Section: Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology)

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**TEACHING 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.

**Examples of divine covenants God made with man:**

Adamic: Genesis 1:26-30; Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 5:12-21

Noahic: Genesis 9:8-17

Abrahamic: Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18–21; 17:1-14; 22:16-18

Mosaic/Sinaitic: Exodus 19-24

Davidic: 2 Samuel 7:4–16

New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:19-20; Hebrews 9:15

* **Introduction to this series**

I hope to take you on a journey over the several catechism lessons that we hope will benefit you in your understanding of God’s plan, working, and word.

As we begin, let’s first remember where we are coming from as God-loving, Bible-believing Christians.

I want us to begin by acknowledging that: The reason Scripture is authoritative is because of who its Author is. Look at:

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)**

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

It is important that we have a full and right view of the authority of God’s word.

Additionally, it is not just important we acknowledge God’s word is authoritative but that we actually seek to understand it correctly and fully submit to its governing of our lives.

It is essential that we study, believe in, abide to, teach accurately, and hold to the word of God.

Our problem is our tendency in the flesh is to submit to popular ideas, humanistic teaching, or the rationale of our own human mind *instead* of the authority of the almighty, eternal God’s holy word. As a result, we form or have views of who God is and how He acts (or doesn’t act) based more on our personal feelings or human wisdom rather than the revelation He gave us in Scripture.

To combat this, we need to take very seriously the revelation of the Bible and submit to God’s authority and conform to Christ.

And that’s our desire here at DC.

We’ve been so blessed by all the testimony we’re hearing from you!

You have been and are regularly saying great things about how God is growing your knowledge and understanding of Him and His word. It’s been so fruitful.

And in the covenant theology journey we begin tonight, we get to continue that sharpening. We get to see more things that inform and/or correct us from God’s word.

As we’ve been doing here, we must submit ourselves to what God has revealed—what He is teaching us from His Bible.

The other thing we should restate and acknowledge upfront, (also something we’re well aware of now based on our study), is that God is perfect, and He is first and foremost for His name and glory. As we’ve learned, if God were to put anything above Himself, He would not be ultimate; He would not be perfect. Created is not ultimate: Creator is.

We need to remind ourselves that Scripture teaches that the primary reason that God is, and acts, and saves is in accordance with His plan and *ultimately* for His sake and His glory, and not ours.

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

**Romans 11:36 (ESV)**

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

**Ezekiel 36:22 (ESV)**

**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 (NIV1984)**

**10**Surely your wrath against mankind brings you praise…

**Colossians 1:16-17 (ESV)**

**16**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. **17**And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

**1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)**

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

Creation is God’s creation. God owns everything and as Owner-Creator, He does what He wills with creation. Everything that exists, including our lives, exists ultimately for the glory of God. “From him and through him and to him are all things.”

It is vital that we acknowledge that God is ultimately for God.

His eternal glory is the highest purpose in “ALL” that He does.

Now, with that foundation, it is our starting point for our study. Let’s get into our next catechism section of teachings.

As many of you know, we taught on Covenant Theology for four weeks in 2016. That teaching was impactful for many in our church, as well as some others outside of our church who also listened to the audio. It’s been such a blessing to hear the testimonies as to how it’s helped in understanding of God and His word.

And now, here we are, 4 years later, getting to study it again…and this time with some additional depth and focus. We’re adding a several lessons to the study this time around.

Additionally, I’m glad to be able to bring in (through direct quotes and paraphrasing) some points made by Dr. Sam Renihan, who has since published a great book on this topic, in alignment with what we taught and what we hold to here. That book is called THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST, HIS COVENANT, AND HIS KINGDOM.

Dr. Sam Renihan, as you know, is the pastor/theologian/author that we had join us here last year to teach a conference in the Theology Proper category. He’s no stranger to being a blessing to our church and many others, so I’m glad to mix in some of this work on this topic into these lessons for the benefit of us all. His work on this topic has *significant* value.

So, there is the declaration up front, I’ll quote and paraphrase him throughout these weeks, and it’s from that book.

