as a king. Many years before, the Lord had told David that He would raise up one of his descendants after him and that He would establish his kingdom forever (2 Samuel 7:12-13). God was announcing that His Anointed King would come forth from David’s line. The prophets later used the imagery of a garden to declare the same truth: “a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.” (Isaiah 11:1). But though Isaiah describes this King here as “the stem of Jesse,” he goes on to later describe this King as “the root of Jesse” (v10). God’s Anointed would come forth from David, but He would also exist before David. And in Psalm 110:1, we learn that this Anointed King wouldn’t only be David’s son—but that He was also very much David’s Lord. When Samuel was sent, as the last of the judges, to anoint God’s chosen king, the one whom the Lord instructed him to anoint was different than he had expected (1 Samuel 16:6-7). In the same way, when John was sent, as the last of the prophets, to bear witness to God’s Anointed One, he testified of Jesus, saying: “I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’” (John 1:32-33). John’s testimony here that Jesus is “the Son of God” brings everything together for us. He’s referring back to Psalm 2, where we learn that God’s Anointed wouldn’t only be David’s son—He was and is the very Son of God (v1-7). This is how the Christ is both the stem of Jesse and the root of Jesse. And it’s how He would come from David’s line, and yet, at the same time, be David’s Lord. And so, when John testifies that Jesus is the Son of God, he’s declaring that Jesus is the Son of David—who is the Son of God—who is God’s Anointed King. Jesus is the Lord’s Anointed. It’s He who is “the Son of the Most High”; it’s to Him that the Lord has given “the throne of His father David”; and it’s He that “will reign over the house of Jacob forever,” whose “kingdom will have no end.” (Luke 1:32-33). Jesus is the Christ; and as such, He demands our allegiance. As the closing words of Psalm 2 exhort us: “Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way... How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!”

27 The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question # 45 says: “How doth Christ execute the office of a king? Christ executeth the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon his elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, and their good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.” Roberts likens Christ to Melchizedek, who was a king as well as a priest: “As, of Melchizedek, first King of Righteousness, then King of Peace; a singular type of Christ our King, who first justifies and then pacifies.” (p1624). Calvin notes: “Christ was called Messiah especially with respect to, and by virtue of, his kingship. Yet his anointings as prophet and as priest have their place and must not be overlooked by us.” (Institutes, 2.15.2). And again: “A visible symbol of this sacred anointing was shown in Christ’s baptism, when the Spirit hovered over him in the likeness of a dove.” (2.15.3). The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question # 45 asks: “How doth Christ execute the office of a king? Christ executeth the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon his elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, and their good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.” (p1624). Calvin notes: “Christ was called Messiah especially with respect to, and by virtue of, his kingship. Yet his anointings as prophet and as priest have their place and must not be overlooked by us.” (Institutes, 2.15.2). And again: “A visible symbol of this sacred anointing was shown in Christ’s baptism, when the Spirit hovered over him in the likeness of a dove.” (2.15.3). The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question # 45 asks: “How doth Christ execute the office of a king? Christ executeth the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon his elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, and their good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.” (p1624). Calvin notes: “Christ was called Messiah especially with respect to, and by virtue of, his kingship. Yet his anointings as prophet and as priest have their place and must not be overlooked by us.” (Institutes, 2.15.2). And again: “A visible symbol of this sacred anointing was shown in Christ’s baptism, when the Spirit hovered over him in the likeness of a dove.” (2.15.3). The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question # 45 asks: “How doth Christ execute the office of a king? Christ executeth the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon his elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, and their good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.” (p1624). Calvin notes: “Christ was called Messiah especially with respect to, and by virtue of, his kingship. Yet his anointings as prophet and as priest have their place and must not be overlooked by us.” (Institutes, 2.15.2). And again: “A visible symbol of this sacred anointing was shown in Christ’s baptism, when the Spirit hovered over him in the likeness of a dove.” (2.15.3). Thus he assures the godly of the everlasting preservation of the church, and encourages them to hope; whenever it happens to
A King Like David: Jesus is God’s Anointed King

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE FORERUNNER OF GOD’S ANOINTED KING</th>
<th>THE TESTIMONY OF GOD’S ANOINTED KING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAVID</strong></td>
<td>David said the one from his line is also his Lord (Ps.110:1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anointed by Samuel, last of the Judges (1 Sam.16)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CHRIST</strong></td>
<td>Jesus is the Christ, son of David and Son of God (Lk.1:32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attested by John, last of the Prophets (John 1:29ff)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As Jesus stood before His accusers, on the night before His sufferings, there’s a startling exchange that takes place between the high priest and himself. We read of it in Mark 14:61-62: “the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?’ And Jesus said, I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” Jesus was finishing His earthly ministry the very same way He began it. For at the beginning of His public ministry, He had testified He was the Lord’s Anointed (Luke 4:16-21). Now, as He makes His final public appearance to Israel, He testifies to the same truth. Jesus is the Christ. He is the Lord’s Anointed Prophet, whom God raised up like Moses, who spoke God’s Word in His name to His people. He is the Lord’s great High Priest, who offered up His own body once for all as a sacrifice for sin, and has taken His blood within the veil, where it ever pleads to God on our behalf. He is the Lord’s Anointed King, the son of David and the Son of God, who will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and whose kingdom will have no end. But as Scripture tells us, it was “necessary for the Christ to suffer” before entering His glory (Luke 24:26). And so, Jesus suffered as a priest, when false witnesses rose up and accused Him in His priestly work, wherein the temple of His body would be destroyed and rebuilt after three days (Mark 14:57-58). And Jesus suffered as a prophet, when the men who were holding Him in custody beat Him and were saying, “Prophesy, who is the one who hit You?” (Luke 22:64). And Jesus suffered as a king, when the soldiers put a purple robe on Him, and “after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head. . .and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’” (Matthew 27:29). Indeed, it was necessary for the Christ to suffer. For just like Moses, God’s Anointed Prophet would be rejected when He first came to His people (Acts 7:25); and just like Aaron, many of the leaders of the congregation would gather themselves together against the Lord and His Anointed Priest (Numbers 16:11); and just like David, God’s Anointed King would be hated and hunted before ascending the throne. But having ascended to heaven, Christ has now taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of God; where He continues to serve as God’s Anointed until the day that He comes again in His glory. For as our Prophet, Jesus continues to be our teacher, revealing to us the whole will of God; as our Priest, though He’s finished His work of atonement, He yet continues to intercede for us before the Father; and as our King, He governs and protects us from all our enemies, until the day that we too will reign together with Him.28

Jesus is God’s Anointed Prophet, Priest, and King

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFFICE</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>WORK</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>HUMILIATION</th>
<th>EXALTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROPHET</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Speaks God’s Word in His name</td>
<td>Reveals Salvation</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Teaches us God’s Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIEST</td>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>Atones for sin and bears in prayer</td>
<td>Purchases Salvation</td>
<td>Usurped</td>
<td>Intercedes for us to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KING</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>Rules land and conquers enemies</td>
<td>Applies Salvation</td>
<td>Persecuted</td>
<td>Governs and Protects us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

be oppressed. Elsewhere, speaking in the person of God, David says: ’Sit at [My] right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool’ (Psalm 110:1). Here he asserts that, no matter how many strong enemies plot to overthrow the church, they do not have sufficient strength to prevail over God’s immutable decree by which he appointed, his Son eternal King.” (Calvin, 2.15.3). 28 The Heidelberg Catechism speaks of Jesus as our prophet, priest, and king in question #31: “Why is he called ‘Christ’, meaning ‘anointed’? Because he has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance; our only high priest who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body, and who continually pleads our cause with the Father; and our eternal king who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us.” And Roberts says: “Jesus Christ Reveals the whole way and mystery of salvation, as a Prophet; Acquires and Purchases salvation revealed, as a Priest; and Applies, efficaciously salvation revealed and purchased as a King.” (p1601). And again, Roberts says: “Christ’s benefits towards us are chiefly of three sorts, [namely] 1) He makes known unto us the whole counsel and will of God touching sinner’s salvation in His word; enlightening our minds by His Spirit to understand the same. This He does as a Prophet. 2) He suffers and satisfies for the sins of His elect. . .He ever lives to make intercession for them, and thereby to impetrate all saving blessings upon them. All these and such like blessings he works for us, as a Priest. 3) He effectually applies to us all the benefits and purchases of His mediation. He subdues, calls and governs us by the spiritual scepter of His word and Spirit. . .He restrains and conquers all our enemies. . .And He will come again at last to judge the world, to take us home unto himself. . .Now all these and such like benefits He vouchsafes to us, as a King.” (Mystery and Marrow, pp1601-02).
III. The Significance of the New Covenant

1. The ESSENCE of the New Covenant: What's the same in the New Covenant?

We mentioned in our first lesson that Thomas Boston began his treatise, *A View of the Covenant of Grace* with these words: “As man’s ruin was originally owing to the breaking of the covenant of works, so his recovery, from the first to the last step thereof, is owing purely to the fulfilling of the covenant of grace.” The gospel is the story of man’s ruin and his redemption; and, as another put it, “Covenant Theology is just the gospel.” I hope you’ve seen this in our study together. The Covenant of Grace is simply the good news of what God has done for us in Jesus. In Adam, we were ruined. But God has made a way for redemption in and through Christ. And this is the singular message of the Scriptures. Both the Old Testament (or *Old Covenant*) and the New Testament (or *New Covenant*) declare the same truth: Salvation is freely offered to sinners *by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.*

In each manifestation of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament, we’ve seen Jesus: *When God drew near to Adam and his wife* in the garden after they had sinned, and made a promise in Genesis 3:15, it was a gospel promise. To be sure, it was veiled in strange and mysterious language—but it was a gospel promise nonetheless. And *God’s covenant with Noah* was just as much about the gospel, for as we saw, Noah himself was saved from the coming judgment only by sovereign grace (Genesis 6:8); and indeed, this grace was upheld and mediated only in and through sacrificial atonement (8:20-21). Even Noah was set forth as a type of Christ, through whom all who were together with him in the ark were saved from the judgment and preserved safely to the new earth. *God’s covenant with Abraham* was likewise a gospel covenant. In fact, Paul explicitly tells us that the Scripture “preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham” (Galatians 3:8); for when God told him: “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 22:18), He was speaking of Christ, who would come forth from him, and bring blessing to the world. *God’s covenant with Israel at Sinai* was no less a gospel covenant, for as Scripture clearly tells us, they had the same good news preached to them under Moses that we do (Hebrews 4:2,6); and even Christ himself said to the Jews: “if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me” (John 5:46). Last but not least, *God’s covenant with David* was all about the gospel; for the promises the Lord made to him in 2 Samuel 7 had to do with the distant future, in which God would raise up one of his descendants, and establish the throne of His kingdom forever.

