Section: Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology)

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M. Kirstine

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q59. What is the New Covenant?**

It is the covenant by which God saves the elect, by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The New Covenant was planned before creation, promised in Genesis after the fall, and formally established by the blood of Christ when the work required of Him was complete.

**Jeremiah 31:31** “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah”

**Matthew 5:17** “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

**Hebrews 8:6** But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

**Luke 22:20** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, [Jesus said], “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

**Hebrews 8:13** In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

**Hebrews 9:15** Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

**Galatians 3:14** so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

(Further study: Genesis 3:15; Ezekiel 36:25-28; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ephesians 2:11-22; Hebrews 8; John 10:27-30; Hebrews 9:28)

**This covenant is sometimes called** the Covenant of Grace.

* **Introduction**

At last, we now begin our study *of the perfect covenant*.

In this series, we have been talking about God’s plan for His glory and the story of the Bible that informs us of this plan.

We have seen that God planned and decreed before creation to graciously redeem chosen ones from sin and punishment based on the work required of Jesus. And we said that all of creation is set in the context of this divine plan.

Then we saw the first happenings in this creation, which took place in the garden and required the then sinless Adam to obey God. In this, obedience would be rewarded with eternal life and blessing, but disobedience would be punished with curse and death.

We saw that Adam disobeyed, bringing the consequences of this first covenant with man, *The Covenant of Works*, upon Himself and all whom he represented.

We discussed how this meant the creation was now broken, cursed and destined for destruction, and mankind was now in desperate need for **redemption** and reconciliation to God.

Amazingly, we saw God immediately and graciously reveal His plan to send a Redeemer. God made an invincible promise immediately after the fall in the garden to send a victorious Savior.

We discussed how this meant that **the gospel** was now made known in creation among mankind and that salvation from sin and death was a reality based on the unchanging promise of God, grounded in this Redeemer to come.

*But* sin abounded in fallen man, neglecting and dishonoring the Creator. We saw God display His hatred towards sin and reprobate sinners in His flooding of the world while graciously saving eight people—Noah and his family.

After that, we saw God covenant to never flood the whole earth again, but rather He’d persevere this creation until His plan has been fulfilled.

From these first two covenants made with man, we learned this creation, as we know it, was established by and exists according to the *broken* Adamic Covenant (The Covenant of Works) and the *kind* Noahic Covenant.

We then saw that the Old Covenant was eventually established, consisting of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. This was the complex and lengthy interaction of God and His *temporary earthly* people, the line of Abraham—ethnic Israelites.

In this, God made earthly promises but conditioned the enjoyment of those promises on obedience, *and* God made spiritual promises that He would be responsible to see through—more than once restating the promise of a victorious Savior to come, as He declared more specifically from what family line Christ would come through.

We said that the Old Covenant only offered earthly blessing, to the physical line of Abraham, in the temporary land of Canaan. These were *types*, which pointed to the New Covenant blessing of Eternal life, to the eternally chosen ones, in the coming and forever-lasting Promised Land, the *antitypes*.

Even though God gave earthly blessings of the covenant that they didn’t deserve, they turned from God, from His covenant with them, and from the goodness He had bestowed on them. They turned away, breaking the covenant and forsaking God.

Due to their disobedience, certain individuals and generations were cut off from enjoying the covenant privileges, but God always preserved the people that He was using to bring forth the victorious Savior to fulfill His spiritual promises.

In all of this, we reiterated that these things were a working out of God’s great plan to show His glory and to show fallen man’s sin and helplessness—to put on display our need for the promised Redeemer. We have seen that the previous covenants and happenings served to bring about Jesus’ arrival. That’s the way God chose to plan things.

By God’s decree, the fall was needed, the preservation of mankind promised to Noah was needed, the choosing of a temporary people—an ethnic line to preserve—was needed—all the happenings of the Old Testament served to point to and bring about the incarnation of God the Son, Jesus Christ. This is the great story of Scripture. This is the grand metanarrative of the Bible.

We considered that these things were *steps* in the plan to get us to the arrival of the great Messiah. And that’s where we left off last lesson.

