

Section: Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology)

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

**Lesson 55 <> Question 59 “The New Covenant- Part 2”**

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**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.

In this final lesson on Covenant Theology we look again at the New Covenant. This is the covenant that we are now living in and so it is worthy to spend some extra time considering it’s application to us today on a number of levels.

* **The New Covenant is made with (covenanted to) the *eternally* chosen ones: Spiritual Israel**

We see in Hebrews 8 that God says He makes the New Covenant with particular people, verse 8:

**Hebrews 8:8** “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”

Here we see that God promised a new covenant and said He will establish it with the House of Israel and with the house of Judah—or, shorthand, *Israel*.

* **Hermeneutics: Which “Israel”?**

When “Israel” is being spoken about when we read of it in Scripture it sometimes means *ethnic Israel (the type)*, other times is means *Spiritual Israel (the antitype Israel—eternal Israel—the elect)*.

As with many words in Scripture, the usage/meaning of the title Israel is known correctly by the context of the passage ***and*** the teaching of the whole of Scripture.

With this, we need to identify *which Israel* God is speaking about: Who makes up *this New Covenant group referred to as Israel* in many of *the prophetic passages* and some New Testament passages? This is very important. God will establish the new covenant with *Israel*…**so we need Scripture to teach us what this means**.

We saw clearly in our Covenant of Redemption lesson that God has chosen who His true eternal people are—they the elect of God. In eternity past, God chose all the individuals that He would redeem and make His everlasting people. That has never changed—God cannot and does not change.

But who are these people exactly?

* **The covenant relationship with *ethnic Israel* has truly ended**

We later saw in our study that in God determined to make a covenant with an earthly people—ethnic Israel. That was the Old Covenant.

Now, because the Old Covenant was made primarily with ethnic Israelites, for some this has caused a great misunderstanding about who God’s *eternally chosen people* are.

Some (such as dispensationalists) have wrongly tried to conclude that God has two eternal people: Ethnic Israel and separately the elect Gentiles. This is a serious error and is often based on not knowing biblical Covenant Theology.

As we have learned, God’s choosing of ethnic Israel in the way that He did in the Old Testament was for temporary purposes, as the Old Covenant was temporary.

Additionally, we saw that they broke the covenant—they deserved and received the covenant curses—they were put off—they no longer are His people.

**Hebrews 8:9** tell us for example, “For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them.”

That’s significant: “I showed no concern for them.”

We saw declarations of cursing and putting off ethnic Israel in prior lessons, for example:

**Jeremiah 3:8** for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce…

**2 Kings 23:27** And the Lord said, “I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.”

We should know by now in our study that the Old Covenant people broke the covenant they were in,

so God

casted them off,

showed no concern for them,

divorced them and sent them away.

The Old Covenant was abolished and covenant relationship *with ethnic Israel* has truly ended.

Now also consider this from the standpoint of eternity: Many of Abraham’s line, all through history, have died without saving faith in Jesus, the Messiah. Since there has never and will never be another way to be eternally reconciled to God, all those of Abraham’s line (in the past and all in the present and future) WHO DO **NOT** HAVE SAVING FAITH IN JESUS, **prove that ethnic Israel**, ***as a whole***, are not of God’s eternally chosen ones.

Based on all these factors, it should be clear that ***the whole*** of ethnic Israel is not the (or of the) eternally chosen people of God—***the whole*** of ethnic Israel is not.

Now, to be clear:**some of ethnic Israel are a part of the eternal people of God, such as Abraham and any others with saving faith in Christ alone**, but not all ethnic Israelites are.

* **There is one, united yet diverse, forever people of God**

So then, Who makes up this New Covenant group referred to as Israel in many of the prophetic passages and some New Testament passages? We will see tonight, from Scripture, that when Scripture talks about the people of the New Covenant, it is speaking of *Spiritual Israel—that is the antitype Israel.* Spiritual Israel is the one united people of God: some from ethnic Israel and some who are not of ethnic Israel.

Spiritual Israel is all of the elect Jews and all of the elect Gentiles that God chose before time for eternal redemption—*They* are God’s forever people.