What we’re saying is that there’s a fundamental unity between the new covenant and all the previous old covenant manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. *It's one Covenant of Grace.* New Testament or Old, it’s all about the gospel. Old covenant or new, it’s all about Jesus. Every manifestation of the Covenant of Grace is like an instrument playing in a brilliant orchestra; and starting with the promise in the garden, God began conducting His masterpiece. Each manifestation is like another instrument joining in, adding to the whole. And with the inauguration of the new covenant, there’s a culmination as the symphony rises to its climax. But the music hasn’t changed; it's all about Jesus and the gospel.

29 Thomas Boston’s quote is from his *View of the Covenant of Grace*, p1. The quote about Covenant Theology just being the gospel is attributed to Mark Dever; it’s cited from Ligon Duncan’s course on Covenant Theology in his lesson on the Gospels.

30 As Ball says: “the Old and New Testament...for substance [are] one and the same. They both flow from the free grace and mercy of God looking at poor sinners in Jesus Christ. They have both one common matter: the obedience of faith required, and life everlasting, and all secondary good things promised by the imputation of the righteousness of faith, and free adoption in Jesus Christ. They have both one object Jesus Christ, who being promised to the fathers in prophetical Scriptures, God has made a way for redemption in and through Christ. Both covenants are struck with mankind, as...sinners, and those which work not, but believe in him that justifies the ungodly. In both the same spirit sealed up the truth of the covenants to all under covenant; for seeing the adoption, and inheritance in some measure belonged to the fathers in the Old Testament, the earnest of that inheritance cannot be denied them. But the new covenant does in many things out-strip the old, which do[es] nothing [to] derogate from their substantial and real unity and agreement.” (pp163-64). And Roberts notes: “Every dispensation of the Covenant of Faith since the fall, preached Christ and the gospel in Him...” (p1101). And again: “The substance of the Covenant of Faith is still the same, but yet it still more and more excels itself in gradual perfections, till it attain[s] to the most perfect of all dispensations, the new covenant.” (p1216). And: “The substance of God’s covenants of Faith was but one...The circumstances were very various; but the essence and substance of them all was one and the same, [namely] the revealing and tendering of one and the same Messiah Jesus Christ to His people, as their only all-sufficient Savior through faith.” (Roberts, p1222). Again: “Jesus Christ was represented, in the first covenant, as the seed of the woman; in the second, as the true Noah; in the third, as the seed of
## The Essence of the New Covenant: What's the Same in the New Covenant?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Old Covenant</th>
<th>God's dealings with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The New Covenant</td>
<td>The birth, life, death, resurrection, and present reign of Christ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### JESUS AND THE GOSPEL:

2. The **ECONOMY** of the New Covenant: What's different in the New Covenant?

And so, the first thing we have to understand is that the new covenant is exactly the same as the old as it relates to its essence: Both are equally about the gospel, both serve to point us to Jesus, and in both we are not only saved, but also called upon to live our lives as Christians by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But though the new and the old covenants are the same in their essence—the way they differ is in their *economy*. Or, to put it another way, though they are the same in *substance*, they're different in *administration*. This is the way Paul speaks about the new covenant in Ephesians 1:10, where he marvels that we now live in "an administration suitable to the fullness of the times..." (cf. 3:8-9). In the new covenant, we live in a different administration of the Covenant of Grace. The old covenant is about the gospel as much as the new; but as we mentioned earlier, if the old covenant is like a mango plucked from the tree, the new covenant is that same mango when it's peeled, sliced up, and ready to eat. The difference doesn't have to do with the nature of the covenant, but with how it's outwardly presented. The new covenant is different from the old is in its administration.  

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### Calvin says: "The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same. Yet they differ in the mode of dispensation." (Institutes, 2.10.2). And again: "I freely admit the differences in Scripture, to which attention is called, but in such a way as not to detract from its established unity. I say that all these [differences] pertain to the manner of dispensation rather than to the substance..." (Institutes, 2.11.1). Interestingly, the Greek word for "administration" in Ephesians 1:10 and 3:9 is *oikonomia*, which is also where we get the English word *economy*. This sheds light on why the term, "economy" seemed to be interchangeable with the term "administration" in some of the older writers (most notably in the title of Herman Witsius' work, *The Economy of the Covenants*). Regarding the Scripture in Ephesians 1:10, there is some dispute about whether the "administration" Paul is speaking of is the present or the future; but Charles Hodge says this about *oikonomia* in Ephesians 1:10 and its meaning: "The apostle is speaking of God's purpose, of what He intended to do. It was a purpose having reference to a plan or economy of his own; an economy here designated as that of the fulness of times. This phrase does not indicate a protracted period—the times which remain—but the termination of the times; the end of the preceding and commencement of the new dispensation. The prophets being ignorant of the time of the Messiah's advent, predicted his coming when the time determined by God should be accomplished. Hence the expressions,'end of the ages,' (1 Corinthians 10:11); 'end of days,' (Hebrews 1:1); 'fulness of the time,' (Galatians 4:4); and here, 'the fulness of times,' are all used to designate the time of Christ's advent. By the economy of the fulness of times is therefore to be understood, that economy which was to be clearly revealed and carried out when the fulness of time had come." (Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, V3, p223).
A) The DISTINCTIVES of the New Covenant: What does this look like in particular? In the new covenant, there's a difference in emphasis. In the old covenant, the mango came to us in its skin; the kernel was packaged together with the husk. Gospel truths were set forth to us, but those truths were communicated in and through earthly pictures. But now in the new covenant, the gospel is set forth to us front and center, extracted from its earthly and temporal packaging. And as a result, there's also a difference in clarity with the new covenant. While the gospel kernel was wrapped with an outward husk, it was more hidden from view. Old Testament believers had enough gospel light to guide them in their way, but whereas their light was like the light of dawn, ours is like the brightness of noonday. In the new covenant, the Covenant of Grace also reaches its consummation; for now, Christ himself has come. What had been promised in the old covenant is now actually performed in the new; and what had been foretold in the old covenant is now truly fulfilled in the new covenant administration. And as a result, there's also an abrogation of the old covenant ceremonies and institutions, for these things were only given to a particular people (the Jews), and for a particular time (before the coming of Christ); and thus, they served only a temporary purpose. But now that Christ has come, they're no longer needed; for now that we have the kernel, we can do away with the husk. And in turn, believers in the new covenant now also enjoy a greater measure of freedom; for though it's true that the former ceremonies and institutions set forth Christ; still, they were also heavy and burdensome requirements for the people of God; and from these we've been liberated in the new covenant administration. The gospel is now also preached with much greater effect; for though the content was the same in the old covenant, yet now, God applies His Word powerfully to the hearts of His people, by His Spirit, in a much greater proportion. Indeed, if we are to make a comparison between the two administrations, we have to acknowledge that though the old was full of glory—it's eclipsed by the glory of the new.\footnote{Note: the chart below is taken from the Lesson on Sinai (Part 2); please see this lesson for a more thorough treatment of this subject. Roberts begins his treatment of the differences between the old and new covenants by informing us what those differences are not: “The disagreement or difference between the old and this new covenant is manifold. . .But the difference is not so easily assigned as the agreement between these two covenants; because sundry false differences, either corruptly devised, or inconsiderately embraced, are pretended and obtruded. . .Here therefore I shall [first] propound the disagreements between the old and new covenant, negatively, what they are not. . .The disagreement and difference between the old and new covenant, does not stand in these particulars following, [namely] 1) Not in this, that the old covenant is a Covenant of Works, holding forth righteousness, life and salvation, only upon terms of perfect and perpetual personal doing; but the new covenant is a Covenant of Grace, holding forth righteousness, life and salvation upon terms of believing in Christ. . .2) Not in this, that the old covenant is a mere carnal earthly covenant, containing mere carnal, external and earthly blessings, as Canaan, honor, [and] riches, but the new covenant is a spiritual and celestial covenant, containing also spiritual and eternal blessings. . .3) Not in this, that the old covenant is a mixed covenant, partly legal, partly evangelical; mixed of two diverse covenants, the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. . .But the new covenant is a pure evangelical covenant. . .4) Not in this, that the old covenant (in a far other sense) is mixed, [namely] . . having promises mixed; some evangelical, belonging to those to whom the gospel belongs; some domestic or civil, especially respecting the house of Abraham, and policy of Israel; but that the new covenant is purely evangelical. . .5) Not in this, that God's covenant is threefold: of nature, of grace, and subservient to the Covenant of Grace. . .6) Not in this, that the old covenant admitted and accepted, as federates with God, all the natural seed of Abraham, Isaac, [and] Jacob, though only professing faith; but the new covenant accepts none as federates, but elect and regenerate persons. . .7) Finally, the true difference between old and new covenant stands not in this, that the old covenant comprised in it as federates with God all persons professing true faith and obedience to God, and all their seed, but the new covenant is made so personally with them that actually make such profession, that it terminates in their persons, not taking in their seed as federates with them. . .These especially are those unsound and unjustifiable differences between the old and new covenant, some whereof are unadvisedly expressed by men of sounder judgement; others are most corruptly contrived for the abetting of error by men of corrupt minds.” (pp1706-08). Calvin says: “The Lord held to this orderly plan in administering the covenant of his mercy; as the day of full revelation approached with the passing of time, the more he increased each day the brightness of its manifestation. Accordingly, at the beginning when the first promise of salvation was given to Adam (Genesis 3:15) it glowed like a feeble spark. Then, as it was added to, the light grew in fullness, breaking forth increasingly and shedding its radiance more widely. At last—when all the clouds were dispersed—Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, fully illumined the whole earth (cf. Malachi 4).” (Institutes, 2.10.20). Accordingly, Roberts notes: “Every dispensation of the Covenant of Faith since the fall, preached Christ and the gospel in Him; but the later dispensations do this still much more clearly and fully than the former, and [the] last most fully and clearly of all.” (p1101). And again: “God's covenants with Adam and Noah, were as the day-dawning of saving light and grace to poor sinners; His covenant with Abraham was as the sunrise; His old covenant, comprising those with David and the captives, was as the morning light growing clearer and clearer till the
The Distinctives of the New Covenant: The Gospel and How Its Ministered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis</th>
<th>In the Old Covenant</th>
<th>In the New Covenant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>The gospel was packaged in a temporal husk</td>
<td>The gospel is set forth without the temporal husk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>The gospel was revealed but indirectly and darkly</td>
<td>The gospel is set forth with full noon-day clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consummation</td>
<td>Redemption was promised, pictured, signed</td>
<td>Redemption is performed by Christ the substance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrogation</td>
<td>The Ceremonial Laws applied to OT church</td>
<td>The Ceremonial Laws abrogated for NT church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>God’s people were held in custody and burdened</td>
<td>God’s people are set free from that bondage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect</td>
<td>God’s Word produced little effect on most hearts</td>
<td>God’s Word has a much greater effect on hearts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>Thus, the old covenant was full of gospel glory</td>
<td>But the glory of the new covenant is much greater</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The difference in the administration of the new covenant also extends to THE CHURCH. Again, it’s not that the ESSENCE of the church has changed: God’s old covenant people were the church just as much as we are today. And just as that church was visible and invisible—made up of both those who truly embraced the covenant reality and those merely under its realm—so it is now. Further, as their church included as members all professing believers, together with their children, so does ours. And as they were called to follow their Lord as the church militant, before entering glory and transforming into the church triumphant, so must we. The essence hasn’t changed, but the ADMINISTRATION is different now in the new covenant: For under the old covenant, Christ was promised, salvation was promised, an inheritance was promised. But now, Christ has come, redemption has been purchased, and the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon us; so that whereas the church under the old covenant was comparable to a child in its minority—yet to receive his inheritance—we’ve now entered into a full possession of all the benefits of the Covenant of Grace under the new covenant administration. And whereas the church in the old covenant was essentially limited to the Jews—the new covenant church has taken on a universal scope, made up of men and women from every tribe and tongue and nation under heaven. The difference in administration also extends to THE SACRAMENTS. Under the old covenant, the sacraments unfolded progressively: The first sacrament was given under Abraham (circumcision), and the second under Moses (passover). The purpose of circumcision was to initiate someone into the covenant community; and the passover served to continue to nourish them in their faith. In the new covenant, God has given us the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper. Like circumcision, baptism is administered just once, and it serves to initiate someone into the community of God’s people; whereas the Lord’s supper is to be received often by the people of God as a means strengthening and nourishing their faith. There’s also a difference in administration as it relates to THE OFFICES of the church in the new covenant. Again, the essence doesn’t change. It’s not that God has done away with shepherds and overseers in the new covenant church; but now these offices have taken a new form: Whereas formerly there were prophets, priests, and kings, the new covenant church is shepherded by elders appointed to equip God’s people for the upbuilding of the whole,33

