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Section: Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology)

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**HANDOUT NOTES**

* **The Davidic Covenant**

God told Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 17 that kings would come from them.

While the Israelite people ongoingly proved to be foolish and disobedient, God’s promises to Abraham held back the full curse of the covenant. Eventually, under Joshua and Caleb, Israel entered the land of Canaan, obtaining the promised land inheritance from God.

They were now in the land, but disobedient to the covenant so they were afflicted and oppressed. The laws of God were neglected and for that the people suffered. There was not peace, prosperity, or unity. Instead, as Scripture says, “*everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (****Judges 17:6, 21:25****)*.

They needed a human king to rule them according to God’s law.

They sinfully asked for a king who would “**19**… be a king over us, **20***that we also may be like all the nations,* and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles” (**1 Samuel 8:19-20**).

They wanted to be like the world—*they wanted a king like the wicked nations had*—they thought living under that kind of reign was superior to living under God’s law.

God permitted the Israelites what they demanded to make Saul the first king of Israel. But Saul’s rule was broken from the start and proved to be a failure over time.

In 1 Samuel 16, David is shown to be God’s chosen one for appointment to kingship. In the proceeding chapters of Scripture, we can read of David’s official appointment to the throne and success in driving out all the enemies from the land, according to the sovereign hand of God.

* **The Davidic Covenant declared**

The covenant of our focus is that which God makes with David. It is primarily detailed in 2 Samuel 7.

David speaks to the covenant that God made with him in 2 Samuel 23:5, and it is also specified as a covenant in Psalm 89:3.

In the establishing of this covenant, the earthy implications are that the earthly Davidic king was to reflect the righteous rule *of the divine King* and the earthly king was to lead Israel in the faithful observance of the Old Covenant law.

The Abrahamic Covenant promised a specific land to a specific people for an earthly kingdom. The Mosaic Covenant provided the law of the kingdom. And now, the Davidic Covenant provides the human kings for the earthly kingdom—to rule the people of the Abrahamic Covenant according to the law of the Mosaic Covenant. *All of this makes up the Old Covenant.*

* **The covenant rewards/blessings**

The people of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants were the same, so was *the offer of blessed earthy life in the land of Canaan* the same. In the Davidic Covenant we see God expand upon what the blessed life they would experience with Old Covenant obedience would be. In the 2 Samuel 7 passage we find the offer of security and rest in the promised land for the people of the Old Covenant *and, better yet, that God would dwell with them*—giving further special care and attention among them.

Still at stake was Abraham’s line **perpetually** *staying, living, and thriving* in the promised land with the blessed presence of God.

* **“A” covenant of works**

In the Davidic Covenant, God gave promises to David and his descendants, and he obligated them to obey the laws of the Old Covenant. In the covenant, God threatened discipline and punishment for covenant breaking.

David and his sons must keep the terms of the covenant—they must obey God’s law. If they do, they will perpetually thrive and have an earthy throne to rule from. If they do not, they will be disciplined, even punished. In the Davidic Covenant, if Abraham’s line keeps the Mosaic Covenant, they enjoy the rewards/blessings of the Old Covenant—but if they disobey, they receive the Old Covenant curses.

What we have here, as David understood, and Solomon interpreted correctly, is a **covenant of works**.

* **The Old Covenant was focused** **by the Davidic Covenant**

The Davidic Covenant establishes David and his sons (the heirs of his throne) as a kind of federal headship in the kingdom. This is one way the Old Covenant was focused by the Davidic Covenant.

The Davidic king was particularly tasked to construct the dwelling place of the Lord (the temple) and guard it. He was required to know, obey, and uphold for the people of the covenant all of God’s Old Covenant law (male circumcision, other positive laws, and the eternal moral law). And the Davidic king was to lead the people well according to his role of God appointed ruler of the promised land.

* **One Old Covenant made up of three covenants**

**Samuel Renihan: “**With the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants put together we can clearly see the kingdom of Israel in full… the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants do not extend any further than the initial scope set down in the Abrahamic Covenant. In order to enjoy a blessed life in Canaan, God's covenant must be kept… This is why the Old Covenant includes the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants. Moses controls Abraham and David. The Mosaic Covenant is the most prominent covenant in the Old Testament because it controls whether you enjoy Abraham's covenant, and it stands over the Davidic kings who must copy and keep the law. It is impossible to refer only to the Mosaic Covenant when speaking of the Old Covenant because it unavoidably brings along with it the two other covenants that it controls.”

The three Old Covenant covenants ultimately all have the same parties, rules, rewards, and penalties.

* **The Messiah to come specifically from David’s line**

The most important thing about the Davidic Covenant is how it focuses the Old Covenant in regard to it serving to bring about the Covenant of Redemption Messiah promised to Abraham (and even before in Genesis 3:15). It would be through the line of the Davidic king that God’s promise of blessing to the *nations* would be accomplished.

When God said to David in 2 Samuel 7:16, "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure before me forever," He ultimately had in view a house and a kingdom much greater than that of ethnic Israel—there was a spiritual promise repeated to the Davidic line.

