

1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Covenant Theology
Camden M. Bucey

- ***God desires to bring humanity into a greater fellowship with him in the heavenly places.*** He organizes and mediates that relationship through *covenants*.
 - WCF 7.1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God’s part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.
 - There is no time period after Genesis 2 in which human beings are not in express covenantal relation to God. And even before Genesis 2, Adam still exists in relation to God as being made in his image.
- Definitions of “covenant”
 - Merriam-Webster dictionary:¹
 - “a usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement”
 - “a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action”
 - First Catechism 24, Q: What is a covenant? A: relationship that God establishes with us and guarantees by his word.
 - O. Palmer Robertson: “A covenant is a bond in blood sovereignly administered.”²
- How can we spot a covenant?
 - Genesis 6:18 is the first explicit mention of a covenant. Does something have to be called a “covenant” in the Bible for it to be a covenant?
 - Hosea 6:7—But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.³
- The Basics
 - Basic bi-covenantal structure: Covenant of Works & Covenant of Grace (WCF 7)
 - While there are two basic covenants in history, Reformed theologians will often speak of a third covenant, known as the Covenant of Redemption (*pactum salutis*).
 - This covenant established among the persons of the Trinity from eternity.

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/covenant>

² Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 4.

³ See Robertson, 22–25.

- The Father elects a people unto salvation, the Son redeems those people, and the Holy Spirit applies the life, death, and resurrection of the Son to those same people in redemptive-history.
- See Psalm 2; 110; Isa. 52:13–53:12; John 17:1–5; Phil. 2:5–11; Rev. 5:9–10
- Administrations of the Covenant of Grace
 - What is an administration?
 - The unity of the Covenant of Grace
 - While there are different administrations of the one Covenant of Grace, it is God’s singular plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. The administrations are organically related (naturally, as opposed to artificially). See WCF 7.6.
 - Jeremiah 31:31 connects the Old Covenant with the New Covenant. Both are made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.
 - O. Palmer Robertson shows how Bible understands this New Covenant as part of a unified plan of salvation.⁴
 - Ezekiel 37:24–26—“My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd [an allusion to the Davidic covenant]. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes [an allusion to the Mosaic covenant].²⁵ They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived [an allusion to the Abrahamic covenant]. They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever.²⁶ I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them [an allusion to the new covenant]. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore.”
- The Genealogical Principle
 - God establishes this relationship with Adam and his *seed*. He establishes it also with Abraham and his *seed* (see Gen. 15:18; Exod. 20:5, 6; Deut. 7:9; 2 Sam. 7:12).
 - Deuteronomy 5:2–3—²“The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.
³Not with our fathers did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today.”⁵

⁴ Robertson, 42.

⁵ Robertson, 35.

- Deuteronomy 2:14–15 says that the adults who were present at Sinai had died in the wilderness. Some may people may have been present as juveniles, but the overwhelming majority were not even born yet.
- This demonstrates an exceedingly strong sense of covenantal identity through genealogy.
 - Deuteronomy 29:14–15—¹⁴ It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, ¹⁵ but with whoever is standing here with us today before the Lord our God, and with whoever is not here with us today.
 - Other passages: Psalm 105:8–10; Deut. 7:9; Exod. 20:5–6; Acts 3:25
 - What if we don't descend from Abraham? The Bible speaks about "ingrafting" (Genesis 17:12–13; Romans 11:17–19; Galatians 3:29). Of course, this works in reverse. People may be removed/cut off for covenant unfaithfulness.
- The covenantal refrain: "I shall be your God, and you shall be my people" (found first in Genesis 17:7). This theme is present from beginning to end, climactically as the Son incarnate dwells among his people in the New Heavens and New Earth (Rev. 21:3).
- Survey of Important Texts
 - Genesis 2:16–17
 - Genesis 8:20
 - Genesis 12:1–3
 - Genesis 15:1–6
 - Genesis 17:1–14
 - Exodus 24:1–18
 - 2 Samuel 7:1–17
 - Jeremiah 31:31–40
 - Ezekiel 36:22–38
 - Hebrews 9:11–28

2. THE COVENANT OF WORKS

INTRODUCTION

- The Reformed tradition has spoken of the relationship between God and Adam as a covenantal relationship.
 - Without the Covenant of Works, we cannot rightly understand man's relationship to God in the Garden.
 - Neither can we understand the gospel, for the work of our Lord Jesus Christ was a redeeming work necessitated by the Fall into sin.
- Introductory Textual Considerations
 - Gen 2:16–17—And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
 - Hosea 6:7—But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.
 - Romans 5:12–21
 - Gal 4:24a—Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants.

THE NATURE OF THE FIRST COVENANT

- Scriptural Support
 - Gal 3:12—But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”
 - Rom 10:5—For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.
 - Rom 5:12–20
 - Gen 2:17—but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
 - Gal 3:10—For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”
- Westminster Standards
 - Westminster Shorter Catechism
 - Q. 12. What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate wherein he was created?
 - A. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.
 - Westminster Larger Catechism