Romans 9-11 is a primary place of this teaching.

Paul begins in Romans 9 by acknowledging ethnic Israel’s Old Covenant history:

**Romans 9:4** They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

Paul highlights the fleshy, earthly things that ethnic Israel had claim to.

But, Paul goes on to make clear that God ultimately had a bigger plan and intention:

**Romans 9:6-8** But it is not as though the word of God has failed. **For not all who *are descended from Israel* belong to Israel, 7and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring**, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” **8This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring**.

So, the Romans 9 passage starts by acknowledging ethnic Israel’s Old Covenant history, but then it turned a very important corner to say, verse 6, “For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel.” This may seem odd at first, but I an assure you that Paul is not schizophrenic, or confused, or otherwise out of touch with reality.

What **God** is teaching through Paul is: For not all who are descended from *ethnic Israel* belong to *spiritual/eternal Israel*. He is teaching that not all of ethnic Israel is of Spiritual Israel—the eternally chosen people of God.

As we have said, in the Bible, the title of “Israel” or “House of Israel and Judah” can be a way to speak about God’s temporary ethic people (the type), or God’s eternally chosen people—Spiritual Israel (the antitype).

The Bible gives us clarity as to this title, especially the New Testament. For example, verse 7, we just read, gives us this clarity.

So also, does verse 8, which says, “This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.”

This passage teaches that the flesh, (meaning being born of a particular family or ethnic line), is **not** the basis on which a person is in God’s eternal family—Spiritual Israel.

Rather, the basis for this is *if* you are included in God’s eternal promise, based on the Covenant of Redemption, to be *brought into the New Covenant*. “The children of the promise” are those God chose for spiritual adoption and eternal salvation in the Covenant of Redemption—they are Spiritual Israel. We’ll see this further in the text.

As the chapter continues, Paul then gives examples of God's sovereign working to prove God is the one who decided who will be saved and has the freedom to do with His creation as He wills.

In **Romans 9:23-24** Paul says that God has chosen who He has “in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— **24**even us **whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles**”

In this Paul tells us directly that God calls Jews and non-Jews to Himself for salvation. Salvation is by grace as it is only for those “he has called.”

Then Paul quotes Old Testament prophesy that declares, first, that the scope of God's true elect also includes those beyond ethnic Israel.

And second, that only some of ethnic Israel are a part of the true elect:

**Romans 9:25-27** As indeed he says in Hosea,

“Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’
    and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”
**26**“And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’
    there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

**27**And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved

There we have it again; Not all who are descended from *ethnic Israel* belong to *spiritual/eternal Israel*. *Spiritual Israel is made up of some from ethnic Israel and some who are not of ethnic Israel—****Jew and Gentile****.*

Skipping ahead again for time,

**Romans 10:11-13**For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” **12**For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. **13**For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Here Paul states that salvation is through faith, and that it is for BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS—people of ethnic Israel and Gentiles (non-Israelites).

“There is no distinction between Jew and Greek” is a huge statement. That affirms what we taught a couple of lessons ago, namely, for and in the New Covenant, there is not specialness or advantage to being of ethnic Israel.

That sais, there is a way Scripture uses the title or name "Israel" that means something different than ethnic Israel. In these cases, it means Spiritual Israel—that is the elect—the eternally chosen ones—those chosen before time began in the Covenant of Redemption—**the antitype people**.

There is significant beauty in this. God decreed to save people from all nations and unite them into one people, one flock, one family, one household.

We see this in other places of the New Testament as well.

See a few examples.

**Galatians 3:26-29** for in Christ Jesus *you are all sons of God, through faith*. **27**For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **28**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29**And **if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring**, heirs according to promise.

Additonally, Jesus’ claimed to have other people (non-Israelites) to gather into His *one* flock:

**John 10:16** … I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

“**One flock, one shepherd**.”