Tonight, we are setting the table for the Bible study to come in the following lessons.

We don’t get into considering specific Bible passages yet, rather we are covering some intro points and information.

So, first:

* **What is Covenant Theology and why is it important?**

As we begin our study of Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology), I think it’s helpful to consider

*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*.

In this we learn about God’s plan for covenants, God’s work in covenants, God’s reigning through covenants, God’s requirements on humans in covenants, God’s punishments and wrath through covenants, and God’s blessings through covenants.

It’s clear, (as one studies the Bible), that God works through covenants.

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

Sam Renihan writes that, “…covenant theology seeks to understand and explain the united purpose of God in all history past, present, and future. This is no small task.”

We must be humble, careful, and diligent in this study. We must always remember that God is perfectly holy and transcendent…His ways are not our ways, His ways are higher than our ways….He is so high and above us that we must be careful to learn biblical truth carefully and diligently from His word. 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/Baptist Confession of 1689 states.

We must continue to be a people who LONG to know God rightly, through His word, carefully studied.

Covenant Theology is known by us from the whole of Scripture. What we see happening in the Bible, is happening because of covenants….beginning with Adam and Creation and ending with Jesus and consummation. The reality of covenants is found both explicitly and implicitly throughout the entire Bible.

Renihan states “…not only does covenant theology bring to light the large and small details of the progress of redemption, but it also interprets and explains their theological significance and systematic implications.”

Therefore, Covenant Theology is very helpful and very important.

For some who are newer to Covenant Theology, much of what is being said here may seem unfamiliar, but I want to encourage you to remain humble, careful, and diligent in this study. As with so many things, what is new and unclear now, becomes, according to the work of the Holy Spirit, familiar and clearer as you remain a faithful student.

I want to encourage you to be excited about this study, as it is truly a blessing. Your faith of Christ will be strengthened, your understanding will increase, and your view of the majesty and greatness of God will be heightened. There are all these benefits and many more. Renihan rightly writes that, “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.”

We’ll further consider these benefits as we go, week by week.

In this Covenant Theology journey we will be considering the story of the bible—the Bible metanarrative— by story I mean the historical facts and flow of things as revealed in the Scripture as God’s infallible and inerrant word.

Let’s consider an illustration using Star Wars for a moment. Many of you are big Star Wars fans…

The first movie released dropped us into a story not at the beginning, nor with much context.

Instead, the movie starts with the shot of space with yellow scrolling words giving the viewer a tiny bit of context as to what is going on that immediately leads to the events in the first movie. This is helpful, but it surely didn’t give us all the significant background info.

As the movie went on, we got more info as to the bigger story and so on, but it was still lacking in real depth of context.

Now, for a movie like Star Wars, that plays a role in the whole entertainment value of it. Fans generally like how they did this. For example, it’s interesting to learn about the family relationships as the story progresses. It’s fun to learn how the past Jedis trained and developed. And so on.

But when we are talking about real life, especially about God and His creation and eternity, playing loose with what He has ordained us to know is a serious issue. The Bible is not for entertainment. It is God’s holy word in which He reveals truths about Himself and His work and this creation.

Not knowing or understanding the overarching story of the Bible (or again, the Bible metanarrative) leads to many people **mis**understanding so much of what God has revealed in its parts. In this, people often ignore or simply don’t know the fullness of what God has revealed and so they fill in the gaps themselves or through the false teaching of others, unto creating something that is not correct, not biblical.

We can’t treat the Bible this way. We need some important facts and an accurate understanding of the story, details, and main point.

What you will find in these lessons is a fuller understanding of what is happening regarding human history as revealed to us in Scripture.

And this is really important. All of us have been reading the Bible at some point and realized we don’t know the proper way to understand the happenings in Leviticus or the teachings in Hebrews, for example.

So, if you track with me in these lessons, you’ll find your time in the word to be more fruitful and your understanding of God and His workings to be even deeper as well.

The divine covenants we will look at inform us of and carry the Bible’s storyline.