* **Prophecy of the New Covenant**

With that, let’s begin to transition now to looking at the New Covenant—**the glorious covenant that does what no other covenant offered, or could do**. To do this we pick up on some points we made last lesson about the anticipation for a new covenant to come.

As we touched on last week, *there were* prophetic delectations in Old Testament times of something new to come, something that offered relief and blessing to an extent far beyond what was in play before.

As found in the Old Testament books of Prophecy, God promised several times in a variety of different ways, often with Prophetic Idiom, that He had yet to complete a mighty work for “Israel.” In these prophecies we see decelerations of a **New Covenant** through a future Messiah that would bring new life, peace, and unending enjoyment of God's presence. Particular blessing-filled declarations of the prophets spoke to a promised reality **beyond** their present situation, something truly everlasting, restful, righteous and guaranteed.

There would be *no sweeter news* than to hear of a New Covenant that provides full forgiveness of sin, unchangingly draws you near to God, and forever flourishing. Simply put, a perfect covenant providing a perfect blessing. This would have been wonderful news to those hearing it—the most amazing news that has ever been declared.

Listen, for example, to prophesies given before the New Testament time:

**Jeremiah 31:31-34**

31“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. 33For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

These prophesies, and the others like it, declare that God is going to make a New Covenant that **isn't like the old one**—a covenant eternally better, with unfailing promises and eternal rewards.

No other covenant offered these things—surely, *this is the covenant* fallen man needs.

We will study *further* that the use of the name or title of Israel in these New Covenant prophecies and the protic idiom statements about the blessings they would receive through a new covenant was pointing to *not the ethic nation as a whole*, but a mixed people of all nations marked out before creation and blessings not terminating on earthly things, but spiritual things. God used ethnic Israel as a shadow of His eternal chosen ones, therefore the way He speaks about Israel in the Old Testament *is sometimes* not about the ethnic nation, but for/about the true eternal people of God.

Now, let us connect the prophecy of the New Covenant to what we learned in our second lesson. The basis for this perfect New Covenant would be on One who would do all that is required to earn forgiveness and redemption for those God planned to covenant to. As we saw when we looked at Isaiah 42 in that previous lesson, God assigned someone to a work *that actually and truly* accomplishes these things. God says in the Isaiah prophecy that He gives this Servant for and as a covenant to a particular people.

This One, this someone, this Servant, is Christ Jesus Himself.

**Isaiah 42:1, 6**

1Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
    my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
    **he will bring forth justice to the nations.**

6“I am the Lord; I have called you [my servant] in righteousness;
    I will take you by the hand and keep you;
I will give you as a covenant for the people,
    a light **for the nations**,

The spiritual promises and New Covenant prophecy in the Old Testament pointed to Christ Jesus, and the work He would do (required of Him in the Covenant of Redemption), **in order for** Him to make The Covenant of Grace with His eternally chosen people. And, as those promises and prophecy stated, this was a worldwide people.

It is the Promised seed of the woman, Christ, who is “a light for the nations” (Isaiah 42:6), who brings “forth justice to the nations” (Isaiah 42:1). He is the one in whom “shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:18). The Messiah who would come out of Israel will unite *those eternally chosen of both Israel and of the other nations* to all be “members of the household of God” through this New Covenant (Ephesians 2:19). They, together, make up true Israel—spiritual Israel—*the antitype Israel*. And this New Covenant would be unto them, a covenant of eternal forgiveness, righteousness, and fellowship with God.

As we get to the New Testament, we see the entrance of this promised Messiah. Matthew’s gospel opens with “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” (**Matthew 1:1**).

The incarnation of God the Son proves God’s promises true and changes everything from a human perspective.

**Finally, the Messiah has come**. After hundreds, no thousands of years, Christ had arrived. He was promised in the garden at the fall and now born of the Abraham’s line. He took on flesh and was now in time, on the earth, to complete the mission He covenanted to. The mystery of Christ had now blossomed into the very Son of God arriving to fulfill the spiritual promises and declare His kingdom.

But, for many of ethnic Israel, their hope was still only aimed at the temporary, they wanted one would improve their earthly state—their present circumstances.