33 Many of these things we’ve dealt with in detail over the course of our study; our purpose here is only to briefly summarize...
What are the names and titles that Scripture uses
Most of the time we've used this phrase, a new covenant
Of the church's universal scope in the new covenant, see
"The young man, though he is free, 'though he is lord of all' his father's
The Church under the old covenant was as an heir in minority; but the Church under the
extraordinary,
On the sacraments:
Roberts says: "Ever since God's promises were in Scripture called covenants, they have
the old covenant.
On the offices:
Roberts writes: "The new covenant
is a second covenant;
"The old covenant was of less and more limited extent, only to the nation of the
we've done what we can here to simply give a brief overview of the main differences in administration.

### B) The DESIGNATIONS of the New Covenant:

What are the names and titles that Scripture uses to refer to the new covenant? In three short verses in the book of Hebrews, we're given three unique designations for the new covenant: In Hebrews 8:6, the new covenant is called a better covenant; in Hebrews 8:7, it's called a second covenant; and in Hebrews 8:8, the author refers to it in the way that we're most familiar with, calling it a new covenant. We'll take these one by one, starting with the last.

In Hebrews 8:8, the author quotes from Jeremiah 31, where the Lord declares through the prophet: "Behold, days are coming," says the Lord, 'when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt..." Here in this passage, God promises to make A NEW COVENANT with His people; and this is set in contrast with the covenant that He made with them at Sinai, which would be the old covenant. Most of the time we've used this phrase, the old covenant, we've taken it as referring to all the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace, together as a whole; and this is, indeed, one way this phrase can be used. But it can also be

<table>
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<td>THE SACRAMENTS</td>
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<td>THE OFFICES</td>
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some of the things we've learned. On the church: Of the church in her minority (in the old covenant) and maturity (in the new covenant), see especially Galatians 4:1-5. Calvin notes: “The young man, though he is free, 'though he is lord of all' his father's family, still resembles a slave; for he is under the government of tutors. But the period of guardianship lasts only 'until the time appointed by the father' after which he enjoys his freedom. In this respect the fathers under the Old Testament, being the sons of God, were free; but they were not in possession of freedom, while the law held the place of their tutor, and kept them under its yoke. That slavery of the law lasted as long as it pleased God, who put an end to it at the coming of Christ." (Galatians 4:1).
And Roberts notes that the church of Christ "was essentially one under both old and new covenant", yet, among other things, they were different in that, "The Church under the old covenant was as an heir in minority; but the Church under the new covenant is as an heir come to maturity of age." (p1712). Of the church's universal scope in the new covenant, see especially Ephesians 3:1-7. Roberts writes: “The old covenant was of less and more limited extent, only to the nation of the Jews, the natural seed of Abraham... and [only] to some few Gentile proselytes embracing the Jewish religion... But this new covenant is enlarged and extended and to all nations of the world..." (p1710). Roberts draws out how incredible this is for us as Gentiles when he notes: “[God]s own peculiar people the Jews must wait many ages for this [new] covenant, and pass many gradual perparatories, especially under the old covenant, before they could be fitted for, and capable of this covenant; and yet we strangers, aliens, enemies to God, were at once exalted from our deepest pagan misery, to this highest new covenant felicity." (p1718). On the sacraments: Roberts says: “Ever since God's promises were in Scripture called covenants, they have been confirmed by visible and sensible tokens: As the covenant with Noah, by the token of the rainbow; the covenant with Israel at Sinai, by the ordinary tokens of circumcision and the passover, and for a time in the wilderness by the four extraordinary tokens, the cloudy fiery pillar, sea, manna, and water out of the Rock; the covenant with David and with the captives, by circumcision and the passover. Thus this last and most excellent covenant is confirmed by two sacramental tokens excelling all that went before, [namely] baptism and the Lord's supper; which are, in signification, clearer; in virtue, greater; in utility, better; in act, easier; [and] in number, fewer... Those sacraments were bloody, these not bloody; those signified darkly Christ to come afterwards, these signify clearly Christ come already; those were painful and costly, these without pain, and cheap; those did wax old and vanish away with the Old Covenant, these are still to continue in force till the world's end with the New Covenant. Now both in those Old, and these New covenant tokens; some were first, for initiating of persons visibly into the mystical body of Christ the church, as circumcision... which, baptism under the New Testament most fully answers, and plainly succeeds them (Colossians 2:10-13; 1 Corinthians 10:1-2). Some were second, for continuing and nourishing up persons initiated in the Church by Christ the spiritual meat and drink of the soul. As the passover... which the Lord's supper under the New Testament most fully answers, and evidently comes in the room of them (1 Corinthians 5:7; 10:3-4, 16-17; 11:29-30)." (p1678-79). And: “Baptism signifies, our putting on Christ, and union to Him; the Lord's Supper our continued communion with Him (1 Corinthians 10:16)... Baptism denotes our admission into the mystical body of Christ the Church; the Lord's Supper, our spiritual maintenance and continuance in that body (1 Corinthians 12:13)." (p1325). Vos categorizes the sacraments in this way: “Before Christ, a From Adam to Abraham—no sacrament; b) From Abraham to Moses—one sacrament; c) From Moses to Christ—two sacraments." (V2, p.137). On the offices: Roberts writes: “The new covenant ministry [is both] extraordinary, as apostles, prophets, evangelists; and ordinary, as pastors and teachers were given of Christ to his church, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ..." (p1236). There are other differences in administration as it has to do with Christ's governing of His church in the new covenant, such as: When are we to gather and what are we to do when we gather? Who are those that partake of the sacraments and how are they to be administered? What are the offices that Christ has instituted in further detail (IE, teaching versus ruling elders; and deacons), and how can it be known when God calls a man to service in such an office? These questions are important but best suited for another study; we've done what we can here to simply give a brief overview of the main differences in administration.
used to refer exclusively to the covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai; and this is how it's being used as it's contrasted here with the new. We've already examined this passage in Jeremiah 31 earlier in our study; and it's not our purpose to get back into the details here. But what is Scripture telling us when it describes this as being a new covenant? What is it about this covenant that's new? Well, the first thing we could say is that it's new in all the ways we just finished talking about. This covenant isn't new at all, as it relates to its true essence or substance; for as we've seen, Israel's covenant at Sinai was just as much about the gospel as our covenant is today. The newness, rather, has to do with its form and administration. The new moon is called new, not because it's a different moon than the one that appeared in the sky a day earlier, but because it marks the very beginning of the monthly lunar cycle. It's not new at all in its essence— but only in its form and outward appearance. In the same way, the new covenant is called new, not because it's something completely different than the old, but because of its outward form and administration. The new covenant is also called new because it replaces the former covenant, rendering it old and obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). New wine is called new, not because it comes from different grapes, but because it comes from the most recent harvest, replacing the old. In the same way, the new covenant is called new because it has come as the latest and most recent of God’s covenantal dealings, and because it serves to replace the old. Indeed, God's previous covenant was rendered old only with the arrival of the new; but now that the new has come, the old is obsolete. Finally, the new covenant is called new because it will be the administration of God's choice for as long as the world endures. Scripture tells us, “The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease . . . They are new every morning” (Lamentations 3:22-23). God's mercies are new each and every day because they never cease to exist; and so, because the Lord's mercies perpetually flow to us, they are counted as being ever new. It's the same with the new covenant; for since this is the administration of the Covenant of Grace that will endure forever and never end, it's for this reason that it's called new.34

