



Introduction

Those who hold to Progressive Covenantalism and those who hold to Covenant Theology are typically reformed.

Progressive Covenantalism

God's Kingdom through God's Covenants and *Kingdom through Covenant* by Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum provides a good explanation of Progressive Covenantalism.

Covenants are Foundational

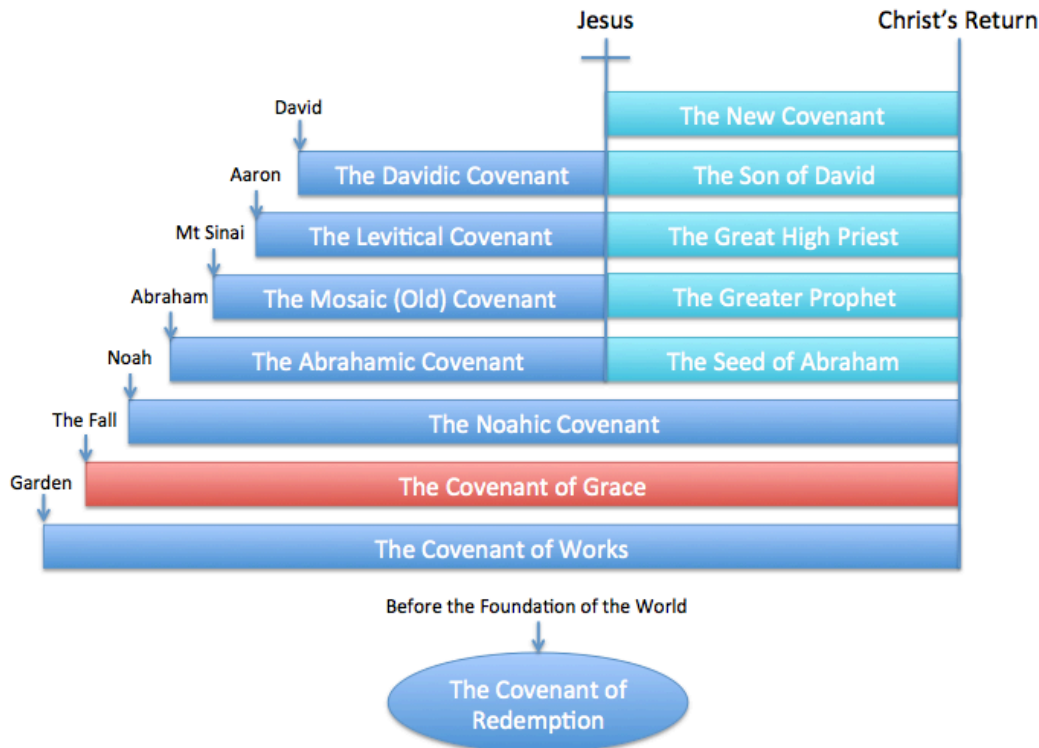
- Progressive Covenantalism is a form of Covenant Theology.
- Progressive Covenantalism affirms that the covenants of Scripture are foundational to the narrative of the Bible.
- We have much agreement with Progressive Covenantalism's understanding of the covenants and how they work together.

Biblical Covenants

- The Covenant with Creation (The Covenant of Works)
 - The Covenant with Noah
 - The Covenant with Abraham
 - The Covenant at Sinai
 - The Covenant with David
 - The New Covenant
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- Progressive Covenantalism does not recognize a Covenant of Grace.
 - Progressive Covenantalism differs in its understanding of the moral law.



Progressive Covenantalism and The Covenant of Grace



The covenant of grace is God's solemn pledge to accomplish redemption by Jesus Christ and to apply redemption to all his elect in Christ.

- All the covenants that follow the Covenant of Grace implement the Covenant of Grace with the fulfillment found in Jesus in the New Covenant.
- Progressive Covenantalism skips over the Covenant of Grace because of the traditional way Covenant Theology thinks of the Covenant of Grace.
- There is no single covenant after the Fall that all the other covenants administer.
- The difference is Gentry and Wellum speak of the “progressive revelation of the *one* plan of God” that the other covenants implement, we speak of the Covenant of Grace that the other covenants implement.
- Gentry and Wellum begin with the promise of Genesis 3:15 and show God is the faithful covenant partner.
- God, by his sovereign grace, made a promise to save through a covenant head, the last Adam, Jesus himself. That sounds like a Covenant of Grace.
- Gentry and Wellum admit that Genesis 3:15 is “crucial in establishing God’s initial promise of redemption – a promise that drives the entire storyline of Scripture, including the biblical covenants, leading us to Christ.”
- Gentry and Wellum describe the Covenant of Grace.



Progressive Covenantalism and the Law

Old Covenant law can be broken down into three categories: moral, civil, and ceremonial. The civil and ceremonial laws are obsolete but God's moral law endures.

Moral, Civil, and Ceremonial Laws

Progressive Covenantalism completely rejects the Old Testament law categories of moral, civil, and ceremonial.