They longed for someone to relieve them from foreign powers and restore them to earthly prosperity. Sam Renihan points out that “[Jesus] did not lead them to political supremacy or free them from foreign rule at all. He did not perfect their present state. In fact, He offered them something that seemed to them to be entirely not Jewish and of no real benefit to their current condition. The Jews stumbled over the unveiling of the mystery.” Therefore, we can see clearly in Scripture that the words and ministry of the Christ perplexed many of them, even angered some of Abraham’s children according to the flesh.

But this did not hinder Jesus—He did not waver from His mission.

Jesus repeatedly told those around Him that He was there *to do a specific work*. In this, He taught the gospel good news of the Kingdom of God. He spoke of His sacrifice and resurrection to come for the salvation—the eternal life—for all who, don’t work to earn it, but rather have saving faith in Him.

* **What is New Covenant/The Covenant of Grace?**

With that reminder of prophecy and historic context, lets now pull in our New Covenant statement, from our Word of Truth catechism Q/A.

**Q59. What is the New Covenant?**

It is the covenant by which God saves the elect, by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The New Covenant was planned before creation, promised in Genesis after the fall, and formally established by the blood of Christ when the work required of Him was complete.

This is it church, we are at the destination of what all this study has been pointing to and stepping towards.

It is finally time to really focus in on the New Covenant: its foundation, its features, its terms, and its people.

This, along with considering some implications of the New Covenant, will take us more than one lesson.

Let’s jump right into a very important passage of Scripture.

**Hebrews 8:6-13**

**6**…Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. **7**For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

**8**For he finds fault with them when he says:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,
    when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
    and with the house of Judah,
**9**not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
    on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.
For they did not continue in my covenant,
    and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.
**10**For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
    after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws into their minds,
    and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
    and they shall be my people.
**11**And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor
    and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’
for they shall all know me,
    from the least of them to the greatest.
**12**For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
    and I will remember their sins no more.”

**13**In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

This portion of Scripture from the book of Hebrews is where we will draw many points from tonight, and the next two weeks, *because of how important and relevant it is*. It recaps some things we’ve seen already, and it declares some of the New Covenant specifics.

* **The fault of the Old Covenant**

In this Hebrews passage we see God declare in verse 9 that the New Covenant is “not like the covenant that I made with their fathers…For they did not continue in my covenant”.

Based on the previous lessons, you know what this means. God is invoking the charge of covenant-breaking disobedience to the people in the Old Covenant.

In verse 7 we read, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.” The “first covenant” language is talking about the Old Covenant. Verse 7 here is telling us *why* the New Covenant was needed. The *why* is because of “fault” in the Old Covenant. The *fault* was both with the **type of covenant** and **with the earthly people** in the Old Covenant.

The Old Covenant was a covenant of works and it was for temporary things.

The Old Covenant was faulty in that it could not do what mankind **ultimately** needs—it was not designed by God to do this—it only offered temporary benefits and it was a covenant of works.

The Old Covenant showed the holiness of God and a person’s need for Christ and promised the Christ to come, but of itself the Old Covenant could not cause a person to obey rightly nor did it offer eternal reconciliation to God.

But we’ll see here tonight, the New Covenant does these things. By the “fault**less**” New Covenant, God gives His chosen ones new hearts, gives us new life, redemption, reconciliation, and eternal life, *by grace*, all on the basis of Christ’s perfect work.

This is critical because as we have seen, if relationship with God depends on fallen man’s own effort/work/merit, *then we have no hope*.

Because of the failure of the first Federal Head, Adam, we need reconciliation to God, but Scripture tells us this is impossible with fallen man. So, we are desperate for a Redeemer. We are desperate for One who will do the work required on our behalf to earn redemption for us.

Fallen man is utterly helpless to save himself—a covenant of works cannot be honored by us. We need a perfect Substitute and Mediator to justify us *on His basis* before the righteous God.

* **The New Covenant is because of and based on Christ**

In that, we come to know the absolute brilliance of God’s plan.