- Q. 20. What was the providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created?
- A. The providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created, was the placing him in paradise, appointing him to dress it, giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth; putting the creatures under his dominion, and ordaining marriage for his help; affording him communion with himself; instituting the Sabbath; entering into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, of which the tree of life was a pledge; and forbidding to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.
- Westminster Confession of Faith 7.2—The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.
- To gain a grasp of the nature of this covenantal relationship, we must recognize several basic features.
 - First, recognize the relationship between Adam and God. These are two parties.
 - Second, within this arrangement, God imposes stipulations upon Adam. These are “perfect and personal obedience.”
 - Third, a reward is promised.
 - The reward is life (eschatological life).
 - Adam would have received consummate eschatological life upon the proper achievement of the stipulations of perfect and perpetual obedience.
 - Fourth, punishment is threatened for violating the stipulations.
 - Fifth, the relationship establishes a bond not only between God and Adam, but also between Adam and those whom he represents.
- Let’s revisit the various names this covenant has been given.
 - “Covenant of Works” emphasizes the principle according to which Adam was to pass probation and gain his reward.
 - “Covenant of Life” emphasizes the reward offered for obedience.
 - “Covenant of Creation” (and to some degree the “Covenant of Nature”) emphasizes that this was a prelapsarian arrangement given at the time of creation.

THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE COVENANT OF WORKS

- God deals with his people through a federal head.
 - Adam was the representative. God dealt with Adam while simultaneously dealing with all the people he represents. God *continues* to deal with his people through a federal head.
 - There are only two: Adam and the second and last Adam, Jesus Christ.
- God required perfect obedience. Successful passage through probation would involve complete conformity to God's standard.
- Given these two points and the historical reality of the Fall into sin, we can see our need of a Redeemer.
 - The Covenant of Works is comprehensive of our relationship to God. It is also comprehensive of all people.
 - After the Fall, we all have fallen into an estate of sin and misery. We also are subject to death as the wages of that sin.

OBJECTIONS TO THE COVENANT OF WORKS

- Some have rejected the Covenant of Works because they believe it introduces a meritocracy or places God in man's debt. Others fail to recognize sufficient Scriptural support.
- S. G. De Graaf takes issue with the use of the term "works," because it was not the case that "man was expected to earn eternal life as a reward for doing good works as though eternal life was man's payment for services rendered." (*Promise and Deliverance*, 1.37). He prefers Covenant of Favor.
- G. C. Berkouwer rejects the idea that an antithesis could exist between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace—such that the Covenant of Works would be about working or achieving the law whereas the Covenant of Grace is purely by God's mercy.
 - Berkouwer misses the eschatology of the Covenant of Works by thinking that the Covenant of Works was about obtaining God's favor, love, and/or communion.
 - Adam already possessed this. The Covenant of Works held out *eschatological* life.
- Herman Hoeksema presents something of an interminable probation. He recognizes a relationship between God and Adam, but Hoeksema rejects that it is an agreement that consists of a condition, promise, and penalty.
- John Murray
 - Murray describes his objections to the Covenant of Works in "The Covenant of Works: Three Problems" found in *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 of *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, pp. 47–59.
 - Murray takes issue with two parts of the "covenant of works" language.

- To elaborate, he identifies three problems in recognizing a covenant of works in Genesis 2.
 - First, Murray is surely not alone in believing that “works” does not accurately describe the relationship God established with Adam.
 - Second, Murray also argues that Scripture does not explicitly identify this relationship as a covenant.
 - Third, Murray insists that covenants are strictly arrangements God establishes *only after* the Fall into sin.
- Nonetheless, Murray argues for an Adamic Administration that is unique as a relationship between God and man.
 - This administration is sovereignly administered by God. And under it, Adam is the head of the human race. The condition for this administration is perfect obedience. He must resist temptation for a time of probation.
 - God gave Adam a promise, which we can infer from:
 - The threat of death. A reward is implied.
 - The parallel with Romans 5:12ff.
 - The symbolism of the Tree of *Life*.
 - Perfect obedience does not *merit* the reward, since this administration is informed by grace at a fundamental level.
 - God threatened spiritual, judicial, and physical death upon disobedience.
- Response to Murray
 - Murray takes issue with “covenant” and “works” as they might be applied to God’s relationship to Adam.
 - However, he has identified two parties, stipulations, a reward, and threats of punishment for violating the terms, and representation.
 - It seems he has just defined a covenant according to our definition.
 - Murray claims that Scripture nowhere explicitly calls the Adamic Administration a covenant.
 - All the features of a covenant are present. The terminology is not be present in Gen 2:15–17, but the elements of a covenant certainly are.
 - Perhaps Murray would be content with the language of “Covenant of Creation” at this point.

3. THE TREE OF LIFE

INTRODUCTION

- Eschatology can be considered in different ways.
 - Chronologically in terms of the doctrine of “last things” or even as that which deals with redemption. Eschatology is that which is concerned with the end of history.
 - Eschatology can also be considered as one of the traditional theological *loci* (like the doctrine of God, the doctrine of man, or the doctrine of salvation). Using this method, eschatology is something of a theological afterthought or addendum instead of basic to our theology and the trajectory of God’s plan for his covenant people.
- These methods have their value, so long as we understand the big picture. We want to begin with the end in mind: ***Eschatology precedes soteriology.***

THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Genesis 2:8–9, 15–17
 - ⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - ¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
- Before we consider this in greater detail, just notice the references to the tree of life and the Garden of Eden which is described in the LXX as “paradise.”
 - These will have redemptive-historical significance when we look at certain references in the New Testament.
 - But for now, we need to consider the Reformed tradition and several theologian’s consideration of the significance of the tree of life.
- Reformed Theologians on the Topic
 - Francis Turretin: “The tree of life served as a sacrament and symbol of the immortality which would have been bestowed upon Adam if he had persevered in his first state. . . . With respect to the future life, it was a declarative and sealing sign of the happy life to be passed in paradise and to be *changed afterwards into a heavenly life*, if he had continued upright.” (*Institutes*, 1:581)
 - Turretin understands that the tree of life serves as a sign and seal of immortality and heavenly glory obtainable by Adam if he continued “upright.”