It is by these covenants that Scripture is giving us the framework for understanding the Bible as a whole **and its parts**. For example, in this, we can best understand the relation of the Old Testament and New Testament and the important differences or changes that happen between some covenant time periods.

Therefore, proper covenant theology is fundamental to our deeper or fuller understanding of the Scriptures.

Now, as we seek to understand the Bible as a whole and its parts, we need to know that God has determined to use a beautiful system of Typology in Scripture, in Creation.

I bring this up because typology is core to proper Covenant Theology. And knowing typology is another way we better understand Scripture.

Typology a big deal biblically. The better we know it, the more things we know to praise God for—a deeper understanding of His work and wisdom is surely fuel for increased praise.

And we’ve talked before (here at Disciples Church) about typology. But I’ll mention a bit about it now in this introduction as it will come up several times through our study.

In typology, there are **types** and **antitypes**. A *type* is the thing foreshadowing something to come, the *antitype*. We could use the word proto-type in place of type to help us.

Types are not the antitype, but a picture of the antitype. Types function on two levels—they have identity and meaning in the initial, immediate, provisional context in which they exist, while simultaneously pointing to something greater and other than itself. Antitypes are greater than and distinct from the type, they are an actual thing the picture pointed to.

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

Again, typology a big deal biblically and it is core to proper Covenant Theology. In the Old Testament, Christ is taught about in large part through types—though in mystery form, He is certainly revealed through types.

We won’t take time to detail and defend them one by one, but to mention *some* significant *type-antitype* things, consider these, see if they are familiar to you:

If you recall, we said in our Federal Headship lesson that Adam was a type, the proto-type, of the one who was to come: the better, unfailing Federal Head Jesus Christ.

The exodus from slavery in the Old Testament was a type, pointing to the greater deliverance from bondage experienced by those who God saves for eternity.

The priests of the Old Testament were a type, pointing to the great High Priest, Christ Jesus.

The sacrificial system in the Old Testament was a type, pointing to the greater sacrifice of Christ Jesus in the flesh.

The Passover in the Old Testament was a type, pointing to the spiritual forgiveness of sin through Christ Jesus alone.

I’ll remind you as we go along that types point to something other, greater, and vastly more valuable than the types themselves.

Types and shadows are all over the Old Testament, and the better we can identify and understand them, the more we’ll get out of the word. Knowing typology is another way we better understand Scripture. The better we know typology, the more reasons we have to praise God.

This is just a brief mention about typology, it, like most of our Covenant Theology study, will come into clearer view as we go in these lessons.

I also want to address another thing very briefly. The name given to the study of this category of theology, *Covenant Theology*, is a term you will see in church history and in the reading of certain books and so on.

Like many things, the term *Covenant Theology* has been used in different ways and by different groups. So, it’s fair to say that you can’t always assume that when someone says Covenant Theology, they are speaking of what *Baptists* have historically believed and taught. The reason that is important is because Covenant Theology directly affects one’s understanding of several doctrines and practices, such as baptism.

We affirm (based on the specific passages about baptism *and* based on the Covenant Theology of Scripture) that baptism is only appropriate for those who profess real, personal trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is a New *Covenant* ordinance. This is called “Believer’s baptism” and more technically, “credobaptism.”

Therefore, studying Covenant Theology from sound sources is very important.

For example, if you go to an online bookstore and look up “Covenant Theology” books, there is a high likelihood that you find a book written by a Christian Presbyterian brother which will contain some differences (which they put forth in alignment with their practice of infant baptism). That’s just one example. There are others.

But the point is, we need to know that while many similarities exist under the wide umbrella of Covenant Theology, there remain very important differences. So please don’t assume that anything with the label of Covenant Theology is fully in agreement with what the Baptists have taught historically in regard to the category of Covenant Theology.