Just like the prophetic passages, in our Hebrews 8 section, we see clear decelerations that the New Covenant is entirely *because of and based on* Christ. For example,

**Hebrews 8:6**

… *Christ* has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant *he mediates* is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

As we’ve emphasized all throughout this and again in the New Covenant catechism answer, the whole plan and justification for redemption rests on the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

Our Covenant of Redemption answer said: *The Covenant of Redemption is the plan and decree … based on the work required of Jesus.*

See the connection there? Both answers point to Jesus.

That’s because, this is an important technicality,

* **The New Covenant is established by the Covenant of Redemption being accomplished within human history**

We learned that the Covenant of Redemption was made before time, in eternity past, but was based on things to happen in this creation, for eternal results.

So, the Covenant of Redemption breaks *into time and creation*, and through the execution of the decree—the plan—the assigned work—*the New Covenant is formally established*, and its benefits justified.

GET THIS: When Jesus completed His work on this earth, He met the terms—the conditions—of *His covenant of works* (that is the Covenant of Redemption), *so that* He could covenant to and be a Covenant of Grace to the people of God’s choosing.

The New Covenant is a reality because it is based on the Covenant of Redemption.

Now, both these answers stressed:

* **The work required of Jesus**

So, let’s look closer at that for a moment.

As Christians, we often say that we are “not saved by works.” What we *must* mean by this is it is not *our* doing/effort/earning that has any basis for or contribution to our salvation. Yes, and amen.

But we could add an important qualifier there when we say we are “not saved by works”—we could say *more preciously* that “we are not saved by our own works.” We are in fact “saved by works,” not our own work, rather we are saved by Jesus’ work.

It is by the New Covenant that God makes with certain sinners that Jesus’ work, His record, His righteousness is credited to us—imputed to us.

Grace is experienced by us. We are not receiving payment for something we’ve personally done or earned. Salvation is only possible because of the person *and work* of Jesus.

What makes God just to forgive sins and justify the unworthy is *only possible* because the eternal Son of God—the Messiah who covenanted to and completed the work required.

What was His work? As Christians we know; It’s what we talk about within the gospel.

It is the incarnation, His perfect life and obedience to God’s commands, it’s His sacrificial substitutionary death, and it’s shown victorious in His glorious resurrection.

It was the gospel work assigned to Jesus.

The Messiah covenanted to enter into time, take on flesh, and complete the substitutional, sacrificial mission.

*Everything is about Jesus*—everything about this plan is dependent upon Jesus. Salvation can be had in Jesus—Jesus alone. That is why the gospel is what it is; it’s the good news about Jesus.

So, let’s see this in Scripture. Jesus spoke of the pinnacle of this assigned work, His sacrificial substitutionary death, and the soon thereafter victorious resurrection, in **John 10:17-18**. He said, “for this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Jesus mentions the need for and the doing of *His work* several times:

**John 4:34**

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”

**John 5:36**

…For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

**John 6:38**

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

And Jesus, praying to God the Father, said:

**John 17:4**

I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the *work* that you gave me to do.

In passages like these, Jesus affirms he had a mission—a work—that He was assigned in the Covenant of Redemption. To be the sufficient substitutional sacrifice for wicked sinners like you and I, He had to take on flesh *and live a perfect life*.

* **Jesus had to perfectly obey law**

Let’s get even more specific now….when we say he had to live a perfect life, a perfect life according to what standard—what law? What law did Christ have to perfectly obey?

Well, Christ *came under the terms of His own covenant assignment*, not according to a prior covenant made with mankind, but to fulfill *His own covenant terms*.

Christ did not come under the same covenant terms as Adam’s covenant.

Christ did not come under the same covenant terms of the Old Covenant.

No, the Covenant of Redemption Jesus covenanted to assigns *His covenant terms*.

The other covenants we looked had terms that differed one from another:

Adam’s having very unique positive law and offering eternal rewards but not redemption,

Noah’s being without law to earn the reward—providing temporary/earthly blessing,

and

the Old Covenant having particular laws in order to *have and keep* the temporary/earthly blessing.

Just as the other covenants we looked had terms that differed one from another, so it is with the terms of Christ’s Covenant of Redemption—the terms (both the work required and the blessings offered) differed from all the other covenants.