### Why the New Covenant is Called A New Covenant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It Refers to its Form</th>
<th>New Moon</th>
<th>It's not a different moon—but the same moon in a new form</th>
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<td>It Replaces the Old</td>
<td>New Wine</td>
<td>It's not made from different grapes—but from the latest harvest</td>
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<tr>
<td>It Remains Forever</td>
<td>New Mercies</td>
<td>It's not different mercies—but a fresh continuance every day</td>
<td>Lam. 3:21-22</td>
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34 Roberts says: “This covenant is already above 1600 years old, and yet it is still new... It is called a new covenant, because: 1) It is a recent and lately established covenant. ...In Scripture, late, fresh, recent things, lately done or made, or lately begun, are called new. So, fruit lately brought forth, is called new fruit. ...So this covenant, being in comparison of all other covenants of God with man, but lately made... and the last covenant that ever God made, is justly called, a new covenant. 2) It succeeds, and antiquates or makes old the former covenant, which was given at Mount Sinai [cf. Hebrews 8:13]. ...As the Sinai covenant is counted old, because it gives place to this covenant to succeed, so this covenant is called new, because it supersedes and comes in place of the Sinai covenant. 3) This covenant is another and very diverse from that Sinai covenant which it succeeds, supersedes, and antiquates. In Scripture phrase, that which is another, diverse, or any way different from what was before, is called new. John calls [love] both an old commandment and a new; old, for the matter and substance, new, for the manner and circumstance of urging it upon them. In this sense, this covenant, being another and a very diverse covenant, both from the old covenant and from all that went before; not in substance, but in circumstance; not in essence, but in accidents; not in inward constitution, but in outward administration; is called a new covenant... 4) This covenant does advance the Church of God and members of Christ to a new state and condition. Under this covenant the Church is so reformed, refined, renewed, and the whole face of all things in the Church made new; that effectively it may well be called, a new covenant. ... 5) This covenant was a very unknown covenant, and wholly unheard of by the Church of the Jews till the days of Jeremiah, who first mentions the same prophetically. Now things unknown and unheard of, are called new; as the Athenians and strangers spent their time in nothing else but to tell or hear some new thing (Acts 17:21). ... 6) This covenant is eminent, excellent, admirable, far surpassing all former covenant expressures; therefore it may fully be called a new covenant. In Scripture-language choice, rare, eminent, excellent, admirable things, are called new. ...New wine (Psalm 4:7). ...that is, most excellent, admirable wine indeed... 7) Finally, because this covenant is still to continue recent, fresh, vigorous, new; and never to wax old or wear away while this world lasts, therefore in a special manner it is called new; as the former by reason of its waxing old, and wearing away, is called old [Hebrews 8:13]. ...Nor is it unusual with Scripture, to style things new in this sense. As the new heavens and new earth, which the Lord has promised to create; are so called, not only because of their admirable excellence, and the perfection of their renewed state; but also in regard of their constant continuance, they shall still remain before the Lord; as it is written, fresh, vigorous. [p1254-59]. And again, “The Church of Christ... was essentially one under both old and new covenant, as the new moon and the old is one essentially, differing only accidentally,” (p1712). Turretin says: “It is called 'new' not as to the substance of the covenant (which is the same in both) but: 1) as to the circumstances and mode... in which way it can be called new both intensively as to degree of light and extensively as to multitude, extending itself indiscriminately to all nations; 2) as to the excellence and glory of this dispensation which far surpasses the old (2 Corinthians 3:9-10), as new is elsewhere taken for what is remarkable and superior (Revelation 3:9; Psalm 33:3); 3) as to perpetual duration, by which it happens that it is as it were always new, while those things which ought to cease are called old.”(Institutes, V2, p232).
The new covenant is also called A SECOND COVENANT. In Hebrews 8:7, we're told: “For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.” So then, Scripture is referring to the new covenant as a second covenant; but this can create some confusion if we’re not careful. One reason for the confusion is that these same terms, first and second covenant, are also used to describe the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. And indeed, these are fitting names, for the very first covenant that God made with man was the Covenant of Works, which the Lord made with Adam while he was yet sinless in the garden. And it was after he had sinned that God drew near to him once again and entered into a second covenant with him, which was rooted in the Lord's mercy, known as the Covenant of Grace. But this is not the way the author of Hebrews is using these terms here in this passage. When he refers to the first and second covenants, he’s rather (once again) contrasting the new covenant with the covenant that God had made with Israel at Sinai. This resolves some questions, but it also creates questions of its own. For though the covenant which God made with Israel at Sinai, and the new covenant, both belong to the Covenant of Grace; still, it’s difficult to understand why they would be called the first and second. Indeed, as we just mentioned, the first manifestation of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament was God’s promise to Adam, after he had fallen, in Genesis 3:15. And this was followed by God’s covenant with Noah, as well as His covenant with Abraham. So it's difficult to see how Sinai is spoken of as the first covenant. And it's equally difficult to understand how the new covenant is spoken of as the second, especially in light of the fact that it's the Davidic covenant, not the new covenant, that comes after the covenant at Sinai! In short, these two covenants are called first and second because they are set forth as representing the two distinct administrations of the Covenant of Grace. For though there were many manifestations of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament, God's covenant at Sinai was the most illustrious; so that it serves to represent all the others. It's in this respect that Sinai is counted as the first covenant. And as Hebrews 8:7 reminds us, it's because the first was flawed that God made place for the second. We might well think of the contrast as that of a special old book from antiquity. Most of the time, it's the first edition that's most prized. But often, after that initial edition has already been published, it goes through some significant changes and revisions, which are made to further expand upon, clarify, and perfect the edition, bringing it to final form. It's the same book; but now it's the second edition that's become more valuable than the first. In the same way, we might think of Sinai and the new covenant as being different editions of the same book: The first is to be prized; but the second even more so.35

**WHY THE NEW COVENANT IS CALLED A SECOND COVENANT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE MEANING</th>
<th>THE SIGNIFICANCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST</td>
<td>Sinai as representing the entire OT administration of the Covenant of Grace</td>
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<tr>
<td>SECOND</td>
<td>New Covenant as representing NT administration of the Covenant of Grace</td>
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Lastly, the new covenant is also termed A BETTER COVENANT. Hebrews 8:6 says, “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.” In what sense is the new covenant better than the old? It's better in all the ways that we've been talking about here in this section: The new covenant is better than the old as the light of noonday is better than that of a candle. It's better than the old as a lavish

35 Regarding the confusion we noted above, William Strong wrote a book called A Discourse of the Two Covenants, in which he compared the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace; and Ezekiel Hopkins wrote a volume called The Doctrine of the Two Covenants, in which he examined the same two covenants. As we quoted earlier in our lesson on Sinai, Robert says, “It's evident [in Hebrews 8:7], that he calls that Sinai covenant the first covenant, and the new covenant, the second. But how can we understand this; seeing the Sinai covenant was not the first covenant; God's covenants with Adam, Noah and Abram going before it? Nor is the new covenant the second after the Sinai covenant, God's covenants with David, and with his captives in Babylon, coming between them. . . . The Sinai covenant, and the new covenant, are the two most illustrious, famous and eminent covenant expressures among all the rest. For, 1) These were made with greatest solemnities. 2) These were tendered to the greatest number of people; the old covenant to the whole national Church of Israel, the new covenant, to the whole eccumenical or general Church gathered out of all nations in the world Jewish and Gentile. Whereas the covenants with Adam, Noah, Abram, [and] David, were directed but to their particular persons, families and their seed. . . . [Moreover], these two covenants, beyond all other, were managed with peculiar administrations most remarkably distinct and opposite to each other. The three covenants preceding the Sinai covenant being preparatory and homogeneal in their ministrations to it; the [covenant] following the Sinai covenant being [an additional explanation] of it. . . . So that in these regards, these two covenants may be called the first, and the second; because they are the first and second most illustrious covenants; although in regard of time, and order of discovery, the old covenant was not precisely the first; nor this new, the second.” (pp1263-64).
feast is better for a hungry man than a painting of one; or as a gushing river is better for a thirsty man than its shadow. The new covenant is better than the old as having my wife face to face is better than looking at a picture of her; and as being married to her is better than the promise of having her hand in marriage. The new covenant is better than the old as being a free man is better than having to live in custody; and as growing into maturity is better than remaining a child. The new is better than the old as having a torrential downpour of God's Spirit is better than having drops. And indeed, the new covenant is better than the old as having a church made up of all nations is better than a church that's limited to just one. Again, it's not that the new covenant is something different from the old in its true essence or substance. Just as the new moon is the same as the old in its essence, and just as the older wine came from the same grapes as the new, both old and new covenants belong to the Covenant of Grace. But if compare these two distinct administrations, we have to acknowledge the new is better. 36

### Why the New Covenant is Called a Better Covenant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOOD</th>
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<th>PAINTING OF A TASTY FEAST</th>
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<th>CHILDHOOD</th>
<th>DROPS OF THE SPIRIT</th>
<th>OLD COVENANT</th>
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<td>BETTER</td>
<td>LIGHT OF NOONDAY</td>
<td>THE LAVISH BANQUET ITSELF</td>
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<td>A TORRENTIAL DOWPOUR</td>
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C) The Dignity of the New Covenant: There is a beautiful passage in Ezekiel 37, where the Lord proclaims: “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.” (vv24-28). In one sense, the prophet is looking forward to a day yet to come; but in a very real sense, he's also speaking of the new covenant.

And as he does so, the first thing we see is that the new covenant is THE FULFILLMENT of all the previous manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. In verse 27, the Lord declares, “and I will be their God, and they will be My people.” This, of course, isn't anything new. This has been the heartbeat of the Covenant of Grace from the very beginning. It was the goal of God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:7-8); just as it was the goal of God's covenant at Sinai (Exodus 6:6-7). But it's in the new covenant that it finds it’s fulfillment, because this doesn't happen apart from Jesus. It's in Christ that God the Creator has become God our Redeemer; that we've become His people, and He's become our God. So again, the new covenant is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace; and we also see this in verse 26, where it's called “an everlasting covenant.” This is significant, because this same phrase was also used to describe God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:16); His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:7-19), and His covenant with David (2 Samuel 23:5); but now, all these old covenant forms are brought to their true and proper fulfillment in and through the new covenant. And we don't only see this truth in verse 26, we also see it throughout this passage. For in the new covenant, David will be king over God's people (verse 24). And in the new covenant, God's people will be characterized as a people who keep God's Law, which He gave to them at Sinai (verse 24). Moreover, in the new covenant, the people of the Lord will live on the land that God had

36 As Roberts says: “Now this new covenant is called a better covenant and testament in opposition to the old covenant and testament. And this, not in essence and substance, but in accidents and circumstance; [namely] 1) Because it is established on better promises, more spiritual and heavenly, more clear, and universal, to all nations. 2) Because it is not an earthly, servile, slavish, terrible dispensation,. . .but a heavenly, free, filial and comfortable dispensation,. . . 3) Because it was dedicated with better sacrifice and blood, than the old covenant,. . .the true sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ crucified,. . . 4) Because it is administered by a better priesthood,. . .the priesthood of Jesus Christ,. . . 5) Because it [thus] has many excellencies, privileges, and prerogatives above the old covenant,. . .” (pp1264-65). And again: “The new covenant is deservedly said to be established upon better promises, [namely] upon better promises than the old covenant was established upon. Why? For this reason especially: Because the old covenant did principally run upon promises of outward and temporal blessings, as the inheritance of the land of Canaan, long life there, honor, wealth, peace and all outward prosperity there,. . .But here the whole current of the new covenant runs only upon spirituals. That, was a more carnal; this, a more spiritual covenant. That, had more of earth in it; this, more of heaven.” (Roberts, p1350). In another place, Roberts further clarifies how the new covenant promises are better: “1) Better in regard of perspicuity and clearness,. . . 2) Better in regard of spirituality,. . . 3) Better in regard of divine efficacy and sufficiency,. . . 4) Better in regard to extent,. . . [and] Better in regard of duration,. . .” (pp1673-75).
given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (verse 25). In other words, the new covenant is the fulfillment of the Noahic Covenant; it's the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant; it's the fulfillment of the Mosaic Covenant; and it's the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. What we see here in Ezekiel 37 is that the new covenant brings to fulfillment all the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace.35