And, related to that point then, I want to point out that what we are putting forth in these lessons is summarized in the Baptist Confession of 1689. The goal in these lessons is not new or cutting-edge ideas. It’s a blessing that the theologians who worked on the Baptist confession knew the benefit to include important statements as it relates to Covenant Theology. In the confession, there is a chapter devoted to God’s covenants, but it’s important to know that *foundational and significant* teaching as it relates to Covenant Theology is not limited to that chapter in the confession. Generally speaking, the confession should always be known in whole to have the best understanding of its parts and of it’s teaching on particular topics. And, so it is with this. Critical Covenant Theology teaching happens outside of the chapter on God’s Covenants, for example, the chapter immediately prior to the God’s Covenants chapter contains many important statements on the covenant God made with Adam. Being that the writers just taught those things there, it is understandable that they didn’t repeat themselves in the proceeding chapter.

In all of this, we need to know that Baptist Confession offers great biblical statements throughout that help us in our study of this topic. I aim to point out some of that confessional content in this series for our benefit *and* as further example to you of this being a historical and confessional doctrine. You’ll see the Bible’s teaching all throughout this series, and you’ll also see how the Baptist confession summarizes what we cover.

Now, that was all introduction…………..to get this started, let’s look at our first WoT catechism question of this series. I’ll read the question and answer for us:

**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?**

Now to some degree, each of us has heard and is familiar with the term *covenant*. But since it’s so central to our present catechism section, establishing some clarity is needed.

The word covenant is commonly used in social, marriage, and theological contexts.

As with other terms we’ve discussed before, this is a term that has different meanings or uses depending on the context it’s used in.

Fundamentally we need to ask, “what is a covenant?”

The Merriam-Webster defines covenant as “a formal and serious agreement or promise,” Google dictionary simply defines it as “an agreement,” and another online dictionary defines it as, “A binding agreement; a compact.”

These definitions are helpful to a degree, *and you can* see how they fit into various social, marriage, and theological contexts.

A covenant needs to be understood as often something *different* than a cold or impersonal agreement. *Usually*, when the term “covenant” is used, a person is speaking to a special type of relational agreement. This is not a cold business deal between two self-seeking Wall Street tycoons. A deal like that often has selfish desires that may benefit both parties in the end, but the agreement is not about truly caring for or about the other party.

But with “covenant,” both the seriousness of a solid agreement and a heightened level of relations or care is implied.

For example, many churches, like ours, talk about the membership agreement that exists in the local body as “Covenant Membership.” In this *church membership covenant,* the people joining are agreeing with the other members and the leaders to a committed, serious, loving, and accountable *relationship*.

And we often talk about marriage as a covenant, because clearly, in regard to God’s design for marriage, that life-long commitment is one of relational union that is about the flourishing of both the husband and wife.

So, there is that clarity regarding the word covenant in general: it’s not a cold, heartless agreement. It’s relational and it’s seeking all party’s good or honor.

* **What is a divine covenant?**

But then there is another use of the term, another type of covenant (a specific type of covenant). This would be what we call a *divine covenant*. In this, the focus is on specific covenants that are made by God, with God. Divine convents are the focus of our series. Look again at our answer:

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

Think about the things I just said about how we often use the word covenant. I said it is a relationship, and one that may be serious, caring, and accountable. This is especially the case for a divine covenant.

But in addition to that, we need to see that a divine covenant is a relational agreement initiated by God *that may include obligations, rewards, and/or punishments from Him*.

We’ll spend the next portion of our lesson really focusing in on divine covenants. This is foundational to our series, so we need to note some important things upfront.

* **The markers and distinctions of divine covenants**

Climbing into the markers and distinctions a bit…

* **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**

Our definition clearly says divine covenants are *initiated by God*.

In this, we need to see that God is the Sovereign One. God has decreed what covenants He would initiate and enter into and who makes up the other covenanting party (who all is in the covenant). This happens by His eternal will. When God enters a covenant, it was not a good idea of someone else. Rather, it was His decree to do so and the terms are set by Him.

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

* **To provide extra/additional blessings**

Within the reality of God initiating all divine covenants, we need to realize that covenants He makes with mankind are an “extra thing” (or to put it another way, a supernatural thing). What is meant by this is that 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 anyway). Divine covenants that God makes for the benefit of any created persons are a pure act of God’s sovereign goodness and are added or extra realities to man’s existence.