Some overlap exists in the work required, (for example, obeying moral law as part of earning the reward was a requirement in several of the covenants). But it needs to be seen that Jesus did not come according to a prior covenant made with mankind, rather, **He came to fulfill *His own* covenant terms**.

We’ll consider further the rewards His covenant terms offered later, for now let’s see the specifics of what law His covenant required Him to obey.

We asked, *when we say he had to live a perfect life, what law did Christ have to perfectly obey*?

* + **Universal Moral Law**

First, Jesus came to obey the **Universal Moral Law** perfectly. This is the same moral law that we are required as humans to obey but can’t perfectly in our fallen nature. As we have studied before the Universal Moral Law is unchanging law and commands based on the right and character of God, to which man is held accountable for all of life. This law is a blessing—it outlines God’s good moral design for mankind. This moral law is the eternal, foundational law that has and will always exist. The Universal Moral Law cannot and will not be set aside; it cannot be abolished.

Jesus, therefore, did not come to abolish this law, but to fulfill it—and He did, perfectly obeying it. This is a crucial part of His work. Jesus **did** what we are unable to do. He came to obey the Universal Moral Law perfectly.

* + **Positive Law**

Second, in addition to the Universal Moral Law, Jesus had to obey certain positive laws.

* + - **Of that time**

Jesus had to obey all Positive Law that was applicable to Him during the time He was living bodily here on earth. Such as Positive Laws that *were* abrogated eventually by the New Covenant, things specific to the Old Covenant—Positive Law that was still in place and applicable to a male born of Abraham’s line.

Now, to be clear, this was not about Jesus striving to revive or maintain the Old Covenant nor was His mission to earn the Old Covenant’s rewards—no, that was not why He came. That covenant had fault as its rewards were not the same as the rewards *He sought*.

Jesus rightly obeyed all Positive Law that was applicable to Him during the time He was living bodily here on earth as another expression of **His perfection and His sufficiency** in being the only possible substitute for human sinners. Disobeying Positive Law that was still in place and applicable to a male born of Abraham’s line, would have meant Jesus was not perfect in the eyes of God. So, Jesus obeyed these things perfectly to prove His righteousness and worthiness, not because the Old Covenant was His assignment or offered any rewards of eternal value.

* + - **And assigned to Him in the Covenant of Redemption**

And, Jesus had to perfectly obey other positive law—**other commands—uniquely** **assigned *to Him* in the Covenant of Redemption**. As we’ve learned, it is common for God to issue law/commands that are for particular persons for a particular time—(we have certainly seen that be the case in various covenants). And, so it was for Jesus and His covenant of works. He had His own, unique Positive Law to obey—these Positive Laws were the additional things *required of Him alone* so that salvation is earned for and justly granted, in the proper time, to the eternally chosen ones.

Again, this *Christ specific* Positive Law consisted of things uniquely required of Him. Such as, Him having to die on a cross as a sacrifice for the sins of many. Jesus had to do that—no one else could do that as a sufficient sacrifice, ***nor* has anyone else ever been in a covenant requiring that.**

So, Jesus had His own, unique, Positive Law required of Him by the Covenant of Redemption.

With these points of clarity, we have the biblical insight needed for proper interpretation of a sometimes misunderstood passage:

**Matthew 5:17** which says:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

In this passage, Jesus is speaking about law and prophecy that was declared in the Old Testament that would be perfectly honored and fulfilled in His coming to complete His mission. He didn’t come to declare that all of God’s law was irrelevant or done away with, rather He came to be the One who perfectly honored required, applicable law. **He came to be the fulfillment of the law required of Him and to be the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Him.**

So, when we say Jesus had to live a perfect life, it means that Jesus had to perfectly obey the Positive Law that was required of Him and the Universal Moral Law.

Christ *HAD to* perfectly complete His work, *and*, as we see in the biblical text, **He knows He had this work to do**—*He willingly agreed* to this work before time began!

Therefore, as we discussed in our second lesson, the Covenant of Redemption was a ***covenant of works*** to Jesus.

Since Jesus had to obey law to earn or receive rewards, the Covenant of Redemption was a covenant of works to Him.