### The New Covenant: The Fulfillment of the Covenant of Grace

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<td>Noah, Abraham, David</td>
<td>The New Covenant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attributes</td>
<td>“David will be king... they'll keep My statutes and... live on the land”</td>
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As the new covenant is the fulfillment of the Covenant of Grace, it’s also the Final Edition of the Covenant of Grace. In other words, the new covenant administration is permanent; it will never be replaced or come to an end. While the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace were temporary, the new covenant will endure as long as the world remains. We see this emphasized throughout this passage as well, for as the prophet looks ahead to the new covenant, he clearly speaks of it using a language of permanence and perpetuity. For indeed, in the new covenant, God’s people will live on the land, together with their sons, and sons’ sons, forever (verse 25). In the new covenant, David, the specially appointed servant of the Lord, will be prince of God’s people forever (verse 25). And in the new covenant, God himself will set His sanctuary in the midst of His people forever (vv26, 28). And just as we mentioned above, verse 26 tells us the new covenant is “an everlasting covenant.” God’s covenants with Noah, Abraham, and David were described in the same way, but whereas they were everlasting as it related to their essence and substance (as being part of the Covenant of Grace), the new covenant is also everlasting as it relates to its form and administration. Indeed, the Covenant of Grace itself is permanent; but whereas the old covenant is described as that which fades away, the new covenant is described as being that which remains (2 Corinthians 3:11). And it’s under this new covenant administration that Jesus himself will continue to shepherd His people until the day that He comes again “to be glorified in His saints... and to be marveled at among all who have believed.”38

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35 Roberts puts it thus: “As God’s covenants surpass all other covenants, so this new covenant is the last and best of all God’s covenants,” (p1696). And again: “As God’s covenants are the marrow of Holy Scriptures; and the new covenant the flower and spirits of the covenants; so Jesus Christ our mediator, is the life and soul of the new covenant.” (p1650). He adds: “The New Covenant is the Rock, Christ the water that flows from it. The New Covenant is the cloud, Christ the manna that rained from it. The New Covenant is the honey-comb, Christ the honey that drops from it. The New Covenant is the cabinet, Christ is the jewel that’s locked up in it.” (p1694). And, “Hence, how great are the privileges of God’s new covenant people!... To be in covenant with God not only by outward, but also by inward federation, is most advantageous; such are safe in the ark, when the rest of the world is drowned; such are blessed with Abraham, when all the rest of the world are cursed; such are God’s peculiar treasure and special people with Israel, when all the rest of the world are not His people. But to be God’s sincere new covenant people, in power as well as form, in truth as well as name, is most glorious. As the new covenant’s pre-eminencies are above those of all other covenants, so the new covenant people’s privileges are above all other federate’s privileges.” (Roberts, p1714). On the theme and goal of the Covenant of Grace, Boston writes: “Hebrews 8:10 [says], I will be their God.’ This is more than reconciliation, and adoption; it is the height of the relation to God, which a sinful creature could be advanced unto. They were by nature ‘without God’ (Ephesians 2:12); but forasmuch as the Son of God did, in the covenant, undertake to give himself for them, in their nature perfectly to satisfy the law, in his holy birth, righteous life, and exquisite death; a ransom of infinite value, quite beyond all created things whatsoever, grace, pardons, heavens; there was made, upon that consideration, a promise of God’s giving himself to them, as the adequate reward of that service; which being performed by the Mediator, this reward was purchased for them. Hence God says to Abraham, ‘Genesis 15:1, I am thy exceeding great reward.’ Now, to the believer being justified, reconciled, and adopted into the family of God, this heritage falls in accomplishment of this promise, Romans 8:17: ‘And if children, then heirs; heirs of God.’ Galatians 4:7: ‘And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ;’ God himself being the heritage. He becomes their God...” (p131). And Rhodes notes: “Matthew also draws our attention to the fact that Jesus will be called Immanuel, which means: ‘God with us.’ ‘I will be your God, and you will be my people’ has been the recurring melody of the covenant. Jesus quite literally embodies this principle—he is God with us.” (Chapter 7).

38 Roberts says: “All other covenant administrations have waxed old and worn away; only this covenant administration remains still fresh and new, and shall not vanish away till the world’s end. This new covenant succeeds and supersedes them all; but no other shall succeed or supersede this new covenant.” (pp1238-39). Again: “The old covenant endured only from the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, till the death of Jesus Christ. But the new covenant abolishing the old... continues still new from Christ’s death till the end of the world...” (p1712). And in another place, in speaking of Hebrews 13:20-21, he writes, “This new covenant is everlasting in a double sense; [namely] 1) Absolutely Everlasting, so as it shall never know any end, in regard of the primary essence and substance of it. The Lord will be their God, and they His people forever, even in glory. 2) Respectively Everlasting. [that is,] everlasting in respect of the... administration of it. This New Testament ministration... shall continue till the world’s end. The Old Testament ministration [IE, of the Covenant of Grace] is called, that which is
3. The EPILOGUE of the New Covenant: What's still to come in the New Covenant?

It's now time to draw our study to a close. But as we do, there's one last subject we need to address. It's true that we've saved this topic for the final section; but it's not because it's an afterthought; rather, we wanted to save the best for last. What we are going to discuss in this final section is very precious to me; and my prayer and earnest desire is that it might also become something very precious to you.

The truth is, there's a surprise ending in the new covenant. Maybe you've read a book or seen a film with a surprise ending. Everything in the story was going just as it should have; and you fully expected it to turn out in a certain way. But just as the story is drawing to its close, it takes a dramatic turn; and you're left awed and speechless. Well, we're at the point now in our study where it seems we should be closing up shop. We've learned a lot about the covenants. We now have an understanding of the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace; and we've seen how the Covenant of Grace is really just another name for the gospel. We've discovered that there's a fundamental unity between the Old and New Testaments. But at the same time, we've also learned how the new covenant is distinct from the old; and perhaps we've been amazed and humbled in particular that God's new covenant church has become universal in scope; so that instead of being limited to just one nation, God's grace is now extended worldwide. This seems a fitting place to say: And God's people lived happily ever after.

But the story doesn't end here. And in particular, the story doesn't end here for ethnic Israel. From what we've learned so far, we might be left with the impression that Gentiles have essentially taken the place of ethnic Jews in the new covenant church. That is, there's still a few believing Jews; but by and large, the church of the new covenant is primarily a Gentile church. It makes sense to us: In the Old Testament, God's people were largely Jews. But at Pentecost, the floodgates were burst open, so that now the nations have been included in God's plan of salvation. And at the same time, we know that the Jewish nation rejected their own Messiah; so it appears to us that God has given them over to the stubbornness of their ways; perhaps—we even think—fittingly so. And then, our own experience tends to validate these assumptions; because when we look at the church, it's predominately Gentile; and in fact, overwhelmingly so; to such an extent that it's a rare thing to even come across a Jewish believer in Christ. In Ephesians 3:1-10, Paul spoke about something that he referred to as a mystery; and the mystery was this: that the Gentiles have been grafted into the body of Christ. It's commonplace to us, but it would have been something astonishing and wonderful for Jews who were living in the days of the old covenant. Well, in Romans 11:25, Paul speaks about another mystery; and the mystery that he refers to in this passage has to do with the Jews. It will likely be just as astonishing and wonderful to us, but what Paul is going to share with us in Romans 11 is that God isn't done with ethnic Israel.39

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39 We're going to get into Romans 11 below and make our conclusions from the text itself. But at the outset, we also wanted to...
A) EXPOZITING the TEXT: As we come to this passage in Romans 11, it would be good to begin with some context. Throughout chapters 9-10, Paul had been dealing with the JEWS' REJECTION OF CHRIST. In Romans 9, he writes: “What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. . .” (vv30-32). And then later, in Romans 10, Paul quotes Moses and Isaiah as the Lord rebukes Israel and announces His future plan for including Gentiles: “Moses says, ‘I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding I will anger you.’ And Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.’ But as for Israel He says, ‘All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.’” (10:19-21). This last passage, in fact, represents the final words that Paul speaks in Romans 10; and thus serves as the immediate context of Romans 11. But what's important for us to see in all these passages leading up to Romans 11 is that when Paul uses the term “Israel” in this context, he's talking about ethnic Jews.

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provide a small sampling of quotes from significant theologians on this subject. To begin, Iain Murray shows this isn't a strange or outlandish teaching when he notes: “From the first quarter of the seventeenth century, belief in a future conversion of the Jews became commonplace among the English Puritans.” (The Puritan Hope). Witsius says: “We may reckon among the benefits of the New Testament the restoration of the Israelites, who were formerly rejected, and the bringing them back to the communion of God in Christ.” (V2, p413). And Vos writes: “The Jews for the most part apostatized, but they were not all put aside so that the Gentiles simply take their place. Rather, the Gentiles were grafted as branches on the domesticated olive tree to share in the rich oil of the covenant (Romans 11).” (V2, p135). And he concludes: “It seems to us that the conversion of Israel is clearly predicted. But that will not occur in order to make Israel a special nation and give it back its old separate position; that would be an anachronism in the days of the New Testament. Nor will it be in order to return the Jews to the holy land.” (V3, p279). Vos asks, “Where is the conversion of the Jews spoken of as a sign of the end?” In general, in all of the prophecies of the Old Testament that speak of the apostasy and the return of the Jews; more specifically, in Zechariah 12 and 11 and Romans 11. Romans 11 speaks of a national conversion, that is, a conversion of the majority...what is meant is something as a whole, something national...” (V3, p279). Interestingly, Vos later addresses why some are fearful to embrace this doctrine: “What makes the treatment of the further details of this conversion [of ethnic Israel] so difficult? Because for one thing it has been associated with the anticipated return of the Jews to the Holy Land, for another with the millennial kingdom. This already happened quite early (Justin, Irenaeus). In reaction, the opponents of chiliasm have not infrequently denied the general conversion of the Jews (e.g. Augustine).” (V5, p279). Jonathan Edwards asserts: “Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews is in the eleventh chapter of Romans. And there are also many passages of the Old Testament that cannot be interpreted in any other sense, that I cannot now stand to mention. Besides the prophecies of the calling of the Jews, we have a remarkable seal of the fulfillment of this great event in providence by a thing that is a kind of continual miracle, [namely] their being preserved a distinct nation in such a dispersed condition for above sixteen hundred years. The world affords nothing else like it. There is undoubtedly a remarkable hand of providence in it. When they shall be called, then shall that ancient people that were alone God's people for so long a time be God's people again, never to be rejected more; they shall then be gathered into one fold together with the Gentiles; and so also shall the remains of the ten tribes wherever they be, and though they have been rejected much longer than the Jews, be brought in with their brethren, the Jews. The prophecies of Hosea especially seem to hold this forth, that in the future glorious times of the church both Judah and Ephraim, or Judah and the ten tribes, shall be brought in together, and shall be united as one people as they formerly were under David and Solomon as [in] Hosea 1:11, and so in the last chapter of Hosea, and other parts of his prophecy. Though we do not know the time in which this conversion of the nation of Israel will come to pass, yet thus much we may determine by Scripture, that it will be before the glory of the Gentile part of the church shall be fully accomplished; because it is said that their coming in shall be life from the dead to the Gentiles (Romans 11:12,15).” (History of Redemption). And Spurgeon says: “I think we do not attach sufficient importance to the restoration of the Jews. We do not think enough of it. But certainly, if there is anything promised in the Bible it is this. I imagine that you cannot read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is to be an actual restoration of the children of Israel. Thither they shall go up; they shall come with weeping unto Zion, and with supplications unto Jerusalem.” May that happy day soon come! For when the Jews are restored, then the fullness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in; and as soon as they return, then Jesus will come upon Mount Zion to reign with his ancients gloriously, and the halcyon days of the Millennium shall then dawn; we shall then know every man to be a brother and a friend; Christ shall rule with universal sway.” (Sermons, VI, 1855). And Charles Hodge writes: “As the rejection of the Jews was not total, so neither is it final. . .The future restoration of the Jews is, in itself, a more probable event than the introduction of the Gentiles into the church of God.” (Romans). We'll also be quoting others, such as Matthew Henry, John Gill, Roberts, and Haldane; along with more recent authors such as Douglas Moo. For a helpful summary of this subject, see Witsius' The Restoration of the Jews.
This is where we pick up with Romans 11, where Paul's main object in verses 1-10 is to show us that THE JEWS' REJECTION OF CHRIST IS NOT TOTAL. He begins in verse 1 with an emphatic declaration: “I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!” (cf. v2a). Paul goes on to use himself as a living attestation of this very truth: “For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.” (vv1b-2). Again, it's clear from what Paul's saying here that he's talking about ethnic Israel; and he proceeds to set forth an illustration of the same truth from the Old Testament: “Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 'Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.' But what is the divine response to him? 'I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.'” (vv2-4). Elijah thought he was the only one left in Israel who believed in the Lord during a time of great apostasy. If he was killed, it seemed faith in the Lord would vanish entirely. But God's response to Elijah showed that however bad things might get in Israel, the Lord himself was preserving a remnant of Israelite believers. Paul concludes with this application: “In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.” (verse 5). In other words, Paul's telling us that the situation today in Israel is just like it was in Elijah's day. It may have seemed like there were no believers in Israel during that time—but God was at work all the while, behind the scenes, preserving a remnant for himself. And He's doing the same thing today. That's Paul's whole point here in this first section of Romans 11. The Jews' rejection of Christ is not total, because God is at work, behind the scenes, preserving for himself a remnant. Paul does end this section with a final clarification, in verses 6-10, that the vast majority of Israelites are still indeed hardened. But even in the midst of this general hardening, God is preserving His remnant.10