This point is also the informed way to understand a commonly misunderstood passage in 1 John. John wrote this to an ethnic Israel audience:

**1 John 2:2** [Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

John’s point here is **not** that Jesus paid *for the sins of every person who ever lived*; rather, he is teaching that Jesus is the Savior of people from within ethnic Israel AND non-Israelites—those scattered throughout the world. The elect are from “every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (**Revelation 7:9**).

Despite what some people think because of the historic existence of the Old Covenant, Jesus is the Messiah for the eternally chosen ones throughout the whole world.

Jesus is the Savior of the world, meaning **the elect** are from every tongue, tribe, and nation—not just ethnic Israelites. I hope you’re seeing that connection more clearly now AND why the Bible takes important steps to teach this.

As Jesus said, “one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16).

This leads us to an important understanding of the New Covenant Church!!

* + **The Church**

These people (Spiritual Israel) are the true Church (capital “C” Church)—theologically called the *universal Church.*

While there are local gatherings of believers that we call “the church”, what we are talking about here is the spiritual Church—those who *truly* make up Christ’s bride, those brought in under Jesus’ New Covenant Federal Headship.

The universal Church is all the actual members of the body of Christ, made up of people from all times and around the world. It is all who *are called* out of darkness, regenerated, and set apart by God’s saving grace.

The formal declaration of the Church began outwardly after the death of Christ, but inwardly, its people began long before that—going all the way back to the first person in creation ever effectually called and redeemed on the basis of the Messiah to come.

HN 1689 Quote.

1689 Confession of Faith: “The universal church, which (with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) may be called invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

* + **The Church didn’t replace Israel—rather the Church existed before Israel**

Therefore, (this is really important), **see that the Church didn’t replace Israel—rather the Church *existed before Israel***.

The Church existed before Israel’s covenant time period, and during, and after. **Some of ethnic Israel are of the Church**, but not all ethnic Israelites are.

Old Covenant Ethnic Israel was the type, the Church is the antitype. Ethnic Israel shadowed a people (the Church) that God was actively gathering for eternity all along, by grace alone, through the perfect covenant of Christ.

**All of the elect Jews and all of the elect Gentiles (Spiritual Israel) are brought into and make up the Church**.

Look at:

**Ephesians 2:19**

All those redeemed in Christ, “… are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God ”

Ok….Now that we have allowed Scripture to identify the WHO (that is: the New Covenant is made with the eternally chosen ones: Spiritual Israel) (which speaks to some Dispensationalism error)…now let’s turn to allow Scripture **to identify in detail HOW one is brought into the New Covenant** *and* **WHO *we* should regard as being in the New Covenant**. (which speaks to some Presbyterian error)

* **How is a person brought into the New Covenant?—Who should we regard as being *in* the New Covenant?**

As Hebrews tells us plainly, Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant, the “better covenant” established on “better promises.” And that is based **on Jesus being appointed as a Federal Head** in the Covenant of Redemption—**Jesus was appointed as *the* Federal Head of the New Covenant**.

* **Membership of a given covenant is determined by Federal Headship**

As we have seen in this series, the membership of a given covenant is determined by Federal Headship—all those represented by the Federal Head—all those under the Federal Head of the covenant.

And, for each covenant, we have seen that **God sovereignly determines** *how someone is brought into the covenant*—that is, *who are under or made to be under the Federal Head of the covenant*.

**When we look at the New Covenant** (in both who it was planned for and how it works) **it should be clear that membership for the New Covenant was determined by God’s pre-creation election.** There are specific individuals whom God chose before time in the Covenant of Redemption to eventually redeem—to eventually covenant with *in the New Covenant*. In time, then, New Covenant membership happens when God truly and unchangeably effectually calls a person into the covenant.

* **New Covenant membership happens when God effectually calls a person**

Each elect person, one by one, is transferred to be under Jesus’ New Covenant Federal Headship when God the Holy Spirit causes new birth, gives saving faith, and unites them to Christ Jesus eternally.