- For Turretin then, the tree of life is a symbol of what Adam would receive upon the condition of his perfect and personal obedience.
- Geerhardus Vos has a similar view of the tree of life: “The tree was associated with the *higher*, the *unchangeable*, the *eternal* life to be secured by obedience throughout Adam’s probation (or time of testing). After man should have been made sure of the attainment of the *highest life*, the tree would appropriately have been the sacramental means for communicating the highest life . . . After the fall, God attributes to man the inclination of snatching the fruit against the divine purpose. But this very desire implies the understanding that it somehow was the specific life-sacrament for the time after the probation (*Biblical Theology*, 28).
 - For Vos, the Garden of Eden and Adam’s life in it were *provisional* and *preparatory* for the glorious, heavenly life promised him for his obedience to God.
 - The figures, symbols, characteristics, and features of Eden at the time point of creation are aspects of *protology* (the first things). The language for the goal of creation is *eschatology* (the ultimate things).
 - Protology concerns that which, as originally created is *provisional*, *partial*, and *temporary*.
 - Eschatology concerns that which is *permanent*, *perfect*, and *terminal*.
- The tree of life helps us see how *protology* in the nature of the case leads us to consider *eschatology* (last things). Eschatology completes what is provisionally present in *protology* (first things). That is why we must ***start with the end in view***.
- This seems like a lot of speculation on an account in Genesis 2:7, which doesn’t actually say much in detail about a future goal.
 - Because the tree of life reappears at the end of history, it leads us to conclude that it has something to do with kingdom consummation.
 - In other words, a protological symbol continues to have eschatological significance.
 - This significance will become clearest in light of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.
 - As we will see, the tree of life is presented as a pledge. It is the sacramental means and representation for the Church’s participation in the consummate life.
 - This is captured in the image of paradise and is secured by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ—the *eschatological* Son.
 - Therefore, we must read the entire Bible—not just typology or eschatology—in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - This principle underlies the hermeneutic employed by both Turretin and Vos. But we have biblical warrant for such a hermeneutic as well. In the next lesson,

we will turn to the Apostle John's writing in Revelation to see how he uses the tree of life imagery to speak of Christ's work.

THE TREE OF LIFE AND FUTURE BODILY RESURRECTION

- John references the tree of life in the New Testament in Rev 2:7b.
 - Revelation 2:7b—'To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'
 - Consider this context: Christ has ascended, and now he appears to John as the risen and glorified King of a New Creation.
- This is a huge point that connects the work of Christ—the *eschatological man*—to a symbol of protology.
 - **First**, this means that Christ promises his church something associated with the glory and splendor of heaven.
 - This is the same glory and splendor that is revealed in the person of Christ.
 - He is present to offer something of the quality of life he now experiences. He will bestow something of his realm and mode of existence.
 - **Second**, while Christ *presently* experiences the blessings of heaven, eating from the tree of life in a paradise of God is something that he presents as a *future reality* for the church.
 - The overcomer theme in Revelation has clear eschatological overtones. It describes the person who attains resurrection unto life.
 - This is a future verb translated, "I will give." This particular act of eating is best understood as a future sacramental meal.
 - **Third**, this sacramental meal will involve eating specifically, "from the tree of life."
 - This is a blessing in accordance with the realm in which Jesus present belongs. He possesses glorified life (1 Cor 15:42–43—imperishable, honor, glory, power, Spiritual).
 - The blessing that is received is nothing less than glorified resurrection life.
 - This is clear from Jesus's words to John in Revelation 1:17–18: ¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.
 - The reference to the first and last in verse 17 is immediately qualified in terms of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (I died, and behold I am alive forevermore).
 - Jesus announces resurrection life to John.
 - This is the reason Jesus tells John not to fear when John falls before him *as dead*.

- Resurrection life is the very antithesis of death. And so, Jesus, as the first and the last, the resurrected Savior and Lord, in a sense, raises John from the dead.
- If eternal life in John's theology must be resurrection life through Christ, then the overcomer who eats from the tree of life must be resurrected bodily. The tree of life—as something that *will be granted* to the overcomer—symbolizes a future, bodily resurrection life with and in Christ.

THE TREE OF LIFE: PARADISE AND HEAVEN

- The paradise of God has theological significance, especially when considered in light of Christ's resurrection.
- If the protological paradise (Eden) was an earthly realm of imperfect, provisional life with God, the paradise of God to which Jesus refers is the heavenly realm of perfect eschatological life in Christ.
 - This is the realm of resurrection life, which we sought to establish as the blessing signified by the tree of life.
 - Paul shares something similar in Colossians 3:1–4. Paul says that your life is now hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ appears, you will appear with him in glory.
 - John describes the future participation in resurrection glory in term of the categories of Eden. Yet, the *earthly* Eden and its original tree of life have been *fulfilled and surpassed*.
 - Christ as second Adam has triumphed and entered into the heavenly paradise of God by virtue of his resurrection and ascension. And now he offers that life to his people—the overcomers.
- Notice that there is continuity between the kingdom in paradise Christ attains and the kingdom in paradise offered to Adam before the fall.
 - Adam's prospect in the protological Garden was the eschatological paradise—the paradise of God.
 - The tree of life was reserved for Adam as he overcame the serpent's temptation in the context of his covenantal probation.
 - The tree of life symbolized the future, heavenly reward for Adam the overcomer. It symbolized the future eschatological outcome of the covenant of works, if Adam obeys.
 - Christ has obtained what was represented by the tree of life. He now has authority to bestow those blessings upon his people. He is the Second and Last Adam, the Alpha and Omega. He brings his people to live and reign with him in the paradise of God.
- But after the fall, the prospect of eschatological life (eating from the tree of life in the paradise of God) requires death and resurrection.