ROMANS 11:1-10: THE JEWS' REJECTION OF CHRIST IS NOT TOTAL

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<td>“In the same way. . .there has also come to be at the present time a remnant”</td>
<td>“What then? . . .those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened”</td>
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But that's not all. Paul's aim isn't just to tell us that God has an elect remnant among the Jews. It's not until the second part of the chapter that we get to the surprise ending; because what we're going to see is that just as the Jews' rejection of Christ is not total; it's also true that THE JEWS' REJECTION OF CHRIST IS NOT FINAL. As we get into this second part of the passage, it might be helpful to see that Romans 11 is structured around two questions; which, in turn, naturally divide the text into two distinct sections. In verse 1, Paul had asked: "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!" Well, as we get to verse 11, Paul asks a second question: “I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be!” He's referring to ethnic Jews, as a whole; for though God has a remnant among them, the great majority of them are hardened. Well, here in this second question, Paul's asking whether or not they did stumble so as to fall. In other words, he's asking if this hardening is going to last—if this is the end for Israel—if they've fallen for good—if they've stumbled in such a way that they'll never rise again. And Paul's answer is an emphatic, no. Let that sink in: Paul's telling us that though Israel has stumbled, becoming hardened as a nation; it won't be the final word.11

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10 As Thomas Blake notes from this passage: “[The Apostle limits] this doctrine of [the Jews’] rejection. . .That it was not total. . .That it was not total, . . .That it was not total, he first asserts, secondly proves. Asserts, verse 1, I say then, has God cast away his people? God forbid. Proves by a threefold argument: 1) By instance in himself, verse 1: ‘For I am also an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin,’ and he does not dispute for his own rejection. 2) By instance in the elect of God, verse 2: ‘God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.’ 3) From a parallel Scripture out of 1 Kings 18, which parallel he first lays down, verses 2-4. And afterward applies, verse 5: ‘Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.’ And so falls into a digression concerning grace and works (verses 6-11).” (Treatise of the Covenant of God, p324).

11 On Romans 11:11, Hodge says, “This verse begins with the same formula as the first verse of the chapter, and for the same reason. As there the apostle wished to have it understood that the rejection of God's ancient people was not entire, so here he teaches that this rejection is not final.” And Haldane writes on Romans 11:11: “Having proved that God had not cast away His people, by referring to the fact that even then a remnant, according to the election of grace, was preserved, Paul supports his denial of their rejection by the consideration that in process of time the whole nation shall be restored. This restoration, as
Verses 11-16 show us there was a design in Israel's hardening, but it wasn't to cast Israel away. Rather, as Paul says in verse 11: "But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles." In other words, God had a design in giving the Jewish nation over to stumbling; but that design was never that they would stumble so as to fall—it was that by their stumbling the Gentiles might be saved. They've been hardened, to be sure. But that hardening came for a purpose—and it's to end in recovery. Paul is going to get back to the Jews' recovery in verses 25-26, but before he can talk more about the Jews, he knows he needs to address us as Gentiles. He doesn't want us to become arrogant about the way things have become in the church; and so, in verses 17-24, Paul sets forth for us a lesson from Israel's hardening. The church is like an olive tree: Abraham is the root; his descendants are the branches. Some of those branches were broken off; they represent ethnic Jews. Other branches were grafted in among the others, taken from wild olives; they represent the Gentiles. And Paul's urging his Gentile audience not to be arrogant; because, first of all, they're growing as branches on a Jewish tree, not the other way around (vv17-18). And secondly, they're grafted into this tree by faith, and so they ought to fear; for if God didn't spare the natural branches—but cut them off for their unbelief—then He won't spare us either (vv19-22). Paul then closes this section by coming back to the Jews; and this is what he says: Not only is the Lord able to cut off Gentile branches because of their unbelief; He's also able to graft the natural ones back in. For, as Paul tells us, if the wild branches can be grafted in "contrary to nature," how much more "will the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?" (vv23-24).

If Paul had stopped there, we would've been left with the impression that God is very able to graft the Jewish people back into the new covenant church. But we would have been left wondering whether or not that was something God was actually going to do. Thankfully, Paul doesn't stop there. Right after he tells us in verses 23-24 that God is able to graft the natural branches back into their own tree, he knows he needs to address us as Gentiles. He doesn't want us to become arrogant about the way things have become in the church; and so, in verses 17-24, Paul sets forth for us a lesson from Israel's hardening.
this is what Paul says in Romans 11:25-26: “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved...” Before we unpack what Paul is saying here, we need to address two other misguided views of this passage: First, there are some who contend that though Paul is using the term “Israel” in verse 25 to speak of ethnic Jews, he’s using that same term “Israel” in verse 26 [IE, “all Israel”] to speak of mystical Israel; that is, God’s people as a whole, made up of both Jew and Gentile alike. This interpretation requires a bit of exegetical gymnastics; changing “until” to “in order that;” so that the passage now says: “a measure of hardening has happened to the Jews in order that the fullness of the Gentiles might come in; that all God’s people, Jew and Gentile, will be saved.” Aside from having to depart from the plain reading of the text, this interpretation falls short because of the context of the passage. As one writer points out: “In these three chapters (Romans 9-11) the term ‘Israel’ occurs no less than eleven times. And in the preceding ten cases it refers indisputably to the Jews, in contrast with the Gentiles. What compelling reason can there be... to accept another meaning here?” And not only is the context before verse 26 compelling; but even immediately afterwards, in verse 28, Paul’s still talking about the Jews. This view also falls short because of the purpose of the passage. Remember, the whole reason Paul is writing all this is to humble the Gentiles (vv18,25); but the notion that God had hardened the Jews in order to make way for the Gentiles would actually serve to do the opposite—kindling their pride all the more. A second view of this passage understands “all Israel” in verse 26 as indeed referring to the Jews, but specifically, to the small remnant of elect Jews that God would preserve throughout time. This view also requires some exegetical gymnastics; but this time it involves changing “and so” to “nevertheless” in verse 26; so that the passage reads: “a measure of hardening has indeed happened to the Jews until the very end; nevertheless, all of God’s elect from among the Jews will be saved.” Aside from having to depart, once again, from the plain reading of the text, this view also falls short; this time, because of the subject of the passage. In verse 25, Paul describes what he’s about to share with us as a profound mystery; but is there really anything “mysterious” about the fact that God is saving a small number of elect Jews? This view also falls short because it fails to fit with the logic of the passage. There’s a clear connection between verse 25 and what Paul had said just prior to that; and in verses 23-24, Paul isn’t talking about preserving the branches that remain—but grafting back in the ones which were cut off.43

