

# Chapter 4: Covenant Theology

What Is a Reformed Baptist? by Tom Hicks

# What are we talking about?

- How do we organize Scripture?
  - 2 main frameworks:
    - Dispensationalism
    - Covenant Theology
- Covenant Theology is the necessary consequence of utilizing the Reformed hermeneutic we talked about in the Confessionalism section

# What are we talking about?

Category	Covenant Theology	Dispensationalism
View of Scripture	Unified story centered on covenants	Progressive revelation across dispensations
Structure of the Bible	Two or three theological covenants (Works, Grace, Redemption)	Multiple dispensations (e.g., Law, Grace, Kingdom)
Church and Israel	Church is spiritual Israel; one people of God	Church and Israel remain distinct
Law and Gospel	Moral law endures; ceremonial/civil fulfilled	Mosaic Law not binding on the Church
Salvation	Always by grace through faith in Christ	Varies by dispensation; now by grace through faith
End Times	Typically amillennial or postmillennial	Premillennial; often pre-trib rapture

# The Covenant of Works

- Evidence from Genesis: Genesis 2 outlines God's command to Adam with life for obedience and death for disobedience, reflecting covenantal terms.
  - Scriptural Testimony: Hosea 6:6-7 and Romans 5 affirm Adam's covenant role as the federal head of humanity.
- Three Aspects of Covenant of Works
  - Provided the context and terms for friendship with God
  - Promised glorification to Adam and his posterity
  - Threatened death for sin
- An Objection Answered: Though 'covenant' isn't named in Genesis 2, the structure clearly represents one, just as seen in other unnamed covenants.

# The Covenant of Redemption

- God's purpose among the Trinity to redeem His chosen people through Jesus Christ.
  - Christ perfectly obeyed God's law, and He died to pay the penalty deserved by lawbreakers who are under the curse of the covenant of works (in Adam)
- The Old Testament: Psalms and Isaiah portray a pre-temporal plan between the Father and Son for redemption.
- The New Testament: John 6, Ephesians 1, and Hebrews show the Father giving a people to the Son, whom He redeems perfectly.
  - Jesus is constantly referring to doing the will of the Father who sent him, and referencing the plans that they have made

# The Covenant of Redemption

- The Effects of Christ's Obedience in the Covenant of Redemption
  - Christ Overcame the Curse of the Covenant of Works
  - Christ Secured the Blessings of the Covenant of Grace
  - Christ's Work in the Covenant of Redemption Leads to Worship
- Summary: The Father elects, the Son redeems, and the Spirit applies salvation in an eternal intra-Trinitarian covenant.

# The Covenant of Grace

- The covenant of grace is the doctrine that declares there is only one gracious saving promise in the Bible, the gospel of Jesus Christ, that weaves like a golden thread through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation
- Unity of the Covenant of Grace: Reformed Baptists see one unfolding covenant of grace throughout redemptive history.
- Old Testament Administration: Present in Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants as types and shadows.
- New Covenant Fulfillment: Christ establishes the covenant of grace fully in the new covenant, which includes only the elect.
- Role of the Elect: Elect Israelites experienced the covenant of grace through faith in the coming Messiah, not by law.

# The Covenant of Grace

- Hebrews 8:8-13
  - Four promises in this passage:
    - Everyone in the covenant of grace is effectually called
      - I will be their God... - certain salvation for God's people
    - Everyone in the covenant of grace is converted by faith and repentance
      - They shall all know me ("know" is in a salvific way); only believers in new covenant
    - Everyone in the covenant of grace is justified
      - I will remember their sins no more
    - Everyone in the covenant of grace is being progressively sanctified
      - Laws in their minds and (carve) on their hearts



# The Covenant of Grace

- Effects of the Covenant of Grace
  - The Free Offer of the Gospel
    - No other way any person can be saved unless by the pure grace of God
  - The Salvation of the Elect
    - John 6:37 – All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.
  - The Establishment of the Church
    - Salvation isn't just about individuals, but a gathered people to testify to this covenant of grace
  - The New Heaven and New Earth
    - Final reward is the lifting of the curse of the Covenant of Works (Rev. 21:1-4)

# Conclusion

- Reformed Baptist Distinctives: Particular Baptists taught a robust covenant theology distinct from paedobaptist federalism.
- Further Reading: Recommended works include Renihan's *\*The Mystery of Christ\**, writings by Owen, and the 1689 Confession.