- The church participates in the glories of resurrection life in an eschatological Eden through the mode of resurrection life in and with Christ.

THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

- Revelation 22:1–3 is another text that associates the tree of life with future heavenly glory.
 - ¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ *No longer will there be anything accursed*, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.
- To get a handle on this, we should notice some contextual observations from the previous chapter.
 - Revelation 21 describes the appearance of the New Heavens and New Earth.
 - The context focuses on the fulfillment of redemptive history in eschatological glory.
 - Revelation 21:1—“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.”
 - Notice that there is a displacement and replacement motif present in John’s theology. There is a new heavens and new earth, which appear because the first heaven and earth pass away. The “first” gives way to the “new.”
 - This is language that demonstrates the eschatological order both *fulfilling and surpassing* the protological order of creation.
 - Then, beginning in Revelation 21:10 we see the same eschatological reality described in the language of typology.
 - The eschatological New Heavens and Earth is now described as the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, with God and the Lamb as its temple (cf. Hebrews 12:18–29).
 - This means, then, that the New Heavens and New Earth is also a New Jerusalem.
 - Jesus Christ *fulfills and transcends* what was present in the protological order of creation as well as the typological order of redemption.
- Now, let us consider features of Revelation 22:1–5 that connect future, eschatological significance with the tree of life imagery.
 - First, the reference to the throne of God clearly indicates that we are given a heavenly vision. John says that he is shown, “the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.” See also Revelation 4:1–11.
 - Second, not only is the scene *heavenly*, but it is a revelation of heaven in its *future*, consummate glory.

- Verse 3—“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.”
 - This is the fruition of redemption in its eschatological glory.
 - The tree of life imagery finds its ultimate eschatological significance in this *heavenly future* context that is *free from the curse and its implications*.
- This accounts for the expansion of the tree in the heavenly city.
 - Notice the tree of life stands on either side of the river, which is prophetic idiom used to convey the notion of the way the eschatological order radically transcends the original, Edenic order.
 - The healing of the nations must be understood in light of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.
 - The language that the tree bears its fruit every month is again prophetic idiom to denote the superabundance of life conveyed to those who inhabit the heavenly city.
- The tree of life finds its place in a glorious New Heavens and New Earth, a heavenly Jerusalem, a city where the curse is totally absent and the saints behold the eternal glory of God in the freedom of resurrection life in the Spirit. That is the eschatological significance of the imagery of the tree of life.
 - Since Jesus brings his people into the consummate form of the kingdom, symbolized by the tree of life, the original tree of life must have symbolized the consummation of the same eschatological kingdom promised to Adam.
 - The tree of life accents the fact that eschatology operates from the very outset of creation, orienting the protological order of creation (the world as created) toward its glorious goal in consummation.

4. THE COVENANT WITH NOAH

INTRODUCTION

- This covenant occurs under the large umbrella of the covenant of grace, but its relationship to the covenant of grace is unique.
 - The covenant God established with Noah is largely one of common grace that serves as a foundation or prelude to God's special grace mediated through his redemptive covenants.
 - Theologians have used various names to describe God's covenant with Noah.
 - Covenant of preservation⁶
 - The common grace covenant⁷
- Passages: Genesis 6:17–22; 8:20–22; 9:1–7; 9:8–17
 - In Genesis 9:9–10, God says that he establishes his covenant with Noah, his descendants, and with every living creature that is with him.
 - What covenant is this? It's the covenant of Genesis 8:20–22.⁸
 - The content is the same.
 - Since this is all part of the same textual unit, it also means that what is said in Genesis 9:1–7 should be seen as part of this covenantal arrangement.
- How does Genesis 6:18 relate to Genesis 8:20–9:17? Are these two covenants or the same covenant?
 - Genesis 6:18 is the first explicit reference to “covenant” in Scripture.
 - Meredith Kline argues that the covenant made in Genesis 6 is fulfilled within the flood narrative itself. Then *after* Noah and his family are saved, God established a new covenant with all creation as part of a new world order.

FEATURES OF THE NOAHIC COVENANT

- **The parties:** The covenant was not only made with Noah and his family but also with all of creation (Gen. 9:9–10).
 - This is clearly a *common* covenant. Noah and his descendants are representatives of all humanity, not merely the elect.
 - It is a covenant of *common grace*.
 - Restrain evil
 - Promote justice
 - In service of special grace

⁶ O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 109ff.

⁷ Brown and Keele, *Sacred Bond* (2nd ed.), 75ff.

⁸ Brown and Keele, 78.