The connection of 1) the need of new birth and 2) entering the kingdom of Christ (being brought in under His Federal Headship, into His Covenant of Grace) is made clear in Scripture, for example by Jesus in John 3 in a conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus:

**John 3:3-8** …[Jesus said] “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” **4**Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” **5**Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **6**That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. **7**Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ **8**The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

In this, Jesus definitively declares there that **new birth** by the Spirit of God is the only way to be Christ’s—to be of Christ’s kingdom—to be in Christ’s covenant.

First birth (natural birth) does not grant access into Christ’s Covenant of Grace—**we are not naturally born into the New Covenant.**

*Apart from* union with Christ, the Federal Head of the New Covenant, *a person is not* in the New Covenant. This should be clear.

The Apostles Paul says plainly in **Romans 8:9** that, “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” You do not belong to Christ, (that is, you are not under His Federal Headship—**you are not in the covenant** He makes with humans for eternal life, The Covenant of Grace)—***unless*** you have been personally united with Him by new birth and saving faith.

**Therefore, no one should be assumed to be in (or considered in) The Covenant of Grace outside of personal testimony of new birth and saving faith.**

Membership in the New Covenant, union to Christ, being under Jesus’s Federal Headship are all the same thing—and that hinges upon the gracious effectual call of God alone.

* **New Covenant membership=brought unchangeably under the Federal Headship of Christ**

I hope you can see in all of this that New Covenant membership happens to God’s chosen and is not revocable. God makes no mistakes, those He effectually calls are indeed redeemed.

New Covenant membership equals redemption.

New Covenant membership equals eternal life.

New Covenant membership equals not being able to be snatched out of God’s hand.

Membership in the New Covenant is not *in and out* kind of thing. A person is ether truly in or not in. **There is not a *partial in*, or an *outwardly in* membership**. If you are in the New Covenant, you have been brought unchangeably under the Federal Headship of Christ.

In all what we have seen, it should be clear that not only does ethnicity not mark out New Covenant membership, neither does any other earthly or natural factor. In this, see that:

* **A child’s relationship to a believing parent does not grant membership into the New Covenant, assumed or otherwise**.

There has been nothing about membership of the New Covenant that should lead a person to think that a child’s relationship to a believing parent grants some kind of membership or even assumption into the New Covenant, but sadly, **our beloved confessional Presbyterian brothers and sisters believe children of a Christian parent are, *in some way*, in the New Covenant prior to new birth and a personal testimony of saving faith.**

* + **The Presbyterian error: Missing the newness and difference of the New Covenant unto blending covenant realities**

This error is drawn primarily from them looking to Old Covenant realities. The Presbyterian error is to look at how God work previously, in other covenants, and bring distinctives from the past into the New Covenant.

Presbyterians have faulty views in some points of Covenant Theology in which they do not rightly see the differences of the Old Covenant and New Covenant. In short, they believe the Old Covenant and New Covenant are of the same substance, which leads them to think God’s choice to work and covenant on the basis of *family line* in the Old Covenant time, is maintained in the New Covenant time. But that is not what Scripture teaches.

A person is not in the New Covenant until the **effectual call**. Only those with credible personal testimony of new birth and saving faith, should be considered to have New Covenant membership.

In biblical study, it has been critical to see the differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

The Old Covenant primarily had covenant membership through a family line.

But the New Covenant has exclusive covenant membership through adoption into a new heavenly family.

The Old Covenant primarily had covenant membership through natural birth.

But the New Covenant has exclusive covenant membership **through spiritual birth**.

As we have seen, the New Covenant—that is The Covenant of Grace—is a covenant entirely other and different from anything that had come before it between God and man.

Taking realties from the Old Covenants and applying them to the New Covenant where Scripture doesn’t is not biblically faithful.

Each covenant needs to be defined by Scripture. Proper, biblical Covenant Theology lets Scripture define each covenant on its own terms according to the word of God alone.

* + **Jesus: “I have come to set a man against his father”**

In addition to studying the terms of the covenants, we can also see that covenant membership is not based on or assumed of family line or parental belief because God makes clear in Scripture that **the New Covenant actually divides families**. Christ’s own words are clear on this point:

**Luke 12:51-53  “**Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. **52**For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. **53**They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Now, this can be a hard truth **for all of us** because we love our family, we want the best for our family. Christian mothers and fathers have a love, care, and hope so deep and true for their children—more real than most things on the horizontal. It is a great blessing to have the privilege to have family that you know and love. Surely, we *must* love our family.