Now……Connecting all of this again to the covenant of focus tonight: Jesus had a work to do on which the New Covenant is dependent. In order for God to covenant redemption to any sinners, **the justice of that has to be earned**. And, it has—based on the work of Jesus.

Christ earned the rewards of His covenant of works, and He was given His role as Federal Head for a people of a covenant that God would make with certain sinners, being appointed to be the Mediator for His people, and as Mediator to be the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King.

*As we are told in Hebrews 8*, Christ has obtained a ministry, having a covenant that He mediates—The Covenant of Grace—the New Covenant.

In all of that, let us see that, based on the person and work of Christ Jesus, God is just to forgive and save sinners by grace alone.

*Jesus did* the reward earning work, He completed it. As our answer says, “The New Covenant was planned before creation, promised in Genesis after the fall, and **formally established** by the blood of Christ when the work required of Him was complete.”

Jesus willingly, righteously did all He covenanted to in the Covenant of Redemption (1 Peter 2:22-24, Philippians 2:5-8, Isaiah 50:5–7) meeting the requirements in order to justly give eternal life through the New Covenant.

The Covenant of Redemption was a *covenant of works* to Jesus, so that the New Covenant can be a *covenant of grace* to the specific people God covenants it to. More on that in a bit.

Having focused on Christ’s completed work, let’s now focus further on critical attributes of the New Covenant. First,

* **The New Covenant is *different* than what has come before in time, it is truly *new.***

You may have noticed earlier the similarities between the Jeremiah 31 passage and the Hebrews 8 passage. That is because the inspired writer of Hebrews was quoting much of the passage from its original biblical location of Jeremiah 31.

In Jeremiah 31, God is speaking through a prophet about the disobedience of the members of the Old Covenant and telling of the New Covenant God is going to establish with particular people—the antitype people. He says, in verse 8,

**Hebrews 8:6**

the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish **a new covenant** ...

This is a great declaration of the true *newness* of this New Covenant. This is a plain and clear deceleration of a new and different covenant. It is a great turning point in the story.

Under this critical point, see that:

* **The** **New Covenant is entirely other and different from anything that had come before it between God and men**

The New Covenant was promised in times and covenants of old, but it was not any of those covenants. The New Covenant is not an establishment of or a continuation of or part two of the Old Covenant, or any other past covenant between God and man.

This is one of the major points of the Book of Hebrews: Detailing the insufficiency of the Old Covenant is a major point. Explaining the difference between the Old Covenant and New Covenant is seen over and over in the book.

Consider just a few important declarations from Hebrews:

As we have seen, **Hebrews 8:6**

… Christ has obtained a ministry that is as *much more excellent than the old* as ***the covenant he mediates*** *is better*, since it is enacted on better promises.

And see **Hebrews 8:13**

*In speaking of a* ***new covenant***, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

And **Hebrews 9:15**

Therefore [Christ Jesus] is the mediator of *a* ***new covenant***, so that those who are called may receive the promised *eternal* inheritance …

We see how there is a clear distinction made between the Old Covenant made with the ethnic Israelites—called the “first covenant” in some Hebrews passages—and the New Covenant that Christ mediates. Jesus “makes the first one obsolete.”

The Old Covenant began to fade away, until eventually, being abolished altogether. God found fault with the people in the temporary Old Covenant, and furthering His plan, He brought about the New Covenant—a covenant entirely other and different than the Old Covenant.

The New Covenant is entirely other and different from anything that had come before it between God and man.

To be extra clear here:

The New Covenant was not included in the Old Covenant.

The Old Covenant is not included in the New Covenant.

The Old Covenant was not a version of New Covenant.

The Old Covenant was not/is not New Covenant.

Now, I’m to make a point again here that we have discussed previously because it’s a point many get confused on. While the New Covenant was not formally established until the cross, since gospel prophecy—gospel declaration—existed in Old Testament times—all the way back to in the Garden (Genesis 3:15)— the eternally chosen ones living before the Cross were saved by grace through faith *in the coming Messiah*. The work required of Christ had not been completed in time and space yet, *but the New Covenant worked in time and space before it was formally established*—it existed beforehand ***in the form of a promise***, not in the form of a ratified covenant.

It is important that you know that.