- **Terms** of the covenant
 - The covenant is a unilateral promise. Noah and his descendants cannot break the terms of the covenant (Jer. 33:20–21). The covenant stipulates regulations for man’s conduct, but the covenant itself cannot be broken.⁹
 - God establishes continuity with the original creation. Much of the language in the Noah section alludes to sections of Genesis prior to the flood.
 - Be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28; 9:1, 7).
 - Animals for food.
 - Proportionate and Retributive Justice
 - This is the foundation of the state/civil government (Rom. 13; 1 Pet. 2).
 - The provision and regulation of justice is similar between Genesis 4:15 and 9:6.
 - Though all humans are totally depraved, they remain moral beings. God writes the works of the law upon their hearts (Rom. 2:14–15).
 - Man continues to be made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6); therefore, murder is wrong.
 - But also, man is uniquely equipped to execute justice *because* he is the image of God.
- **Covenant sign** of the rainbow
 - This was a sign of God’s promise never to destroy the earth by water.
 - In distinction from other covenant signs (circumcision or the Lord’s Supper), this one is public and applies to all indiscriminately.
 - In Hebrew, the word can literally mean “bow,” as in an archer’s bow.
 - In the ancient world, kings would be depicted going into war with their bow vertical (aiming horizontal), ready to shoot their enemies.
 - After war, their bow would be horizontal (aiming vertically), indicating peace and rest. God is no longer at war with the earth during this period of common grace.
 - The rainbow’s shape may also indicate that the floodwaters of the heavens were shut (cf. Ezekiel 1:26–28).¹⁰

⁹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 246. See also Brown and Keele, 81.

¹⁰ Brown and Keele, 80.

5. THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

KEY TEXTS

- Genesis 12:1–3—Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
- Genesis 15:1–21
 - ⁵And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ⁶And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. ⁷And he said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” ⁸But he said, “O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” ⁹He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. . . .
 - ¹²As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. . . .
 - ¹⁷When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram
- Genesis 17:1–27

GOD CUTS A COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

- To confirm his promise to Abram, the Lord carries out the ceremony for a blood-oath.
 - God is making a contract with Abraham. The Hebrew verb for “making” a covenant (כָּרַת) is the verb “to cut” (Gen. 15:18).
 - In ancient covenants, it was often the lesser of the two kings who would make an oath to the greater king and walk through the pieces of the covenant.
 - What he would be saying was, “If I fail to keep the terms of this agreement, may I be torn in two like these animals.”
 - This is a self-maledictory oath (cf. Jer. 34:18).
- Notice that Abraham does not walk through the pieces.
 - This is a *unilateral* agreement. *God* walks through the pieces in the form of a smoking fire pot and flaming torch.
 - Abram isn’t even conscious. This further emphasizes the gracious character of this covenant. It is not a covenant of works.

ABRAHAM AND THE COVENANT OF GRACE

- This is an administration of the covenant of grace.
 - God is building upon the promise he made with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15.
 - Since it is instituted prior to the coming of the Messiah, it is administered in promises, types, and sacrifices—shadowy means in comparison to Jesus’s ministry.
- God promises Abram two things: (1) a people, and (2) a place. These two aspects fit with the overarching promise where we began our study: *God desires to bring his **people** into an even more glorious life with him in **the heavenly places**.*
- The people
 - The promise of the seed of the woman runs directly through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—all the way through David to Jesus Christ.
 - The people are Abraham’s descendants. Prior to the coming of Christ, this is ethnic Jews.
 - Even in the Old Testament, there was provision for people to *become* Jews and covenant members even if they were not genetic descendants of Abraham.
 - Ruth and Rahab, for example, are in the very line of the Messiah.
 - In the New Testament, we see clearly that the covenant promises are extended to the Gentiles.
 - This is not an afterthought. It was God’s plan all along.
 - This does not mean that the Church has *replaced* Israel. It means that Christ is the true Israel (Gal. 3:16), and all who are united to him by grace through faith are incorporated into the household of God (Gal. 3:29; Rom. 11:11–24).
- The place
 - The promise of a holy realm focuses on the earthly Canaan (the earthly Mt. Zion and Jerusalem) as a provisional type and shadow of the new heavens and new earth—the heavenly Mt. Zion and Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22).
 - The earthly realm was a microcosm—an earthly model in anticipation—of the consummation. Earthly Canaan pointed to the new heavens and new earth.
 - The letter to the Hebrews makes clear that the church continues to exist as a pilgrim people even in this age.
 - Abraham himself knew this. He “was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Heb. 11:8–16).

ABRAHAM'S FAITH

- The covenant of grace is God's singular plan of salvation for his people.
 - God has only one family and only one way of saving them. Though the covenant of grace is administered differently in the Old Testament and in the New, there is always only one savior, Jesus Christ.
 - Whether you are Abraham, Moses, David, or a New Covenant believer, salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.
- Romans 4:1–12
 - What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?
²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." ⁴Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ⁷"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."
 - ⁹Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹²and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

COVENANT SIGNS AND MEMBERSHIP

- Genesis 17:1–27— . . . ⁹And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, ¹³both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

BAPTISM AND CIRCUMCISION

- Baptism replaced circumcision as the covenant sign, because Christ received the ultimate circumcision. He was “cut off” in his death on the cross (Col. 2:11–12). There is an expansion and greater inclusion in the New Covenant. Females may also receive the sign, not only the males (cf. Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:12, 19).
- This is a great difference in administration between the old and new covenant administrations. Often, the question of application arises: Who should receive the sign? Should children of believers receive the covenant sign as they did in the old covenant?