But we must also *not make family an idol*. We must not have an over affection for our children or our other family members.

All of us are susceptible to this. It seems common in our culture that all types of people (no matter their Covenant Theology understanding or lack thereof) tend to idolize family. So, this passage can be hard truth **for many of us**.

But we must remember that we are all God’s creation and He works according His perfect plan and wisdom—His ways are according to the counsel of His perfect will.

He ordained it to be best that not everyone is saved, so it is.

He ordained it best for families to be divided along the lines of the lordship of Christ, so it is.

He ordained it best to **not** covenant on the basis of family in the New Covenant, so it is.

**Matthew 10:35-36**

**35**For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. **36**And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

What Christ makes clear for the New Covenant, (helping us see a particular error of our beloved confessional Presbyterian brothers and sisters), is that God’s plan was to send Christ to divide families, not to covenant to children based on the belief of their parents.

* + **Jesus has come to form a new family**

But, *let us surely know* that God has reasons for working this way. Wise and perfect reasons, as He is wise and perfect.

God not giving New Covenant assumption or entitlement to children based on the belief of their parents is based on His election *of various individuals* **to create a *diverse new family***. That CoR election was not based on conditions in the chosen ones, and that included not being based on the condition of believing parents or what family line you have or what ethnic group you are from.

His sovereign choice of *how and who* to covenant to in the New Covenant highlights, His design to form a new family—an eternal family—an eternal family of diversity—an eternal family not linked in any way to the belief of other family members.

See Christ highlight the importance of the eternal family over the natural family in:

**Mark 3:31-35** And [Jesus’] mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. **32**And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” **33**And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” **34**And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! **35**For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

This speaks to what we have previously declared in this lesson. Namely, **no one should be assumed to be in or considered in The Covenant of Grace outside of personal testimony of new birth and saving faith**. Those of saving faith are in the New Covenant—***it is they who do the will of God***—they are in the eternal family. “For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

In His time here on earth, Christ Jesus boldly taught that He came to divide earthly families for the forming of the new family.

The covenant Jesus mediates is only for those He came to save.

It is not right to assume that a child of a believer is also part of the New Covenant. **Scripture teaches plainly that only those saved by grace through personal faith in Jesus are in the New Covenant.**

If and when a child understands and credibly testifies to saving faith in Jesus Christ, we rightly should celebrate that. But until then, we cannot assume they are in the New Covenant.

Family line, blood, parent’s faith, so-called odds, Old Covenant methods……none of these things can lead us to treat an unbelieving person (young or old) like they are IN the New Covenant. It’s a simple as that.

* **The Law** **in the New Covenant?**

Do we have law to follow in the New Covenant? Answer, we do have LAW to follow.

But **to be** clear here, In The Covenant of Grace we are **not** under law *as a covenant of works*. We are **not** under law *in such a way that we must obey it to receive the rewards or blessings* of the New Covenant (that should be clear from our prior CoR and NC lessons). No, we have the law as a blessing to us—as good and perfect instruction for how God’s chosen people should live and thrive for His glory and our good.

None of the covenanted rewards of The Covenant of Grace (the New Covenant) are earned by our law keeping, period.

* + **Positive Law**

*In addition to the moral law*, like in previous convents, God (who sets the covenant terms and is the only lawgiver), has issued positive laws for those in the New Covenant.

Positive Law is *law and commands based on the will of God for a particular people, a particular purpose, and a particular time*.

Again, as with moral law, we are obligated to obey New Covenant positive law, but ***not*** *as a covenant of works*.

In the New Covenant, the covenanted rewards are not earned by our law keeping, period. That needs to be very clear to all of us.

But it is good and right for us to know and honor His law—including New Covenant positive law. Christ is our King—it must be our pleasure to do His will.

So, I want to highlight *two of the* commands that are unique to the New Covenant.

