

Covenant Theology Introduction (CT01)

Objectives

1. Show the importance of a “covenantal understanding” of Scripture.
2. Understand the biblical centrality of "the covenant concept"
3. Provide a basic, usable definition of "covenant"
4. Provide information on resources to use for "digging deeper"

Why is Covenant Theology Important?

1. It Brings out the "big story" of Scripture

- a. Helps us to understand *how* to read the Bible
- b. How are the OT and NT related to each other?
- c. Why do we need the OT?
- d. Understand the problems inherent in Dispensationalism (and what it is...)
- e. Provides the tools to discern for yourself whether or not a teaching is biblical

2. It is the Bible's way of explaining:

- a. The reason for Jesus' death upon the Cross, and what it means to us
- b. The Sacraments, both theologically and practically
- c. The Christian's assurance of salvation
- d. the relationship between *God's sovereignty* and *our responsibility* in living the Christian life

“The doctrine of the Covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that he who well understands the distinction between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace is a master of divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scriptures are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of law and the covenants of grace. May God grant us now the power to instruct and you the grace to receive instruction on this vital subject.” **Who said it: _____?**

Centrality of Covenant Theology

1. Covenant Theology is central (not peripheral) to the biblical story

- e. Jesus explains His death: Read Exodus 24:8, Matthew 26:28, & Luke 22:20.
- f. Luke explains to 1st century believers: Read Luke 1:72-73.
- g. J. I. Packer on understanding covenant: "The gospel of God is not properly understood till it is viewed within a covenantal frame."

Covenant Theology is the Gospel. And if you don't understand Covenant Theology, you are not ready to convey the Gospel in all of its glory and in all of its fullness.... We are talking about something that strikes at the very heart of our understanding of the person and work of Christ, of the Gospel of salvation, of redemptive history, of the relationship between the Old and the New Testament. Covenant Theology is that central..

J. Ligon Duncan

What is a Covenant?

General Definitions for Covenant:

- **Children's Catechism:** "An agreement between two or more persons."
- **Mike Thompson:** "A _____ with rules."
- **J. Ligon Duncan:** "The gospel set in the context of God's eternal plan of communion with his people, and its historical outworking in the covenant of works and grace."
- **O. Palmer Robertson:** "A bond in blood sovereignly administered."
 - "bond" -
 - "in blood" -
 - "sovereignly administered" -
- **Jonty Roberts** (two-fold definition):
 - Simple - A conditional promise.
 - Detailed - An agreement between God and human beings, where God promises blessings if conditions are kept, & threatens curses if the conditions are broken.

Introduction to "Covenants Made Simple" by Jonty Roberts:

Evangelical Christians are known for their insistence that Christianity is centered on "a relationship with God." Rightly so. but what is the nature of that relationship? I have one relationship with my wife, quite another with my neighbor. My relationship with my daughter could be fairly described as unconditional; that with my boss rather less so.

Covenant is the word God uses to describe his relationship with his people. At each stage of the Bible's story, including our own, God relates to his people through a series of these interlinked covenants. That relationship is more complex than we sometimes imagine. God is a Father who loves his children unconditionally, yet in Corinth he strikes some of those same children dead when they disobey him. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who will never lose a sheep, yet Judas, one of the original twelve, never makes it home.

Christ died for the sins of the world, yet not everyone is saved. We are saved by grace alone, yet John tells us we'll still be judged according to what we've done. These examples provoke all sorts of questions in thoughtful Christians. Can I know I'm saved? Does how I live have any effect on how God treats me? Can I lose my salvation? What does God expect from me?

Covenants hold the key to unlocking these kinds of puzzles. I hope we'll see that they bring a beautiful harmony to the different melodies God sings throughout Scripture.

Biblical understanding of a Covenant

1. Elements

- a. Parties
- b. Condition
- c. Promise or Blessing
- d. Penalty or Curse
- e. Sign

2. **Purpose:** is to _____ and structure an existing relationship

3. Misconceptions:

- a. A covenant is the same thing as a contract.
- b. A covenant is not a contract.
- c. Some covenants do not have conditions.

THE COVENANTS TIMELINE