Divine covenants provide blessings for those created men and women that are, by nature, blessings not automatic or available to them. Divine covenants improve or advance man’s communion with and enjoyment of God beyond nature.

This will become more clear as we get into the different covenants in the coming weeks, but briefly for example, the covenants that we see God make throughout Scripture always had a added layer of benefit for the persons involved…Adam was blessed to have entered into a covenant with God and Adam would have been BETTER OFF than he was naturally if he honored the covenant he was in with God …Ethnic Israel was blessed to have entered into a covenant with God and would have been BETTER OFF than it’s people were naturally if they honored the covenant they were in with God …and most amazingly, believers are eternally BETTER OFF than we were naturally (dead in sin) because of the covenant we are now in (and forever will be in) with God.

These are a few of the several examples of this—the covenants that we see God make throughout Scripture always had an added layer of benefit for the persons involved.

Renihan puts these points well when he says, “Because God is one of the contracting parties in the covenants under consideration, and because covenants are **not** a natural feature of the Creator-creature relationship, all covenants are the results of God’s own free initiative to carry out His purposes and to do good to mankind. Covenants are not ‘take it or leave it’ options. God imposes His covenants on man and determines the commitments.

Yet this language of non-negotiability and imposition should not prevent us from seeing covenants as a gracious and kind condescension. Every covenant provides blessings and benefits for man that would otherwise be UNAVAILABLE by nature. Covenants advance man’s communion with and enjoyment of God beyond nature. Nehemiah Coxe expressed these nuances when he defined a covenant between God and men as ‘A declaration of [God’s] sovereign pleasure concerning the benefits he will bestow on [man], the communion they will have with him, and the way and means by which this will be enjoyed by them.’”

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

With the covenants that God has made with man, it was God who initiated them, for wise and excellent purposes, and He sets the terms. Divine covenants are legal and formal. And different covenants have different kinds of commitments. We see this as our definition continues.

* **God sets the covenantal terms**

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

We’ve alluded to some of this already, but we need to build out this understanding further. In the course of these lessons, you will see that the details and terms of the covenants we will look at *differ*. The word “may” in our definition is really important, because each covenant may or may not include these things. Some covenants require specific obligations be met by another party in order for the covenant rewards to be experienced. Some covenants include rewards for one party or another based solely on grace to them. And some covenants include various punishments for the breaking the terms of the covenant.

Remember, the Triune God sets these terms, not anyone else.

In all of this, it’s important to see that there is some variation in the *divine covenants*. It’s important to keep that in mind as we work though this topic.

I’ll be pointing out these varied covenant terms as we go along. That’s part of this study—helping you see these factors in the covenants we’ll cover.

* **Two types of divine covenants**

But in this first lesson, we will take a few minutes to identify the two *types* of divine covenants, this speaks to the most important variation that can exist in divine covenants, these are classified as “covenants of works” and “covenants of grace.”

* + **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*.”

If a party must obey law to receive rewards, it’s a ***covenant of works*** to them.

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

But 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. Rewards that improve or advance man’s communion with and enjoyment of God beyond nature.

In a covenant of works God offers mankind rewards (improvements) man could not obtain before the covenant of works was initiated by God.

Renihan speaks very well about covenants of works when he says, “In a covenant of works, you must earn the reward. You get out that you put in. You reap what you sow. Obey and be blessed; disobey and be cursed. The idea of merit or earning, though, is relative in the sense that God dictates the terms of what the obedience rendered will be as well as what the blessing rewarded with be. Apart from God making rewards available through covenantal obedience, the creature could never claim recompense from God because the creature can never place the Creator in its debt. And therefore, if God says ‘Do this and receive that’ then such is the agreement. God is free to dictate the conditions and the rewards as He sees fit according to His own wisdom and justice. And once God established a work-reward relationship, the blessings can be claimed according to justice. In a covenant of works, your obedience rightly earns the blessing.”

So, if a party must obey law to receive rewards, it’s a ***covenant of works*** to them.

