

Explorations in Covenant Theology

Session Two

Review:

- A. Key differences between *Dispensationalism (D)* & *Covenant Theology (CT)*
 - 1. D: *emphasizes 'discontinuity'*
 - 2. CT: *emphasizes continuity*
- B. Within CT we distinguish three primary covenants
 - 1. Pre-time: *Counsel of peace – God's plan of Redemption*
 - 2. Pre-Fall time: *Covenant of works*
 - 3. Post-Fall time: *Covenant of Grace (incorporating covenant with Noah, Moses, David and New Covenant in the NT)*
- C. Reformed CT views **all** God's dealings with mankind in 'covenantal way'
 - 1. Stephen Myers: *In the Scriptures, God always reveals Himself to His people as a God in covenant. Therefore the lens of covenant is necessary to understand accurately all that God has revealed about Himself.*
 - 2. In CT we view NT Church as the continuation (not replacement!) of God's covenant people Israel but now with the Gentiles added
 - a. trace this in Ephesians 1:4, 9-11; 2:11-19; 3:1-11
 - b. observe God's earliest revelation of this fact: Gen. 12:3; 17:4
 - c. see God's confirmation of this truth; Gal. 3:29; 6:16
 - 3. In CT we view the Kingdom of God as existing now (Luke 17:20-21; Rev. 4-5)

Discussion of Submitted Questions

Q 1. *What Biblical support is there for the Counsel of Peace*

A The Definition of *Counsel of Peace* or *Covenant of Redemption*

1. *The Father elects a people in the Son as their Mediator to be brought to saving faith through the Holy Spirit. (Michael Horton)*
2. *The Father freely chose specific individuals out of the mass of sinful humanity and covenanted to them to the Son in order to redeem them as His own children. The Son freely covenanted to purchase those elect individuals through His active and passive obedience. In return He would receive the elect as His inheritance. The Holy Spirit covenanted to apply the purchased redemption by the Son to the elect. (Stephen Myers; Erskine)*
3. Summary: *Before time was created, the elect were chosen and their redemption secured in three Person within the Trinity covenanting with themselves.*
 - All Persons mutually consented to redeem fallen sinners
 - Each Person consented to a different task in the Divine Pact
 - Special attention needs to be given to the Holy Spirit's part in this sacred covenant (Gal. 4:4-7)

In His application of redemption, the Spirit has as much active agency as the Son in obtaining it or the Father in bestowing it. God's people are gathered because the Holy Spirit applies redemption to them as the Son's reward for His obedience to the Father. (S. Myers)

B. The Biblical Support for the Counsel of Peace or Covenant of Redemption

1. Eph. 1:4 – 3:8-12
 - a. the 'mystery' is Jews and Gentile united in Christ
 - b. the 'eternal purpose' accomplished 'in time' (vs. 11)
2. 2 Tim. 1:9-10
 - a. given **before** the world (time) began is **now** made manifest
3. John 17:2, 6, 11, 24
 - a. vs. 11: *given (past) – keep now (present) – may be one (future)*

4. Prov. 8:22-23 (John 1:1ff; Col. 1:16-17)
5. Rev. 13:8 (1 Peter 1:20-21)
6. Luke 22:29
 - a. 'appointed' is in Greek *diatheke* (covenant)
7. Luke 2:49; John 10:18 12:49; 14:31
 - a. Jesus framed His whole life and death as *obedience to the Father*
8. Is. 53:10-13
 - a. as He fulfill the condition, *therefore* He received the promise
9. Phil. 2:9
10. Jer. 31:3 (Eph. 3:8-12)

Q 2. <i>What is the meaning of the word covenant and testament? Are they similar or do they have different nuances?</i>

- A. Word Usage in the OT and NT
1. OT (Hebrew) for covenant: *berith* (290 times in OT)
 - a. describes relationship between people (1 Sam. 18:3) and nations (Joshu 9:15)
 - b. mostly describes relationship between God and human (Gen. 6:18; 15:19; 89:3-4)
 - God sovereignly initiates and unitarily set the boundaries
 - God always enters into this relationship voluntarily

2. Greek OT (Septuagint): *diathéke*
 - a. Greek has two words for ‘covenant’
 - (1) *diathéke: unilateral agreement – one-side covenant*
 - (2) *synthéke: 2-sided agreement as in a treaty, contract,*
3. Greek NT: *diathéke exclusively in God’s covenant with humans*

B. In Sum: Biblical language teach critical things

1. Covenant is always understood as a *relationship* with defined parameters (boundaries or terms)
2. Yet the relationship is never *contractual (mechanical)* but *demand a personal dimension*
3. Covenant is in Scripture the most important and lasting interpersonal relationships
4. Definition: *A covenant is a binding relationship between parties that involves both blessings and obligations. But the main point of the covenant is not the do’s and don’ts but the **relationship***

- C. The word ‘testament’ in NT is same word ‘diatheke’ (for ex in Heb. 9:16-17)
1. why used in the translation?

