****

Section: Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology)

Teacher: Joshua Kirstine

March 20, 2024

**HANDOUT 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.

* **Introduction**

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.

* **Prophecy of the New Covenant**

As found in the Old Testament books of Prophecy, God promised several times in a variety of ways, often with Prophetic Idiom, that He had yet to complete a mighty work for “Israel.” In these prophecies we see declarations 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.

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.

The use of the name or title of Israel in these New Covenant prophecies and the prophetic 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.

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.

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

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.

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.

**Finally, the Messiah has come**.

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 the New Covenant/the Covenant of Grace?**

**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.

* **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”.

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 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 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 New Covenant Is Because of and Based on Christ**

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.

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

When Jesus completed His work on this earth, He met the terms—the conditions—of His covenant of works (Covenant of Redemption), so 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.

* **The work required of Jesus**

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 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.

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

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**

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?

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.

Just as the other covenants 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.

* + **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.

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.

* + **Positive Law**

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

* + - **The Law 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.

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**

Jesus had to perfectly obey other positive law—**other commands—uniquely** **assigned to Him in the Covenant of Redemption**.

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.

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.**

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 came to be the fulfillment of the law required of Him and to be the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Him.**

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

* **The New Covenant Is Different Than What Has Come before in Time; It Is Truly New**

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.

This is a great declaration of the true newness of this New Covenant. This is a plain and clear declaration of a new and different covenant.

* **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.

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

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.

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**.

**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.”

* **The New Covenant Rewards the Members of the Covenant With Eternal Blessings**

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.

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

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 the 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.

* **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.

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

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**.

Scripture makes these things definitively clear:

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” Covenant of Grace**

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**.