COVENANT CHILDREN

- Romans 4:11 shows that circumcision was a sign and seal of the *righteousness* that Abraham had *by faith*. It was not a sign of his faith; it was a sign of the righteousness.
 - What righteousness is this? It’s the righteousness of Jesus Christ: his active and passive obedience.
 - Abraham received circumcision as a sign and seal of God’s promise that he would send a savior, who would redeem him from the punishment due under the covenant of works and then give him the perfect righteousness that Adam failed to offer.
- In other words, it was an *objective* sign. Circumcision was primarily a message from God *to* man, not the other way around.
 - Likewise, baptism in the new covenant is not a declaration of our faith unto God.
 - Baptism is not the profession of faith. Baptism is a sign of God *to* man.
 - It is an *objective* sign of the righteousness of Christ given to his people, not a *subjective* sign of our faith-commitment to God.
 - It’s important to note that the Lord then commanded Abraham to apply this covenant sign to his son, Isaac.
 - As an infant, Isaac was incapable of demonstrating faith. But remember, circumcision was not a sign of faith, it was a sign of Christ’s righteousness.
 - Baptism, too, is an objective sign of the *exact same* reality. Given the language of the New Testament (cf. Acts 2:39, Col. 2:11), we are to continuing applying the covenant sign to our children.
- In short, we are *still* supposed to apply the covenant sign to children of believers.
 - Indeed, Peter emphasizes as much in his sermon on the day of Pentecost.
 - Acts 2:38–39— And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

6. THE COVENANT WITH MOSES

INTRODUCTION

- God called his covenant people out of Egypt. The Lord gave his people his law, specifically codified in the Decalogue (Ten Commandments). He brought them through the wilderness and eventually into the Promised Land.
- The covenant with Moses might be the heading under which we find the most diversity within confessional Reformed churches.
 - Among the views represented in Reformed churches is the view that the covenant God made with Moses is a republication of the covenant of works.
 - To varying degrees and manners, they see the operative principle being that of works. People who hold this type of view see the arrangement with Adam in the garden being repeated with the Israelites at Sinai.
 - For a fuller treatment, and how various views might comply with the theology of the Westminster Standards, see the OPC's Republication Committee Report (<https://www.opc.org/GA/republication.html>).

LAW AND GOSPEL

- You may have heard people speaking of law and gospel. This is shorthand used among many in the Reformed community. Usually, it's phrased in a question such as: "Is that law or gospel?"
- Perhaps the most frequent use of law/gospel is a synonym for synergism/monergism. In other words, are you saved by what you do or by what God does?
- But law/gospel is also used with reference to covenantal administrations.
 - For example, the bible authors often speak of the covenantal arrangement with Moses as the "law." It's used as shorthand for the covenant with Moses.
 - The covenant God established at Sinai is an administration of the *covenant of grace* (see Exodus 20:2).

BASIC TEXTS

- Exodus 19
- Exodus 24:7–8
- Exodus 34:10
- Deuteronomy 5:2–3—²The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. ³Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today.
- Deuteronomy 30:1–10

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH, CHAPTER 19

1. God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

2. This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables: the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man.

5. The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Neither doth Christ, in the gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.

6. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works. So as, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law; and, not under grace.

7. Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but do sweetly comply with it; the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely, and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done.

NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL

- There is a national dimension to this covenant in addition to aspects that apply to individuals in the covenant of grace.
- Flattening the national aspects into the individual can complicate soteriology and the relationship between law and gospel.

7. THE COVENANT WITH DAVID

THE COVENANT KING

- The Lord is progressively revealing his glorious portrait of Jesus Christ through David. Beginning in Genesis 3:15, he sketched the basic contours of the covenant of grace.
 - The redeemer is not only a descendant of Adam and Eve, but also Abraham and Sarah. He is the righteous law-keeper and prophet, the perfect sacrifice and great high priest. Now, the Lord shows us that he is also our *king*.
 - The Westminster Standards on Christ's kingly office
 - Shorter Catechism 26
 - Larger Catechism 45
 - The Israelites asked for a king (1 Samuel 8–12 and the background of Deuteronomy 16:18–17:20).

2 SAMUEL 7

- The key text for the Davidic covenant is 2 Samuel 7 (and its parallel in 1 Chronicles 17). We should recognize that the word "covenant" is not mentioned here in 2 Samuel 7.
 - Earlier in this course, we considered whether the word must be used in the institution of a covenant in order for it actually to be a covenant. That is one objection to the covenant of works.
 - Even though this is not called a covenant in 2 Samuel 7, David calls it a covenant in 2 Samuel 23:5. And we find many other references (2 Chron 13:5; 21:7; 2 Kings 8:19; Ps. 89:3; 132:11; Isa. 55:3; Jer. 33:20–21).
- After David settled in, he thought he would build a house for the ark of God. He dwelt in a house while the ark was still in a tent. What the Lord says is truly remarkable. It is the establishment of the Davidic covenant.

THE BINDING OF GOD

- A covenant is an agreement between two parties with stipulations for blessings and curses attached to obligations.
 - In a covenant two parties are bound together.
 - No one can bind God, but he binds himself willingly by his own word. God cannot lie, and once he gives his word, he will do it.
- Several features of the Old Testament provide context for God's word to David.
 - God established the covenant of grace with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He promised that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent.

