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Section: Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology)

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**HANDOUT NOTES**

**Q55. What is a divine covenant?**

A divine covenant is a relational agreement initiated by God that may include obligations, rewards, and/or punishments from Him.

* **Introduction to This Series**

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

We must submit ourselves to what God has revealed—what He is teaching us from His Bible.

The reason we exist is for His sake and His glory, and not ours.

**Romans 11:36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

**Ezekiel 36:22** “Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name …”

**Psalm 76:10** (NIV) Surely your wrath against mankind brings you praise …

**Colossians 1:16-17**For by [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

**1 Corinthians 10:31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

* **What Is Covenant Theology and Why Is It important?**

Covenant Theology is the study from Scripture informing us about God’s use of covenants, the details and terms of those covenants, and results of those covenants.

Covenant Theology is the study of covenants declared and/or detailed in Scripture and God’s use of them.

What God’s word reveals, both explicitly and implicitly, we must be diligent to study and know—that which is “either explicitly stated or by necessary inference contained in the Holy Scriptures,” as the Christian Confession of 1689 states.

What we see happening in the Bible is happening because of covenants.

**Sam Renihan**: “Studying covenant theology is a devotional experience that enriches one’s understanding of the unity of God’s purposes, enhances preaching from any text, informs one’s understanding of the church, assures God’s people of the security of their salvation, and much more. But above all, studying the covenant theology of the Bible magnifies the majesty of the triune God’s plan of redemption.”

* **Typology**

Typology is core to proper Covenant Theology. Typology a big deal in Scripture.

In typology, there are types and antitypes. A type is the thing foreshadowing something to come, the antitype. Types are not the antitype but a picture of the antitype.

Types are their own entity serving their own purposes in their own context, yet they also point forward to something greater than themselves.

**Q55. What is a divine covenant?**

A divine covenant is a relational agreement initiated by God that may include obligations, rewards, and/or punishments from Him.

* **What Is a Covenant?**

**Merriam-Webster definition of covenant**: “a formal and serious agreement or promise”

* **What Is a Divine Covenant?**

A divine covenant’s focus is on specific covenants that are made by God, with God.

A divine covenant is a relational agreement initiated by God that may include obligations, rewards, and/or punishments from Him.

* **The Markers and Distinctions of Divine Covenants**
* **A special commitment between parties or persons**

In a divine covenant, parties or persons make a special commitment to one another—that may be between the persons of the Trinity or between God and specific humans.

* **Initiated by God, from His goodness and wisdom**

God has decreed what covenants He would initiate and enter into and who makes up the other covenanting party.

Divine covenants are amazing displays of God’s character, and they derive from His goodness and wisdom.

* **To provide extra/additional blessings**

Covenants God makes with mankind are an “extra thing.”

Divine covenants made with man are added realities to man’s existence. They are not natural (meaning they do not exist automatically by nature of creation), and they are not entitlements (mankind is not entitled to covenants with God in any way).

Divine covenants improve or advance man’s communion with and enjoyment of God beyond nature.

* **God sets the covenantal terms**

Our definition also says these covenants *may include obligations, rewards, and/or punishments from Him.*

It is important to see that there is some variation in the divine covenants.

* **Two types of divine covenants**
* **Covenants of works**

When a covenant requires obedience to law/commands in order to receive the rewards it offers, it is a *covenant of works.*

We must first realize that, *by default*, creatures owe the Creator perfect obedience *for no reward*. *This is our duty* (Luke 17:7-10).

In *a covenant of works*, God is *offering* (as we covered a moment ago) blessings or benefits *beyond* man’s natural or existing state--things not automatic or otherwise available to them. These are rewards that improve or advance man’s communion with and enjoyment of God beyond nature.

* + **Covenants of grace**

The other type of divine covenant is historically called a *covenant of grace.*

In a *covenant of grace,* a party covenanted to receives rewards/benefits without earning the rewards/benefits.

In a *covenant of grace*, enjoyment of the blessings is not based on one’s own work but strictly on the grace of God.

* **God uses a system of representation or federal headship**

God reveals His covenants to a public person or federal head, who stands on behalf of a specific group of people. God covenants with them all when He covenants with the representative—the federal head.

Two covenants and federal heads were about eternal life, while other covenants and federal heads were about other things, not eternal life.

* **What Divine Covenants We Will Focus on in the Coming Lessons**