This is an important distinction: The New Covenant is entirely other and different from anything that had come before it between God and man **and it worked retroactively in time *because God promised it and He is unchanging***.

I included some quotes again in your handout notes of the 1689 Christian Confession of Faith on this point. We won’t read them aloud now, for the sake of time.

**1689 Confession of Faith**: “God was pleased to proclaim the promise of Christ, the seed of the woman, as the means of calling the elect and producing in them faith and repentance. In this promise the gospel in its substance was revealed and made effectual for the conversion and salvation of sinners.”

**1689 Confession of Faith**: “The price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ till after his incarnation. Yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit of it was imparted to the elect in every age since the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices that revealed him and pointed to him as the seed that would bruise the serpent’s head and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Another way we see that the New Covenant is entirely other and different from anything that had come before it is in our next point, that is:

* **The New Covenant rewards the members of the covenant with *eternal* blessings**

As we studied, the Old Covenant had promises, types, and shadows that taught about the Messiah and the New Covenant to come, the Old Covenant did not offer, in and of itself, any spiritual redemption and reconciliation—any eternal rewards. But the New Covenant is the substance and realization of entirely different and better things—eternal things.

In Hebrews 8 we are told the New Covenant, “is enacted on better promises.” And in Hebrews 9 we are told that “those who are called may receive the promised *eternal inheritance*” brought only in the New Covenant.

Eternal inheritance!?

The benefits are eternal in the New Covenant, not temporal! Finally, a covenant that forgives and redeems fallen men, eternally!

Some of these New Covenant blessings are in verses 10-12 of Hebrews 8:

**Hebrews 8:10-12**

**10**… I will put my laws into their minds,
    and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
    and they shall be my people.
**11**… they shall all know me,
    from the least of them to the greatest.
**12**For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
    and I will remember their sins no more.”

Those verses declare better blessings, spiritual blessings, eternal blessings!

Paul speaks of the New Covenant rewards/blessings in:

**Ephesians 1:3**

**3**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us *in Christ* *with every spiritual blessing* in the heavenly places

Amen!

*Some* of the better, spiritual, eternal, blessings of the New Covenant are: regeneration/spiritual life/new hearts, saving faith, full forgiveness of original sin guilt and personal sin guilt, the imputed righteousness of Christ, justification, redemption, eternal reconciliation to God, the Holy Spirit to dwell within, perseverance, the causing of love for God’s law and an obedience to His commands—Eventually: new glorified bodies, life in the new creation to come, no more pain, suffering, or tears, being in presence of Christ Jesus in the flesh, glorious worship of God like we have never experienced…the list goes on and on!

The blessings can be spoken to in many different ways, but Scripture often sums them up by saying: Eternal life. Those God covenants *the New Covenant to* get ETERNAL LIFE with Christ Jesus.

**Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God *is eternal life* *in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

In speaking about those God calls into the New Covenant, Jesus says in:

**John 10:28** "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

Those God covenants *the New Covenant to* get ENTERAL LIFE with Christ Jesus.

The eternal blessings of the New Covenant are better than we can even imagine.

Now, related to this we must understand that:

* **The New Covenant works much differently than the Old Covenant—*it is a Covenant of Grace***

The Old Covenant was a covenant of works to the members of it—it depended upon fallen human obedience to have and remain within the covenant blessings. But, the New Covenant is a *covenant of grace* for those God has chosen to covenant with.

Remember our language about covenants of grace:

In a *covenant of grace* a party covenanted to receives rewards/benefits without them 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 persons God has covenanted with.

Sam Renihan, “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.”

As we just considered, in the Covenant of Redemption, God sent Christ to work and earn the rewards the New Covenant gives—it is based on His work, not our own work.

Therefore, in New Covenant, we (those God has chosen to covenant with) *enter into the New Covenant and remain in it eternally* **entirely on the basis of grace**—

Even when we consider the imperatives of Christianity, it is God who works in us:

**Philippians 2:13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

These realities make the New Covenant a *covenant of grace* for us.