And these two things **are actually the signs of the New Covenant.**

These two commands—these two covenant signs—are Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

* **The two signs of the New Covenant are Baptism and the Lord’s Supper**

Those living before the New Covenant was formally established were not commanded by God to be baptized or partake in the Lord’s Supper.

These commands in the New Testament are a New Covenant reality *that apply to believers living* ***when and after*** *Christ commanded them and established the New Covenant*. *That means it is Positive Law for us in the here and now.*

The 1689 Confession of Faith says in agreement that “Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only lawgiver, to be continued in his church to the end of the world.”

We’ll have full lesson content devoted to each of these New Covenant commands later in our catechism study, so we won’t take time but a few highlights about them are fitting for our study.

* **Lord’s Supper**

First, the Lord’s Supper:

**Luke 22:19-20**

**19**[Jesus] took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **20**And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

The Word of Truth Catechism says, “The Lord’s Supper is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus, whereby professing believers gather together regularly to remember, celebrate, and testify of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ by the eating of bread and the drinking of wine, which symbolize the body and blood of Jesus. This is a regular practice and testimony for those who are saved by God.”

The Lord’s Supper is such a blessing!

* **Believers Baptism**

An example of this being commanded to and for Christians is in:

**Matthew 28:18-19**

**18**[Jesus said], “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”

And an example of it being done biblically can be found in:

**Acts 8:12**

**12**… when they [the crowd] *believed Philip as he preached good news* about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

The Word of Truth Catechism says, “Baptism is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus, whereby a professing believer in Jesus Christ testifies of his/her faith in Christ alone for salvation and his/her union with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection by the public testimony of immersion in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is to be done once and in no way contributes to one’s salvation.”

Those who do actually profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, *are the only proper subjects of this ordinance*.

The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, wherein the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

As noted on the next page of your notes, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are the distinct signs of the New Covenant, *commanded for those in the New Covenant*. These things are only to be done by those who are testifying to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Only those considered to have New Covenant membership should partake of the signs of the New Covenant.

As we said in past content, while we cannot know for certain who God has saved**, only those with personal testimony** of new birth and saving faith *should be considered by us to have New Covenant membership.*

* + **The unbiblical practice of infant baptism**

In light of that, related to what we discussed last week, this is another area where we believe our beloved confessional Presbyterian brothers and sisters error.

The error Presbyterians make in thinking that children of believers are, (in some way), in the New Covenant leads them to believe that children of believers should be baptized ***prior to*** their professing personal credible faith in Christ Jesus.

As a side note, the unbiblical practice of infant baptism exists in a number of various groups—and some, like Roman Catholics, actually *heretically* believe that

*through baptism one receives the Holy Spirit, is freed from sin and reborn as a son of God; becoming a member of Christ.*

Catholics believe that baptism has *salvific effects*. That is outright, damnable heresy. It’s dangerous and concerning how many people are deceived by the false Roman Catholic religion.

Confessional Presbyterians, however, do not believe baptism has salvific effects, to be clear.

But since confessional Presbyterians (who we align with on so many other things) are our closest friends that hold to paedobaptist errors, we want to address that a bit more this time teaching through Covenant Theology.

In this consideration, it is helpful to see the Presbyterian confession’s words to see how they declare these things. The **Westminster Confession** says:

Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; but also, to be unto him a sign and seal

of the covenant of grace,

of his ingrafting into Christ,

of regeneration,

of remission of sins,

and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life.

Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world.

Their confession goes on to say…

Not only those that do actually profess faith in the obedience unto Christ, *but also the infants* of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.

So, they claim that Baptism … of the party baptized [is] … to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration,of remission of sins, and so on.

*And then* they also say that the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.

**Do you see the problem with their own confession?** Baptism cannot mean for unbelieving infants what it says in the first portion of their Baptism beliefs. Presbyterian paedobaptists say baptism is a sign and seal of being in Christ’ saving covenant, but then they baptize children who are not in Christ’s saving covenant—or at least, not claiming to be in Christ’s saving covenant. Surely not all the infants they baptize are saved at that time or at all in their lives. Baptism cannot be what they claim it is in their confession for those who are not personally claiming to be in Christ.