God was declaring that the Messiah would come *specifically from David’s line*, and this Messiah would be the better and final King—a forever King over a diverse people from all nations. This is the most significant way the Old Covenant was focused by the Davidic Covenant.

All of creation is set in the context of God’s eternal plan.

So, God shows in this Davidic Covenant that it is through David’s line that He will see through that promise, that plan, that decree, *that* trinitarian covenant.

All of this is happening to bring about and show how we get to the chosen One who establishes The Covenant of Grace—the New Covenant.

* **God did what He promised—Jesus, the son of David, the son of Abraham**

The plan to bring about the Messiah through Abraham’s family line was done *as promised*. The Old Covenant’s purpose of stepping the story towards The Covenant of Grace—the New Covenant—has worked.

God did what He decreed to do and what He has been promising all along: Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, the seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3:15.

* **The** **Old Covenant People Were Eventually *Fully and Finally* Cursed**

Their work—their choices—their sin—earned the payment of curses.

God would not remain with them in Old Covenant relationship—in His timing, He would cut them off and abolish the Old Covenant.

The Old Covenant began to fade away in Old Testament times, until eventually, many years later, being abolished altogether—that occurred after Christ came.

After the promise of the Messiah was fulfilled, the full curse of the Mosaic covenant was poured out upon Judah as well, and the Old Covenant was done away with.

Because the Old Covenant is abolished, being of ethnic descent from Israel no longer, *in and of itself*, means *anything unique* in relation to God and covenant with God.

* + **Dispensationalism: A broken system with wrong hermeneutics**

This modern belief of Dispensationalism misses or denies much of what we have seen here. Dispensationalism seeks to interpret Scripture differently than the historic Christian confessions on some of these things and that is driven by or produces a conclusion of the thinking that ethnic Israel *remains* special and is separate from non-Israelite believers.

* + **There are no longer any special national groups or lands**

We see clearly in Scripture that Abraham’s line repeated in disobedience and covenant failure over and over, so God ended the covenant relationship (Hebrews 8:9 & 13). Therefore, because the Old Covenant has been abolished, being of ethnic descent from Israel no longer, *in and of itself*, means *anything unique* in relation to God, covenant with God, or special benefits.

Horizontally, the nation/people of ethnic Israel should be loved and treated in the same way we would *any other nation or people group*. Ethnic Israelites are not more or less important than anyone else in the world. It is not more biblical to elevate ethnic/national Israel in New Covenant times. To do so is a misunderstanding of covenant, biblical realties.

Abraham’s line has no special or remaining covenantal claim to any earthly land, or any other covenant blessing that was offered in the Old Covenant.

Abraham’s line did not earn the right to stay in the land of Canaan, so a curse of the covenant was such that they no longer have a covenantal claim to Canaan *or any other land.*

What once was called “holy land” was *made common* by the abolishment of the Old Covenant and the formal establishment of the New Covenant *worldwide* reign of Christ.

Let us note, the true spiritual people of God—*the elect—*have a glorious *eternal land* (the *antitypical* “holy land”) awaiting us. It is not the land of Canaan on this broken earth.

Therefore, on this first creation, there is no longer any special lands *or* national groups.

* **God Never Fails**

In all of this talk of Old Covenant failure, let us note that the disobedience of the Old Covenant people was not *God failing*. No, the broken covenant was actually a part of His perfect, preordained plan to *display the need for and to take us to the Messiah and New Covenant*.

* **Prophetic Idiom**

In the Old Testament books of Prophecy, God promises several times in a variety of different ways that He had yet to complete a mighty work for “Israel.” Since God used ethnic Israel as a shadow of His eternal chosen ones, the way He speaks about Israel in the Old Testament is sometimes not about the ethnic hearers of content, but for/about the true eternal people of God.

Prophetic Idiom is used often in Scripture. Prophetic Idiom is a form of speech in prophecy whereby *familiar names, terms, and concepts are used to speak of something else*, perhaps, something to come.

With this clarity, one is better suited to make correct interpretations of prophetic Scripture. For example, what God is declaring in Ezekiel 36 is not a promise to ethnic Israel as a whole, rather it is a promise to the eternal people of God made up of people from all nations.

This glorious truth about regeneration/redemption/salvation is a New Covenant benefit only for those chosen in the Covenant of Redemption. In passages like these, we must see that God is using the title of Israel to teach about the antitypical, eternal people of God.

* **Only One Way to Be Saved**

As we complete our main consideration of the Old Covenant, we need to stress again how a person in any time of human history can be redeemed. As I hope you see so clearly by now, there is one answer to this which is based off the Covenant of Redemption, because of an unchangeable God, because of an unbreakable eternal promise. Salvation has always been by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

In our time after Jesus’ death, we look back to the finished work of Jesus for salvation. But before Jesus came, they looked forward to the person and work of Jesus for salvation. Same Jesus, same one way to salvation. There has never been any other way. The New Covenant worked in time and space even before it was formally established.