43 The quote is from Iain Murray’s, The Puritan Hope, pp62-63. Calvin was, in fact, a proponent of the Mystical Israel view, as is evident from his commentary on Romans 11:25. The Remnant of Israel view, as Iain Murray explains, “was apparently common in the early seventeenth century, but it was almost uniformly rejected by English and Scottish expositors of the Puritan school.” (p64). Murray himself exposits much of Romans 11 in a helpful way (cf. pp59-72). Charles Hodge writes: “1) Many understand the apostle as not predicting any remarkable future conversion of the Jewish nation, but merely declaring that the hardening or blinding of the nation, was not such as to prevent many Jews entering the Christian church, as long as the Gentiles continued to come in. Thus all the true Israel, embracing Jews as well as Gentiles, should ultimately be saved. 2) The second general view supposes the apostle, on the contrary, to predict a great and general conversion of the Jewish people, which should take place when the fullness of the Gentiles had been brought in, and that then, and not till then, those prophecies should be fully accomplished which speak of the salvation of Israel. The former of these views was presented, in different forms, by the great body of the authors who lived about the time of the Reformation; who were led by the extravagancies of the Millenarians, who built much on this passage, to explain away its prophetic character almost entirely. . .The second view has been the one generally received in every age of the church, with the exception of the period just referred to.” (Romans 11:23). And Witsius says: “From what we have said before, it appears, that they depart from the apostle’s meaning, who, by all Israel, understand the mystical Israel, or the people of God, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, without admitting the conversion of the whole Jewish nation to Christ, in the sense we have mentioned. Notwithstanding this may be confirmed by the following arguments: 1) First: The apostle speaks of that Israel, to whom he ascribes his own pedigree (verse 1) whom he calls his flesh, that is, his kindred (verse 14) and the natural branches (verse 21) whom he constantly distinguishes from the Gentiles; to whom he testifies, blindness is happened. All this is applicable to Israel properly so called. 2) Secondly: He lays before us a mystery; but it was no mystery that a very few Jews were converted to Christ together with the Gentiles; for we have daily instances of that. 3) Thirdly: He reminds the Gentiles not to exult over, or despise the Jews, from this argument, that, as they themselves were now taken in among the people of God, so, in like manner, the Jews were in due time to be taken in again. But if the apostle meant, that the body of the Jewish nation was to continue in their hardness; but and a few of them to be saved, who, joined to the Gentiles, should form a mystical Israel, the whole of that discourse would be more adapted to the commendation of the Gentiles than of the Israelites; and encourage rather than repress the pride of the Gentiles. 4) Fourthly: As the fall and diminishing of Israel (verse 12) and their casting away (verse 15) are to be understood; so likewise the receiving and saving them; for here the rules of a just opposition must be observed. But the fall, diminishing, and casting away of Israel are to be understood of the generality of the Jewish nation; therefore the receiving and saving of Israel in like manner.” (V2, pp414-15). And the ESV Study Bible provides this helpful summary: “Various interpreters have claimed that Paul is speaking of: 1) the salvation of the church of Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles, throughout history; or 2) the saving of a remnant of Jews throughout history; or 3) the salvation of the end-time generation of the Jewish people in the future. The first view is unlikely since throughout chapters 9-11 Israel and Gentiles are distinct ethnic entities. Furthermore, in 11:25 Israel refers to ethnic
In verses 23-24, Paul had spoken of the possibility of Israel as a nation being grafted back in to God's new covenant church. In verses 25-26, he's declaring the certainty of it. Way back in verse 11, Paul had asked if God was finished with Israel; and he had answered with an emphatic, no: “May it never be!” But as it's often the case with Paul, he got a bit sidetracked along the way as he sought to provide a fuller explanation. In verses 11-16, he felt the need to explain that even Israel's present hardening is indeed part of God's sovereign design to extend salvation to the nations. And then in verses 17-24, having just spoken of God's plan to include the nations, Paul felt the need to address us as Gentiles; reminding us that we've been grafted into a Jewish tree, and we're only here by faith; and that God is not only able to cut off the wild branches because of unbelief—but also to graft the natural ones back in again. This is the context of Paul's words in Romans 11:25-26: “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved. . .” The “partial hardening” is the present situation among ethnic Jews; it's partial because God still has His remnant among them, even now; but it's the majority who are hardened. However, as Paul tells us, this hardening that has happened to Israel, will only continue “until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in. . .” at which point, “all Israel will be saved.” In other words, presently, God is indeed at work primarily among the Gentiles; but there is a future time coming when “the fulness of the Gentiles” will be reached. And Paul's telling us that when that happens, “all Israel will be saved.” Who is “all Israel”? It's the same Israel he's been talking about over the course of Romans 9-11; it's ethnic Jews as a whole; corporately; as a nation. Presently, there's a remnant of Jews who have come to faith in Christ, but by and large, Israel as a nation has rejected Him. Well, just as Israel as a nation has rejected Him until now—Paul's telling us—Israel as a nation will return to Him once again. Paul's not saying that every Jew who has ever lived will ultimately be saved; he's not talking about some kind of universal salvation for the Jews—but rather—that there's a time coming when ethnic Jews will repent of their sins, return to the Lord, and put their faith in Christ. Paul's also not telling us that when this happens, every single Jew will be brought to salvation. But just as by and large, the Jewish nation has rejected their Messiah; the time is coming that by and large, the Jewish nation will turn back to Him.44

44 As Witsius notes: “We may reckon among the benefits of the New Testament the restoration of the Israelites, who were formerly rejected, and the bringing them back to the communion of God in Christ. Paul has unfolded this mystery to the Gentiles, Romans 11:25-27. . .On this place observe, 1) First: That the apostle here explains some mystery; that is, a secret thing, not known but by revelation, and taken notice of by few, and happening beyond the expectation and judgment of reason; [in sum], the whole method and manner of executing which, lies in a great measure concealed. . . 2) Secondly: That it is the interest of the Gentiles to be acquainted with this mystery, to prevent their entertaining higher thoughts concerning God, and yet their elect will be saved Small number of elect Jews through time. . . 3) Thirdly: The apostle here speaks of the people of Israel, not figuratively but properly so called; who were at this time blind, obdurate, stupid, and hardened, of which [in] verse 7 Isaiah foretold this judgment of God against Israel at large [cf. Isaiah 29:10-11]. . .In short, this is that foreordained condition of the blinded nation of the Jews, which taking its rise in the apostles time, continues to this our day. 4) Fourthly: That this blindness is in part happened to Israel. The whole nation, from its first origin even to the end of the world, is considered as one whole; a certain part of which are those, who either have, or now do, or hereafter shall live in the days of the wrath and indignation of God; blindness has seized that part only. 5) Fifthly: That blindness is to continue upon them no longer, than till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. . .Which indeed, began to be done by the apostles and their fellow-laborers; but could not be done perfectly. . .This therefore still remains to be done successively. . .The offer of grace was first made to the Israelites. When they refused it, it was sent to the Gentiles; but when the fulness of them shall be brought in, it will be again given to the Israelites. . . 6) Sixthly: That when the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in, all Israel shall be saved; that is, as our Dutch commentators well observe, not a few, but a very great number, and in a manner the whole Jewish nation, in a full body.” (Witsius, V2, pp413-14). And Hodge writes: “The second general view supposes the apostle... to predict a great and general conversion of the Jewish people, which should take place when the fulness of the Gentiles had been brought in, and that then,
This brings us back to verses 11-16, where we'll close our study of this passage. Notice what Paul says in verses 12 and 15 as he talks about Israel's hardening and restoration: “Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! . . . For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?” What Paul says here is important, first of all, because it serves as a confirmation of our interpretation of verses 25-26. Notice that it’s the very group of people who had rebelled that are now being received; it’s the same ones who had rejected the Lord that are now being readmitted. For and not till then, those prophecies should be fully accomplished which speak of the salvation of Israel. . . [This] second view has been the one generally received in every age of the church. . . That it is the correct interpretation, appears evident for the following reasons: [1] The whole context and drift of the apostle’s discourse is in its favor. In the preceding part of the chapter, Paul, in the plainest terms, had taught that the conversion of the Jews was a probable event, and that it would be in the highest degree beneficial and glorious for the whole world. . . [2] It is evident that Paul meant to say, that the Jews were to be restored in the sense in which they were then rejected. They were then rejected not merely as individuals, but as a community, and therefore are to be restored as a community; see verses 11,15. . . [3] It is plain from this and other parts of the discourse, that Paul refers to a great event; something which should attract universal attention. . . [4] The gradual conversion of a few Jews is no mystery, in the scriptural sense of the word. . . [3] The words, all Israel, in the next verse, cannot, as the first interpretation mentioned above would require, be understood of the spiritual Israel; because the word is just before used in a different sense, blindness in part has happened unto Israel . . . [6] The words latria's body correctly rendered in our version, until, cannot, so consistently with usage, be translated, as long as, or so that, followed as they are here by the aorist subjunctive; see Revelation 1:58; 17:17; compare Hebrews 3:13. . . [7] The following verses seem to require this interpretation. The result contemplated is one which shall be a full accomplishment of those prophecies which predicted the salvation of the Jews. The reason given in verses 28-29, for the event to which Paul refers, is the unchangeableness of God's purposes and covenant. . . From all these considerations, it seems obvious that Paul intended here to predict that the time would come when the Jews, as a body, should be converted unto the Lord. . . ” (Hodge on Romans 11:25). Haldane notes on Romans 11:25: “Having in the two preceding verses exhibited first the possibility, and next the probability, of the restoration of the Jews, according to the order of God's providence, the Apostle, in this and the following verses, down to the 28th, goes on to prove the certainty of the future conversion and restoration of Israel. He here addresses the Gentiles as his brethren, thus expressing his affection for them, and stimulates their attention, by declaring that he was about the reveal to them a mystery—a thing hitherto hidden or unknown. The restoration of the Jews is called a mystery, for though declared in the Scriptures, it was not understood. And in this mystery there were two parts, both of which are here unfolded; first, that blindness is happened to Israel in part only; and, secondly, that this blindness should continue till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. This mystery was opened to prevent the Gentiles from being wise in their own conceits, that is, from being puffed up on account of the preference they now enjoy.” And again on verse 26: “Here the Apostle further unfolds the mystery of which he would not have his brethren to be ignorant. In the foregoing verse he had declared that blindness had come upon Israel—that blindness which he had before shown was inflicted on part of the Jewish nation by the judgment of God (verses 8-10), which would continue till a certain period was accomplished. He now declares that at that period all Israel shall be saved. The rejection of Israel has been general, but at no period universal. This rejection is to continue till the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. Then the people of Israel, as a body, shall be brought to the faith of the Gospel.” Matthew Henry writes: “The JEWS as a nation will embrace Him. Only a small number of Jews are saved. The harvesting of Gentiles and relates to the latter day, when a nation of them shall be born again at once; when, their number being as the sand of the sea, they shall come up out of the lands where they are dispersed, and appoint them one head, Christ, and great shall be the corruptions of the Gentiles under Christ the great Shepherd.” (Haldane on Romans 11:26). And Gill affirms: “And so all Israel shall be saved: Meaning not the mystical spiritual Israel of God, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, who shall appear to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, when all God's elect among the latter are gathered in, which is the sense many give into; but the people of the JEWS, the generality of them, the body of that nation, called the fulness of them (Romans 11:12), and relates to the latter day, when a nation of them shall be born again at once; when, their number being as the sand of the sea, they shall come up out of the lands where they are dispersed, and appoint them one head, Christ, and great shall be the day of Jezebel; when they as a body, even the far greater part of them that shall be in being, shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their King; shall acknowledge Jesus to be the true Messiah, and shall look to him, believe on him, and be saved by him from wrath to come.” (Romans 11:26). And Moo likewise concludes: “Israel's present hostility toward God, manifested in her general refusal of the gospel (cf. 9:30-10:21), is itself part of God's plan, for it is the result of God's act of hardening. . . But this hardening is both limited (partially’ in v25b; cf. 11:3-7) and temporary (until’ in v25b), designed both to allow Gentiles to ‘come in’ (v26b, 30; cf. 11:11-15) and to stimulate Israel herself to repentance (v31; cf. 11:11). . . [God's] faithfulness to Israel presently takes the form of a preservation of a remnant (11:3-6). But in the future God's unwavering commitment to Israel will be spectacularly revealed in the salvation of the nation as a whole (v26a).” (Moo, Romans, p713).
just as it was the Jewish nation, as a whole, that stumbled and became hardened; it's the Jewish nation, as a whole, that will, one day, return and be restored. Indeed, the partial hardening that's come upon ethnic Israel isn't the end of the story. But notice, secondly, that their restoration isn't the end of the story, either. Look at the logic that Paul's using in verses 12 and 15: If Israel's rebellion led to riches for the world—then how much more their reception? And if Israel's rejection led to reconciliation for the world—then what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? Do you see what Paul's saying? Not only is God going to restore the Jews—but when He does so—it's going to unleash unprecedented blessing upon the nations all over again; to such an extent that the work God is doing now among the nations will only pale in comparison. Paul is talking about conversions; he's talking about awakening; he's talking about revival blessings that are so rich, we can only dream about them. But how does he know all this? We're given a hint in verses 26-27, where Paul quotes a passage from Isaiah, applying it to the restoration of the Jews. The passage comes from the very end of Isaiah 59, and according to Paul, it describes the corporate repentance of Israel as a nation. But we shouldn't stop reading there, because Isaiah 60 is the amazing account of what will transpire afterwards: "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about and see; they all gather together, they come to you... A multitude of camels will cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba will come... All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you, the rams of Nebaioth will minister to you; they will go up with acceptance on My altar, and I shall glorify My glorious house." (Isaiah 60:3-7). The names are significant; for Midian, Sheba, and Ephah were all sons of Abraham's concubine Keturah; whom he sent away to the east (Genesis 25:1-6). Do these make up the vast populations of Buddhists and Hindus living in Asia? Further, Kedar and Nebaioth were the sons of Ishmael (Genesis 25:12-13); Nebaioth was his firstborn, yet Muslim tradition traces the ancestry of their prophet to Adnan, who is claimed to be a descendant of Kedar. Could it be that there are certain breakthroughs in our missional and evangelistic efforts that will only come following the time of the restoration of the Jews? It's difficult to know. But what is certain is that those days will be so full of blessing and outpouring, that Paul can only describe them as "life from the dead..."45