Church, Scripture has to be the authority on these things; **In Scripture, there is no biblical basis to say that an infant (of a believing parent even) should receive *a sign and seal of the New Covenant*. Infant Baptism goes beyond Scripture**. It goes beyond the terms of The Covenant of Grace, it goes beyond the commanded ordinance for New Covenant baptism, and it goes beyond the teaching of other biblical doctrine. Infant Baptism—in any shape or form—is an unbiblical practice.

**We have seen clearly in Scripture, that it is only by grace, through faith, in Christ that one is justified and adopted into God’s family.**

It is only by the work of God to regenerate a person and give them that saving faith **that a person is in the New Covenant**—The Covenant of Grace.

While God is free to save the elect in infancy,

**no infant can *testify* to saving faith**,

no infant can testify to a claim of New Covenant participation,

no infant can *express desire or consent* to being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, an infant (of a believing parent even) should not be baptized—*they cannot testify unto the sign of covenant fellowship with Christ*.

A primary problem with Presbyterian-type Paedobaptists is a faulty view of some points of Covenant Theology in which they do not rightly see the differences of the Old Covenant and New Covenant.

**In short, they believe the Old Covenant and New Covenant are of the same substance, therefore, in their view, God’s choice to work covenantally in a family line in the Old Covenant time, is maintained in the New Covenant time.**

To them, since male children of Old Covenant members received circumcision, in their view, *all children* of those professing to be in the New Covenant should receive water baptism.

Infant Baptism is not biblically based, and that is seen in two primary ways:

**First, better understating Covenant Theology (especially the differences between the covenants and the particular terms of the New Covenant),**

**and second, based on the Bible’s passages about baptism.**

When the New Covenant commands to baptize *are considered*, as well as the clear New Covenant examples and biblical New Covenant evidence, **the testimony of Scripture is that baptism is for professing believers in Jesus Christ.** **Baptism is dependent upon personal testimony of a person’s faith in Christ alone.**

There is no biblical justification for infant baptism.

I cannot take you, in Scripture, to a command to baptize an infant, or a clear example of it, or clear evidence for it ***because* there are no such passages in Scripture.**

In effort to try to claim that there is examples or evidence in the New Testament of infant baptisms, some Paedobaptists point to a handful of passages in which the text states that those in a household were baptized.

However, this is not a faithful handling of Scripture, **there is zero actual account** that either unbelieving children were in the home or that unbelieving children were baptized.

**A Paedobaptist has to add or assume something of the accounts that Scripture does not say.**

That is not proper hermeneutics, that is not the proper way to honor God’s word.

The Scriptures do not have any examples of unbelieving children being baptized, and there is no clear evidence of unbelieving children being baptized.

Many well respected Paedobaptist theologians and pastors do admit what I am saying, consider these statements from some of them:

Paedobaptist Geoffrey Bromiley wrote, Q “Parents are not disobeying any clear-cut command if they withhold baptism from their children.” Children of Promise: The Case for Baptizing Infants, 1979

Paedobaptist Charles Hodge wrote, Q “In every case on record of [the apostles’] administering the [baptism], it was on condition of a profession of faith on the part of the recipient.” Charles Hodge 1851–1878

Paedobaptist John Murray wrote, Q “We do not have an overt and proven instance of infant baptism recorded in the New Testament” John Murray (Christian Baptism, p. 66) 1898-1975)

Paedobaptist Bryan Chapell wrote, Q “…we who believe in infant baptism must confess that the lack of any specific example of infant baptism in the NT is a strong counterweight to our position.” Bryan Chapell

Paedobaptist Louis Berkhof wrote, Q “It may be said at the outset that there is no explicit command in the Bible to baptize children, and there that is not a single instance in which we are plainly told that children were baptized…the NT contains no direct evidence for the practice of infant baptism in the days of the apostles.” Louis Berkhof (Systematic Theology, p. 634) 1873-1957

*And finally,* Paedobaptist BB Warfield wrote, Q “It is true that there is no express command to baptize infants in the NT, no express record of the baptism of infants, and no passages so stringently implying it that we must infer from them that infants were baptized.” BB Warfield 1886–1902

**The only commands and clear examples of baptism** **in the Bible are for and of professing believers.**

With that being the case, how do those Paedobaptists/ Presbyterians who admit those points as true, still come to their position?