Scripture makes these things definitively clear:

Look, for example:

Speaking of fallen man,

**Romans 3:10-12** … “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

**Romans 3:20** For by works of the law no human being will be justified in [God’s] sight…

**Galatians 2:21** … if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

**John 1:17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

**John 6:63** “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all …”

**Romans 9:16** So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

**Ephesians 1:6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

By grace alone, God chose a particular people in eternity past.

By grace alone, God does what’s required to redeem us.

By grace alone, God gives us new life and saving faith in Jesus—the Mediator of the New Covenant.

By grace alone, God grows us and sanctifies us.

By grace alone, God keeps His redeemed.

By grace alone, God gives us eternal life.

The New Covenant is a covenant entirely of grace to the members of it for the rewards it provides. Do you see that?

Unlike the Adamic Covenant—in which fallible man had to do what was necessary to receive the eternal rewards it offered—

or the Old Covenant—in which fallen man had to do what was necessary to receive the temporary rewards it offered—

in the New Covenant, God does it all that is required and gives to us the eternal rewards of the New Covenant by grace, apart from our own work!

There are no conditions in us or by our own works that have to be met for God to covenant this New Covenant to us—or for us to maintain in the covenant rewards. Amazing! Amazing Church! Praise God!

Now that we have established this, I want to build a bit on a previous point.

In addition to the plain deceleration we saw previously that this is a completely new covenant, we also see the newness of it *in this point*, that is, *in how the covenant works*.

To show the New Covenant’s newness *by the details of the covenant itself*, theologian Pascal Denault writes, “The unconditional nature constitutes a new and unique element of the new covenant. [By unconditional he means the rewards are not earned or kept by fallen man’s own work].

The promises of the old covenant were preceded by an “if” that made them conditional on man’s obedience, while the promises of the new covenant were marked by divine monergism:

**Jeremiah 31:33-34**

33For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God … 34… I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

The elements that make up the substance of the new covenant *are works supremely operated by God* and are presented by a series of **declarative statements**, *not conditional clauses*. None of these promises depends on a condition that had first to be met by [fallen] man.”

By both the plain and clear declarations *and* the details of the covenant itself—in what was prophesied in the Old Testament and reaffirmed in the New Testament, we must see that this New Covenant is *NEW—entirely other and different from anything that had come before it between God and man*. It is not like the covenants before it.

* **“The” Covenant of Grace**

The New Covenant is a *covenant of grace for eternal blessings.*

And since the New Covenant provides those God covenants to ***eternal*** *blessings by grace*—blessings to be enjoyed forever, blessings we can never lose—the New Covenant is called ***The* Covenant of Grace**. ***The* Covenant of Grace**.

We saw that there has been another covenant of grace that God made—that is the Noahic Covenant.

That Noahic Covenant provided gracious preservation to mankind in this first creation for a long **but temporary** time WITHOUT mankind needing to earn that covenant blessing. *In that way it was/is a covenant of grace*. **But it did not provide what mankind ultimately needs—it did not provide redemption, nor eternal life**. It falls vastly short of what the New Covenant provides (and that is an understatement).

*Thank God that the New Covenant is a covenant that provides all we need,* keeps us securely in it, and **is entirely of grace to the members of it**. It is fitting then, that we see the emphasis highlighted in the theological name given to this New Covenant, it is ***The* Covenant of Grace**.

See how awesome these things are? On this side of the Cross, with the full cannon of Scripture, we *get* to see the unfailing, unchangeable plan and decree of God fulfilled for the New Covenant. This is an excellent place to be.

If we were living before the New Covenant was formally establish, we’d be looking forward to it in shadow form—as a promise—but we *get to* look at the story with greater insight and clarity, and see that our awesome God brought the plan to fulfillment—Christ has come and the New Covenant is formally established!

Amazing. So amazing. God is awesome. He is perfect, wise, just, and gracious.

There is a lot left to see, but that’s all we have time for tonight.

In our next couple of lessons we will continue our study of the New Covenant and get into some implications of our study as a whole.

We need to really focus in on *who* is in the New Covenant, *the way* God covenants this New Covenant to them, *the good law* that God causes them to obey, and *the incredible future* these chosen ones of God have.

Lot’s left to see….more and more awe of our great God to be had!

Let’s pray…