- God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him a people and a place (Gen. 15:4).
- Some of the aspects of this covenant refer to Solomon (Acts 7:47).
 - David's son, Solomon, built the temple for the Lord in Jerusalem between 966 and 959 B.C. (1 Kings 6:1–38).
 - But this can also be understood in terms of successive fulfillment. Ultimately, this covenant is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

THE SON OF GOD

- The genealogy in Matthew 1 makes it clear that Jesus descends from David.
 - Consider Jesus's claims and how they speak to the promises God gives to David in 2 Samuel 7.
 - He is the Son of God (Matt. 27:43; Mark 1:1; Luke 22:70; John 20:31; Acts 9:20; Heb. 1:5)
 - He will build a temple (Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19–22)
 - He possesses an eternal throne (Matt. 19:28–29)
 - He possesses an imperishable kingdom (Luke 22:29–30; John 18:36).
 - This language echoes God's promise to Abraham. He didn't need to take matters into his own hands, but the Lord would raise up a child of promise from his own body. Likewise, God would raise up a king.
 - Of course, our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the flesh.
 - But even after his substitutionary death, he was raised up and coronated as king. David died, but his descendant was raised from the dead to reign forever (Acts 2:30; 13:23).
 - Psalm 2; 110
 - Romans 1:3–4
- What God did to the dynasty of Saul he will never do with the dynasty of David.

THE HOUSE OF GOD

- The house of God theme is highly significant in the Davidic covenant. "House" can be used many ways: a building, a dynasty, a people, or kingdom. All of these uses are at work in this passage and its preceding covenant-historical context.
- It would not be David, who would build a house for the Lord. It would be the son of David.
 - Ultimately, it would be David's Lord. Indeed, Jesus Christ *is the temple*. He is the house where God dwells, because he is God incarnate (John 1:14).
 - And Jesus alone will build his church, the body of Christ.
- This notion is carried into the New Heavens and the New Earth as well (Rev. 21:22).

8. THE NEW COVENANT

TRANSITIONING FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW

- John the Baptist marks an important transition from one covenant administration to another.
 - In Mark 1:1–8, John is called a “voice” (cf. Isaiah 40:3). He’s also called “Elijah” (Malachi 4:5–6). He is the forerunner to the Messiah.
 - There are several important things we should note about John’s ministry.
 - First, he is the voice that cries in the *wilderness*.
 - Second, his message is one of repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 3:1–5).
 - John is the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. In Matthew 11:11, Jesus says, “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”
- Relationship of the Old to the New
 - There are two administrations of the one covenant of grace. But these two administrations are neither equal nor can they be reversed in order.
 - Redemptive-history is moving in a particular direction, and Mark’s primary purpose in his gospel is to identify and introduce Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is far greater.

INSTITUTION OF THE NEW COVENANT

- The Last Supper is recorded in Mark 14:22–26; Matthew 26:17–30; Luke 22:7–38 (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17–34). Jesus was celebrating Passover with his disciples in the Upper Room.
 - Mark 14:22—²²And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “*Take; this is my body.*”
 - Later, he took the cup, “²⁴And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”
- Jesus needed to die in order to save his people from the penalty due for their sins.
 - This death was necessitated because of God’s arrangement with Adam in the Garden.
 - God deals with his people through a federal head and requires perfect obedience.
 - Adam failed to obey. And because of his transgression, we sinned with him and fell in him into an estate of sin and misery.
 - Given this reality, we can see our need of a Redeemer.
 - The people needed to be cleansed. There needed to be atonement for their sins.
 - God provided for them in the Old Testament in the sacrifices.
 - But was this blood sufficient? Could that blood cleanse the people of their sins once for all?
 - This drives us to consider Jesus’s words as he institutes a new covenant.

- At the time of the third cup, the cup of blessing, Jesus interjects that this is his blood of the covenant.
 - His words recall Exodus 24:8—And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”
 - Isaiah 53:12—poured out for many
 - Jeremiah 31:31—this is the blood of the covenant. It’s a new covenant.
- After the third cup, there is no fourth cup mentioned. He said he would not drink of it until he drinks it new in the kingdom of God (Mark 14:25).
 - The Passover reminded the people of God delivering his people from Egypt. Yet in 1 Corinthians 5:7, Paul declares that Christ has been sacrificed as our Passover lamb.
 - In other words, there is a fundamental link between what God was doing in the Passover and what Christ did in offering himself as a sacrifice for the sins of his people.
- The same reward that was offered to Adam is secured by Christ.
 - He *purchased* reconciliation and an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. This came through his perfect obedience and his personal sacrifice.
 - Jesus satisfies the demands of the covenant of works vicariously for his people.
 - Jesus needed to obey the law of the Lord perfectly. But in order to redeem his people from their sin, the wages of which are death, he had to die.
 - His life was the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of his people.
 - This points to the need for both Christ’s active and passive obedience.
 - Through Christ’s life *and* death, his people may be brought to the originally-intended destination, a heavenly inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3–7; 1 Cor. 15:49–50).
- This has always been the hope for God’s people. Hebrews 11 tells us that even the Old Testament saints looked forward to such an inheritance.
 - There is one savior—whether for people living after Christ’s death and resurrection or before.
 - WCF 8:6—Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof, were communicated unto the elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices, wherein He was revealed and signified to be the Seed of the woman, which should bruise the serpent’s head, and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world being yesterday and today the same, and for ever.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE NEW COVENANT

- Are children included even before they are able to profess faith? (Acts 2:39)
- Are there unregenerate members of the new covenant?
 - Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:14—There is a category of person who has “been enlightened,” “tasted of the heavenly gift,” and has been “sanctified” by the blood of Christ yet falls away.
 - In other words, there are unregenerate members of the new covenant.
 - This is because eschatology is not fully realized. In other words, we are still awaiting Christ the return and separate the sheep and the goats.
 - He will purify his church (Mal. 3–4) so that *covenant* and *election* will be coterminous.