It’s back to what we said earlier…

***The Presbyterian error is to look at how God work previously, in other covenants, and bring distinctives from the past into the New Covenant even if the New Covenant passages don’t make the claims they come to.***

**These Presbyterians don’t use God’s later, clearer, more applicable *instruction, examples, and evidence* from the New Testament for the New Covenant realities (New Covenant ordinances/signs), *they look to the Old Testament.***

Scripture puts forth (by command and example and evidence *and by the Covenant Theology of the Bible rightly known*) that **only those personally claiming to be disciples of Christ are to receive and partake in the signs of His covenant.**

Now, hear me clearly, we most certainly want to see children be saved: we’re committed to teaching the bible—to preaching the gospel—we go to great lengths to equip parents and partner with them to instruct the children according to God’s word.

That said, in light of the testimony of Scripture, we must not issue (or support the issuing) of baptism or the Lord’s Supper to anyone who does not personally testify to God’s effectual call that has produced personal faith in Christ as Savior and Lord.

**There is no biblical justification for infant baptism**—on the other hand, Scripture clearly commands, examples, and evidences baptizing those who personally testify to saving faith in Jesus.

All that said, we love our Confessional Presbyterian brothers and sisters. We have great solidarity with them in theology and practice but this is an important areas where we disagree. It is in love that we want to bring these elements in and while I will speak boldly and decisively, that should not be interpreted as uncaring towards those holding those views.

It’s important that you are grounded in good biblical hermatutics so that you are not swayed as many are to different practices of refomrred Chirstianity because of their popularity or history. We want to be committed to Christ and His word on al these things. Hopefully out time together is better quipping you to fun the long race in these good truths!!

So, to begin to wrap up… ***what’s ahead for God’s New Covenant people?***

While the work required of Christ in Covenant of Redemption has been finally and fully accomplished in history *and* God has been (and will continue to) effectually call the elect throughout human history, **what remains for the elect is entrance into the *consummated* covenant blessings—the full rewards of Christ’s kingdom.**

That will not fully occur until every last person chosen for Christ has been gathered in by God through the means of the preaching of the gospel to all nations. In this, we get to relish in the proclaiming of the good news *and look forward to what is ahead.*

Christians, our King is coming back for us—to bring about the consummation, look:

**Hebrews 9:28** says:

**…Christ,** having been offered once to bear the sins of many, **will appear a second time**, not to deal with sin but **to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.**

Christ is returning one day.

The new earth will be brought to be by God, which is the eternal land to which the temporary land of Canaan foreshowed and pointed. *The eternal land to come is the antitype.*

As God’s one, true, eternal people, *all those united to Christ* by grace through faith will be given *this eternal land*: a creation free from sin and brokenness, a new creation glorious and perfect, in which we’ll rule and reign with Jesus, *worshipping Him rightly forever.*

*Those God called into the New Covenant will be graciously given* all the eternal ***consummated* covenant blessings** *because Christ Jesus earned it*.

**1 Peter 1:3-4** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his **great mercy**, he has caused us to be born again **to a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.**

Jesus Christ is the key to this for us because He is the new Federal Head for the chosen ones—He did the work, He is the King of kings.

So, my friends, this is it, the story behind every other story.

All of the stories in the Bible play a role in this grander, ultimate story.

The story of redemption and each one of our lives comes about because of God’s plan.

This story creates in us an awe and worship of the great, true God. He’s accomplished it all by His plan and decree.

*And worthy is the Lamb who was slain to make it all possible.*

Salvation for God's elect because of the work of Christ on our behalf for the New Covenant, because of the Covenant of Redemption.

**Praise be to God…**