Mosaic Covenant Laws

- The Ten Commandments are the foundation and the specific laws (ordinances) that follow are applications of the Ten Commandments in day-to-day living.
- The Ten Commandments and the ordinances go together since they are all part of the same covenant, the Old Covenant, which is done away with by the New Covenant.
- The Ten Commandments and the specific applications of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus are bound by the setting of the time in which they were given. The law is not eternal.
- Once the New Covenant supersedes the Old Covenant, all the laws of the Old Covenant are gone, including the Ten Commandments, because they are fulfilled in Christ.
- All we need to know about righteousness and how to live is found in the New Testament.

Love and The Law

- To the Progressive Covenantalist, we violate the New Covenant when we do not act in love. Romans 13:8–10
- The Ten Commandments do not bind us, but we are bound by love.
- How do we know what constitutes acting in love? Who decides what is wrong or right? Do my neighbor or I determine what is right or wrong?
- We can't rely on our good hearts or our neighbor's good heart.
- If we want to love our neighbors we need to speak and act in accordance with a higher law—a law that is unchangeable.

Applying the Mosaic Law

- The old covenant law has no *direct* and *immediate* authority in the Christian's life
- All laws must be mediated through Jesus

Application Steps

1. Establish the Law's original revealed meaning and application
 - a. Categorize specific laws
 - b. Establish a law's original meaning and significance
 - c. Consider a law's original purpose.
2. Determine the Law's theological importance



- a. Clarify what the law tells us about God and his ways
 - b. Evaluate how Christ fulfills the law and consider its impact on application
 - c. Find the love principle behind the law.
3. Summarize the Law's lasting significance

Application Example

- Deuteronomy 22:8
 - The original meaning and purpose relate to compassion
 - The theological importance is because we are made in God's image we are to value human life and seek to protect it. Matthew 7:12
 - The love principle is "God's call to love requires that I make my living environment safe, removing potential dangers and respecting those made in God's image."
 - The lasting significance is homeowners or property owners should care about the well-being of those who enter their home or property. 1 John 4:11

Sabbath Example

- Romans 14:5–5
- Sabbatarianism
 - The Ten Commandments, which include the Sabbath command, is God's moral law and he elevated the significance of the Ten Commandments by speaking them directly to the people of Israel, writing them by his power in stone, placing them in the Ark of the Covenant, and having Moses declare them a second time.
 - The Sabbath was not just a law for Israel, but a part of the moral fabric of the universe because it was established at creation.
 - While Jesus is our Sabbath rest, the rest spoken of in Hebrews 4 points to the final and eternal rest in the new heavens and new earth.
 - Not every aspect of the Sabbath is part of God's unchanging moral law. The specific day and activities of the Sabbath can change as God determines.
 - The timing of the Sabbath initially commemorated God's rest from creation but now it commemorates the beginning of the new creation on the first day of the week.
 - Jesus did not abolish the Sabbath but fulfilled it and proclaimed he was Lord of the Sabbath.
 - Paul declared New Covenant believers free from the Mosaic Sabbath regulations such as not burning a fire at home, but he did not nullify the creation ordinance of weekly rest.
 - The New Testament phrase "Lord's day" points to the Sabbath principle because Jesus said he was Lord of the Sabbath. So the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath.
 - The purpose of the Sabbath is to set our hearts on God, but it does not mean we are inactive. Jesus taught works of necessity, mercy, and piety were part of keeping the Sabbath.¹
- Progressive Covenantalism – Deuteronomy 5:12–15; Exodus 20:11

¹ Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Spirit and Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 899–913.



- The Sabbath is a sign of creation rest, and the Mosaic Covenant.
- The theological significance of the Sabbath:
 - God shows no partiality in the command—all, whether master or servant, need rest.
 - God wants people to depend on him. The fruit of labor in the first six days was ultimately due to God's provision.
 - God wants people to worship him—the day of rest points to God as sovereign.
- All is fulfilled in Jesus. Matthew 7:28; Hebrews 4:3
- Jesus abrogated the Sabbath. John 5:17
- God's call to love required carrying out the six days of work and one day of rest pattern as a witness to the kingdom hope of ultimate rest.
- The lasting significance is the Sabbath shows our need for rest. We enjoy the Sabbath rest seven days a week
- Gathering for worship is required according to Hebrews 10:25, but no day is better than any other day
- No activity is prohibited on Sunday as long as it doesn't interfere with corporate worship.

Three Uses of the Law

- The law reveals our need for Christ (pedagogical use); the law restrains evil (civil use); and the law provides guidelines for living (didactic use).
- As believers, we point to God's law as an objective standard that gives a morality that does not change based on the whims of the people.
- God's moral law restrains evil and points us to Jesus, but for those of us under the New Covenant, it also shows us how to live. Matthew 22:24–40, John 14:15

Conclusion

- We hold much in common with Progressive Covenantalism.
 - The covenants of the Bible are foundational to the narrative of Scripture
 - All of the covenants find their fulfillment in Christ.
- The promise given in Genesis 3:15 is more than just a promise. It is a Covenant of Grace.
- The moral law of God found in the Old Covenant and demonstrated in the Ten Commandments still has value today.