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW COVENANT (HEBREWS 8:6–13)

- The old covenant had a *fault* (Heb. 8:7). The fault or “problem” with the Old Covenant wasn’t that God gave them a faulty law or that his provision was lacking. The problem was with the people’s disobedience.
- The Law of Moses pointed people to Christ, but it was not powerful to save in itself. It only had the power to condemn (Rom. 8:3–4).
 - The Law was *weakened* by the flesh. It could not redeem sinners.
 - They need a redeemer—namely, one who is not already condemned. None of the Levitical priests could fill this role. They would die.
- All along, the Old Covenant was meant to point to the fullness of Christ our savior. Christ has a more excellent ministry through a better covenant enacted on *better promises*.
 - *A better life* based on the finished work of the Messiah, the one who offered *himself* as a sacrifice for sins.
 - *Based on grace*. God shows his people mercy and forgiveness.
 - *Expanded—To your children. To all nations.*

NO TURNING BACK

- Hebrews 6:4–8 warns against apostasy, that is, falling away. This is a *very particular* type of apostasy that is connected to this important era of redemptive-history.
- The Hebrews had also been led out of slavery to sin, formed into the covenantal people of God, and are moving toward their eternal rest.
 - As part of their pilgrimage, they have been brought along by Moses and the Old Covenant from infancy and being juveniles, unto maturity.
 - But many of the Hebrews haven’t matured. They are not ready for solid food but can only digest milk.

- Christ has come and as our great high priest after the order of Melchizedek, he mediates a New Covenant in his blood. There is no turning back.
- Hebrews 6:4 speaks of “those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit,⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come.”
 - This language refers to New Covenant blessings—specifically the means of grace. In the early church, being “enlightened” was a synonym for baptism.¹¹ Many interpreters have understood “tasted the heavenly gift” as a reference to the Lord’s Supper.
 - Perhaps most powerfully, they have even shared in the Holy Spirit.
 - Here, the author is not speaking of regeneration, the new birth.
 - These have experienced the Holy Spirit’s work in the New Covenant age yet still want to turn for the light—to go back to the shadows.
- You cannot go back to the means of the Old Covenant, because they have served their purpose. Not only are they no longer effective but going back to the old observance will prove *harmful*.
- Consider the example of Apollos, who may indeed be the author of Hebrews (Acts 18:24–19:7).
 - The problem is not that the people are believing false things; the problem is that they have not come to maturity.
 - The error of those falling away is an historical error regarding how the Old Covenant relates to the New. And getting this wrong is *disastrous to the extreme*.
- Christ is the fulfillment of the OT. His death and resurrection were climactic acts in history.
 - If the Hebrews seek salvation from some other means, they are rejecting the only fulfillment. They want to go back in time.
 - To set back the clock of redemptive-history is tantamount to saying that the Messiah we received in history is not good enough. They want a do-over, a *Messiah mulligan*.

PRIEST OF THE NEW COVENANT: WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END

- Hebrews 7 begins to address the priesthood of Jesus Christ, comparing him to Melchizedek, an unusual figure in the Old Testament.
 - The Levitical priests are men who die. Their time in office comes to an end.
 - Jesus Christ, as the greater Melchizedek, lives and serves forever as our great high priest.
- Building his case for the supremacy of Christ, the author demonstrates how there is a need for another priest—not like the Levitical priests they know.
 - The Old Covenant order cemented the idea that perfection was necessary.
 - But it may have been shocking for many of these Jews to realize that perfection was not attainable through the Levitical priesthood.

¹¹ This is as early as the second century. Justin Martyr notes this.

- Surely, they should have known that, because they had to offer sacrifices repeatedly.
- The Old Covenant mediated through Moses was not the end-all, be-all. It was meant to point forward.
- God's people were never meant to remain in the Old Covenant. It always led them to Christ, the fullness.
 - The former priests would die, so they could not intercede for you in perpetuity. They were temporary servants on your behalf.
 - Unlike the Levites, Jesus is a priest *forever*.
- The resurrection of our Lord establishes that he serves in a fundamentally different way. Only the glorious mega-priest can attain perfection (Heb 7:11; Col 1:28)
 - You have an *indestructible* intercessor. *Nothing* can stop your priest from ministering on your behalf.
 - The location of Jesus's ministry is important. Christ is a *heavenly* high priest. Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant. He serves the heavenly things, not a copy and shadow of them (Heb. 8:5).
- In Heb. 8:2, the author speaks of the true tent and then in 9:11 of the greater and more perfect tent. What is this tent?
 - To answer that question, it will be helpful to see how the New Testament speaks of the tent (John 1:14; 2 Cor. 5:1, 4).
 - The true tent is not a physical structure. It is—most specifically—the body of Christ. It is his physical body. But then by extension, it is the Church, all the members who have been incorporated into his body with Christ as the head.
- Christ is serving in the highest heavens, having reconciled us to the Father. And he always lives to intercede.
 - This brings us back to the very beginning of our series. What is God's overarching goal in covenant-history? It is to ***bring his chosen people into a glorious life in heavenly places.***
 - After the fall into sin, this is only accomplished through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.