* + **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. Whatever blessings God has chosen to give in that covenant on the basis of grace, are surely enjoyed by the party (or persons) God has covenanted with.

Renihan helpfully says, “In a covenant of grace, the blessings are external to the covenant partner and are imputed to him apart from [his own] merit or works. One does not need to *earn* the blessing of the covenant, but rather one simply receives the blessing of the covenant.”

So, we have the two types of divine covenants, these are 1) “covenants of works” and 2) “covenants of grace.” These terms, (especially if you are new to this topic), will become increasingly clear as the lessons progress and we see them in detail studying actual covenants.

Before we move on, I want to borrow an additional point related to these types of covenants from Renihan, he says, “…we must be cautious to say that these two legal foundations, law and promise (covenants of works and covenants of grace), do not exclude the presence of laws or promises in the one or the other in an absolute sense. Their mutual exclusivity has reference only to the *basis* for the enjoyment of blessings. So, in a covenant of works, when *obedience* has been rendered, blessings *promised* are enjoyed. Conversely, in a covenant of grace, after the *promises* have been *received*, *laws* are introduced. In the first case, the promise must be earned while in the second case the law delivered does not subvert the promise already given.”

Basically, the point is, you can still find gifts of grace in covenants of work and law (expectations, requirements) in covenants of grace. For example, think about our salvation. We were *graciously* saved (made alive and truly redeemed), and as a result of that we should *obey* King Jesus—not to earn or contribute to or keep salvation, but as a fruit of salvation—an acknowledgement of Christ as King and a love for His law. In this, law is not entirely absent, but it’s *not the basis* for receiving the promised blessing.

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

Now, to prepare us further for the lessons ahead, let’s consider another important reality in divine covenants that God has made with mankind—that is that God uses representation or federal headship in these covenants. ((We’ve studied federal headship before in our catechism journey—hopefully you were here for that. If not, or if you’d like a refresher, this week or next week would be a good time to listen to the lesson I taught on federal headship last year. The audio is available if you ask your group leader.))

The reality of and importance of God’s use of representation or federal headship must not be missed or devalued. It helps explain so much of what’s happening in Scripture and in God’s system of justice (which ultimately effects every person’s eternity). It’s especially important as we consider Covenant Theology.

Nehemiah Coxe wrote, “This is also worthy to be noted by us: that when God has made covenants, in which either mankind in general or in some select number of men in particular have been involved, it has pleased him **first** to transact with some public person, head, or representative **for all others** that should be involved **in them**.”

The point is, 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. For example, God spoke to and interacted with Adam, for the covenant He made with Adam and all that were represented by Adam. God spoke to and interacted with Noah, for the covenant He made with Noah and all that were represented by Noah. God spoke to and interacted with Christ Jesus, for the covenant He made with Jesus and all that were represented by Jesus. And so, it is with the other divine covenants that God has made with mankind.

All those whom the federal head represents are surely connected to the federal head. Renihan again, to these considerations, “Covenantal membership, therefore, is determined and defined exclusively by federal headship. To determine one's membership in a given covenant, the question that one must ask is ‘Do I belong to the federal head? Did the federal head covenant on my behalf?’ … Their right to the covenant and its blessings or curses flows exclusively and directly through and from the federal head.”

We’ll consider in the following lessons how only two federal heads effect eternal life because there were only two covenants that God made with man that offered the blessing of eternal life, but there are other federal heads as well. Two covenants and federal heads were about eternal life, while other covenants and federal heads were about other things, *not* eternal life.

*By way of review* of that technical but very important rundown of *markers and distinctions* of divine covenants, let’s summarize the main points:

We have seen how a covenant usually implies something different than a standard agreement or contract. And we have seen that a divine covenant needs to be understood in a specific way even as compared to other types of covenants.

In a divine covenant two 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.

Divine covenants are initiated by God.

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

Divine covenants improve or advance man’s communion with and enjoyment of God beyond nature. They provide blessings not automatic or available to mankind outside of the covenant.

There is some variation in the divine covenants, God sets the terms.

There are two types of divine covenants these are “covenants of works” and “covenants of grace.”