45 Witsius speaks of both an intensiveness and extent in the phrase "life from the dead" in Romans 11:15. He says, "Lastly, to this restoration of Israel shall be joined the riches of the whole church, and as it were, life from the dead [cf. Romans 11:12,15]... The apostle intimates, that much greater and more extensive benefits shall redound to the Christian church from the fulness and restoration of the Jews, than did to the Gentiles, from their fall and diminution; greater, I say, intensively, or with respect to degrees, and larger with respect to extent. As to the intensiveness or degrees, it is supposed, that, about the time of the conversion of the Jews, the Gentile world will be like a dead person, in a manner almost as Christ describes the church of Sardis (Revelation 3:1-2), namely, both that light of saving knowledge, and that fervent piety, and that lively and vigorous simplicity of ancient Christianity, will, in a course of years, be very much impaired... but upon the restoration of the Jews, these will suddenly arise, as out of the grave; a new light will shine upon them, a new zeal be kindled up; the life of Christ be again manifested in his mystical body, more lively, perhaps, and vigorous than ever. Then, doubtless, many Scripture prophecies will after their accomplishment, be better understood, and such as now appear dark riddles, shall then be found to contain a most distinct description of facts; many candles joined together give a greater light; a new fire laid near another, gives a greater heat. And such will the accession of the Jews be to the church of the Gentiles." (V2, p419). And again: "And not only so, but also many nations, among whom the name of Christ had long before been forgotten, shall be seen to flock again to the standard of salvation then erected. For there is a certain fulness of the Gentiles, to be gathered together by the successive preaching of the gospel, which goes before the restoration of Israel, of which verse 25 speaks, and another richness of the Gentiles, that comes after the recovery of Israel. For, while the gospel, for many ages, was published now to this, then to that nation, others gradually departed from Christ; but when the fulness of the Jews is come, it is altogether probable, that these nations will in great numbers, return to Christ... Agreeably to which James has said [in Acts 15:15-17], 'And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doth all these things.' The preparation of the fallen tabernacle of David signifies the restoration of true and spiritual worship among the Israelites. And when that shall come to pass, the rest of mankind, who never gave up their names to Christ, and the nations, upon whom his name was formerly called, but who, by their thoughtlessness, lost the benefit of the gospel, will then with emulation seek the Lord. And what is more evident than that prophecy in Isaiah? The prophet, [in] chapter 59:20-21, having foretold the restoration of Israel according to the apostle's commentary, immediately, [in] chapter 60:1, exclaims, 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee.' [And] verse 3; and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising; etc. Moreover, the riches of the church at that time are described [in] verse 17, 'for brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron'; the most magnificent words to the same purpose, follow these... We have not indeed, the least doubt, that there are many prophecies both in the Old and New Testament to this purpose, the full meaning of which we ardently pray the supreme Being may teach his people by the event, the only undoubted interpreter of prophecies." (Witsius, V2, pp419-21). And John Murray notes on Romans 11:12: "the fulness of Israel will involve for the Gentiles a much greater enjoyment of gospel blessing than that occasioned by Israel's unbelief. Thus here awaits the Gentiles, in their distinctive identity as such, gospel blessing far surpassing anything experienced during the period of Israel's apostasy, and this unprecedented enrichment will be occasioned by the conversion of Israel on a scale commensurate with that of their earlier disobedience."
THE JEWS' RESTORATION TO CHRIST WILL BE GLORIOUS: ROMANS 11:11-16

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<td>THE PRESENT</td>
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B) RECOLLECTING the PAST: As we’ve seen, Scripture explicitly testifies to these things. But the restoration of ethnic Israel isn’t only something that’s foretold in passages such as Romans 11; it’s also something that’s fore-pictured throughout the Old Testament Scriptures: Think about THE STORY OF JOSEPH. His own kinsman hated him and were jealous of him, and so they sold him away into the hands of Gentile foreigners; and they thought they had done away with him. But even as Joseph's brothers were plotting against him for evil—God was plotting for the salvation of the world. For while they tried to pretend he was dead, Joseph was very much alive; and indeed, he had become Prince in a foreign land, among a foreign people. For all authority was given to him, and a people who did not know him gladly bowed the knee to him; and while his brothers tried to forget about him, Joseph was literally off, saving the world. For a great famine had swept across the whole earth; and even the land of Israel had nothing to eat; indeed, the only place there was bread was where Joseph was, among the Gentiles. And truly, the whole reason Joseph's brothers in Israel were starving while the nations were feasting on bread, was that they had forsaken their brother, who was the only source of bread. And though Joseph could have sent for them during this time; yet he chose to hide himself in Egypt—that is—until the time came when his brothers returned to him. We're well acquainted with the story now, but before this actually happened, it would have been shocking to us. We wouldn't have expected it. We would have thought the story would end here, with Joseph as the exalted Prince of the Gentiles; but it doesn't; because God was purposing not only to save the world—but also to reconcile Joseph's brothers to himself. And so, a time came during the course of the famine that Joseph's own kinsmen according to the flesh also came, along with the other nations, to where he was in Egypt. And when the right moment came, Joseph revealed himself to them; and they acknowledged their iniquity; and they were reconciled to him; and indeed, as a result, all Israel came down to live with him in Egypt.

SEEING THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS IN THE STORY OF JOSEPH

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<td>Joseph's kinsman rejected him</td>
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<td>ISRAEL IN ROMANS</td>
<td>The Jews have rejected Christ</td>
<td>Salvation has come to the Gentiles</td>
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And think back again to ISRAEL'S EXILE AND RESTORATION. When God had cast Israel out of their land, it seemed that this was truly the end. God had finally had enough, and now it was time for judgment. Everything was torn away from them: The Davidic king was dethroned; the temple was burned to the ground; and they themselves were cast away from the land that God had promised to their forefathers. God was done with them forever. At least, so it seemed. But He wasn’t done with them forever. It wasn’t true. This wasn’t the end of the story for Israel; for, as the prophets declared, though God was sending judgment, He would “not execute a complete destruction” (Jeremiah 4:27) upon them, but preserve “a remnant within them” (Isaiah 10:20-21). Indeed, God would preserve a remnant. And not only that, but the prophets went on to proclaim that a day was coming when God would bring Israel back into the land once again. And so, not only would the Lord spare a remnant; He would also grant restoration. In other words: the exile wouldn’t be total, for God would preserve a remnant; and the exile wouldn’t be final, for though Israel had been cut off from the land, God was going to graft them back in once again. Does this sound familiar? It's exactly what Paul had just told us about ethnic Israel in Romans 11. Have they been hardened? Yes. But their hardening isn’t total, for God is preserving a remnant among them. Have they been cut off as branches? Yes. But it’s not the final word, for God will cause them to return once again. When Israel was cast away to Babylon, they were like dead men in their graves. Their situation was so hopeless they were likened to corpses buried in the ground. Today, Israel's situation is no better; but we serve a God who raises the dead. ⁴⁶

⁴⁶ This parallel isn’t an original thought. Francis Roberts put it this way: “The Jews' captivity and dead hopeless condition in Babylon, as also their strange resurrection out of their graves there by a wonderful deliverance; seem to shadow out the spiritual bondage and misery of the Jews during all the time of their breaking off from Christ by unbelief, and also of their restoration, and re-implantation of them again into Christ by faith, which shall be as life from the dead. And Paul [quoting]...
**SEEING THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS IN THE EXILE OF ISRAEL**

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*C) ANTICIPATING the FUTURE:* Paul brings Romans 11 to a close with these words: “For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.” (verses 30-32). God’s design is to show mercy; and just as He showed mercy to us as Gentiles, when we were lost in our rebellion and sin; so too, Paul’s telling us, God is purposing to do the very same for ethnic Jews. Don’t misunderstand what we’re saying. It’s not that God is going to revert to the old covenant administration when He gathers Israel back to himself. We’re not saying that ethnic Jews will return to the physical land of Israel; and we’re certainly not saying that the physical temple will be rebuilt, or that this will usher in some kind of earthly, millennial kingdom. We’re simply affirming the truth that Scripture is here declaring, that a day is coming when Israel as a nation will again return to the Lord. God isn’t finished with Israel. And shouldn’t that excite our hearts? There’s a bright future for them in the new covenant. We ought to be brought to awe and worship, that our God is able and that He’s purposed to do such a thing. But it should also drive us back to prayer; because God isn’t going to do this in a vacuum. For just as the Lord has predestined ends; He’s also predestined the means to bring about those ends; and in particular, God has predestined prayer as the means by which we call upon Him to do what we cannot do; and to do what indeed He himself has purposed and promised to do. Friends, it would be good to remember that our Jewish brothers in the days of the old covenant often came before God interceding for us, the Gentiles, when we were outsiders. Can we not do the same for them? May the Lord Jesus gather His fold, both of Jew and Gentile; and bring us safely home to His heavenly kingdom: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

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Isaiah, which had immediate reference to the captive Jews in Babylon, Isaiah 59:20-21, interprets and applies it mediately to the Jews calling and re-ingrafting into Christ, after the Gentiles fulness should be come in (Romans 11:25-27); which notably insinuates to us, that the Jews misery in, and recovery out of Babylon, were types of their future misery in being broken off from Christ by unbelief, and of their happy reviving and being re-ingrafted into Christ by faith. After which restoration of the Jews by their conversion, all these promised blessings of God’s tabernacle, Spirit, Word, and public ministry shall be continued unto them, but much more spiritually till the end of the world.” (Roberts, *Mystery and Marrow*, p1198; cf. p1298).