Q 3. *Do we give enough attention to the covenant relationship in our preaching, and by extension, parenting?*

- A. God’s gives His attention to this *covenant relationship* on each Lord’s Day
1. Reading of His Law: *Ex. 20:1; Deut. 5:2; Ex. 24:7; 34:38*
 2. Preaching: *Deut. 4:23; Mal. 1:2, 6*

B. God expects us to give attention to this in our parenting

1. Remind your children whom they belong to: *Ezek. 16:20-21; Ps. 95:7*
 - a. “...as without their knowledge they **are** partakers of the condemnation in Adam, **so** [also without their knowledge!] are they again received **unto** grace in Christ”

2. Make their baptism day a yearly Thanksgiving and Prayer Day
3. Teach them from their youth that *God is waiting for their personal answer to His covenanted commitment to be their Lord and Saviour*

Q 4. <i>Explain the view of pre-supposed regeneration of those baptized?</i>

- A. Abraham Kuyper: *we need to assume the possibility that **all our children** are in God's covenant and regenerated, gifted with faith from infancy*
 1. Dangerous outflow of this conviction: *how we view and speak to and about our children*
 - a. over-optimistic or positive view is not Biblical (Rom. 9:6-8)
 2. How did Kuyper come to this error?
 - a. his view that the sacrament of baptism was a 'seal of the righteousness of faith'
 - b. perhaps as an *overreaction* to an overly pessimistic view
- B. What to learn from others?
 1. be careful not to falsely feed an *over-optimistic* view of your child as belonging to God's covenant while
 - a. evident in being neglectful to pray for the child's salvation
 - b. evident in neglectful to saturate the child with the Word of God
 - c. evident in neglect to model before the children the joy of the Lord
 2. be careful to falsely feed an *over-negative* view of your child
 - a. treat your child is a rare gift of God (Ps. 127:3)
 - b. treat your child as loved of God as He chose him/her to be a 'sheep in His pasture' (Deut. 7:6-7; Ps. 95:7; 100:3)
 - c. treat your child as 'owned by God' (stewardship)
 - d. wrestle with and for the child in prayer for God's regenerating grace from days of infancy through the Word

- e. water your child with encouragement, direction, and modeling prayer to and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who ‘has no pleasure that they would remain separate from Him.’

Q. 5 <i>What is the view of the replacement theology regarding Israel?</i>

Remaining Submitted Questions:

1. Can we review the different covenants as seen in the OT timeline?
2. Does God view us as Gentile believers as new generations like He spoke about Israel in OT?
3. Does it matter whether we look at the covenant of God/grace through a dispensationalist lens or a Reformed covenantal lens?
4. What is the view of the baptism of children of those who are unregenerate unbelievers?
5. Why do we not allow children to partake at the Lord’s Supper?
6. What is the difference between the ‘inward and outward relationship’ the covenant of God?
7. In Acts we read about the believer’s baptism which followed a confession of true faith prior to being received into the NT Church. This makes sense, until you think about baptism as a sign of the covenant. Our understanding then is: the believer is baptised and his whole family (spouse, children and servants) were then sanctified and brought into the covenant and therefore were baptized. These people were most likely not all believers, but now were members of the church and the covenant.

How is this different than the practice we currently hold that our children, who are part of the covenant through baptism and being born into covenant households just, automatically become church members at the appropriate age and with the appropriate commitment?
8. If we are correct that the NT church can be presumed to be both believers and unbelievers and Paul addresses all his messages to believers - what does this say about the purpose of our preaching? Is it for believers with a warning to unbelievers? Or is it focused on

unbelievers with encouragement to believers? What actually is the purpose of our church service outside of worship (which unbelievers already can't do)?

9. If the above is correct - at what stage were these unbelieving NT members confessing their faith? And is there even any Biblical mandate for confession of faith for those already in the outward covenant? And is there a mandate for official membership? In Heb 8:10-13 it talks about a new covenant that deals with individual hearts and minds: is the outworking of the NT covenant then more individual than collective as the OT covenant?
10. How is the offer of grace different to those in the outward covenant compared to those who do not have the baptism mark? And does it matter? Isn't it simply - God through his covenant with the human race (through Adam, through Israel and now extended to all) is offering a solution of reconciliation through Jesus to all who hear and respond? There is no different grace or promises to those who are baptized and those who are not baptized?
11. What is the view of the "Reformed Dispensationalism (Doctrine of Republication)?"
12. What is the view of the Reformed Baptist in distinction with ours?