It is a “covenants of works” when a covenant requires obedience to law/commands in order to receive the rewards it offers.

It is a "covenant of grace" when enjoyment of the covenant blessings is not based on one’s own work, but strictly on the grace of God. (In a CoG, one does not need to earn the blessing of the covenant.)

In divine covenants, God has made with mankind, He uses a system of representation or federal headship. As Coxe said, "it has pleased [God] first to transact with some public person, head, or representative for all others that should be involved in them." And this public person or federal head stands on behalf of a specific group of people of God’s choosing.

As we begin to wrap up let’s see a helpful image and consider:

* **What divine covenants we will focus on in the coming lessons**

Under the answer to this question in your catechism booklet, you have a brief list of examples of some *divine covenants*. And it provides a non-exhaustive list of Scripture passages where you can see truths of the covenant in Scripture.

**Examples of divine covenants God made with man:**

**(Not an exhaustive list)**

**Adamic: Genesis 1:26-30; Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 5:12-21**

**Noahic: Genesis 9:8-17**

**Abrahamic: Genesis 12:1-3, 15:18–21, 17:1-14, 22:16-18**

**Mosaic/Sinaitic: Exodus 19-24**

**Davidic: 2 Samuel 7:4–16**

**New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:19-20; Hebrews 9:15**

At this point, I want to take a few minutes and discuss this list.

I’ve created a SLIDE for you to see this list in a different layout so that you can track with the clarity I need to bring here.

ADD IMAGE TO HN NOTES:



On this slide, we have a more timeline type layout of the list.

On the left we see in eternity past the Covenant of Redemption (which we cover in our next lesson).

Then, for clarity, we identify the beginning of creation, and we see the Adamic Covenant. (Adam’s life and covenant are covered mostly from Genesis 1 through Genesis 5).

After that we have the Noahic covenant. (Noah’s life and covenant are covered mostly from Genesis 5 or 6 through chapter 10).

After that we have the collection of the next three main covenants which grouped together should be considered the Old Covenant, and this includes the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. This time period covers most of our Old Testament (from about Genesis 11 all the way into the gospel books).

All of the divine covenants made with man, beginning with the Adamic Covenant, unfold the plan of God (based on the Covenant of Redemption made within the Trinity) so that all divine covenants have a part to play in bringing about what ultimately comes in the New Covenant.

With the shedding of Christ’s blood, we get to the official establishment of the New Covenant. (Obviously covered in detail in the gospel books, continues through the end of our Bible, and still in place today).

As we work through these lessons, and certainly as you are in your Bible studies, keep this image in mind. It is critical for a better level of understanding that you know where you are in regard to these Divine Covenants. For example, as we discussed in the biblical law lesson, we don’t take Old Covenant positive/temporary commands we read in Leviticus and apply them to the New Covenant since it is an altogether different covenant *and* the Old Covenant has been abolished. That’s one example of why this is important.

I’ll reference back to this layout as we move through these lessons.

With that, next week we will turn to see and learn about the first *divine covenant*, which is called the **Covenant of Redemption**.

In Covenant Theology, it’s critical that we start with this covenant and refer back to this Covenant of Redemption often in our Bible study, ***because*** this covenant sets the stage of all of human history *and eternity*. This is the foundational covenant that everything else comes from and fits into.

“All of creation is set in the context of this divine plan.”

This **Covenant of Redemption** is game changing; it explains so much.

When we understand it, the rest of the story of the Bible and eternity can be properly understood as revealed in the Bible.

“All of creation is set in the context of this divine plan.”

Please do not miss next week’s lesson, its too foundational. I’m very much looking forward to it.

PRAY

Perhaps tonight was technical or conceptual—maybe you’re feeling a bit lost even—I want to encourage you to keep leaning in. As the pieces come into view and the actual covenants are studied, you will grow in a knowledge of these things, and you will be blessed to see our great God in these things and understand His word better because of it. So, church, I pray you can be excited about this journey ahead. Don’t fret if you don’t understand everything night one…there is helpful stuff ahead.

TMOC, 1-3