

Covenant Baptism

Adult Sunday School

June 5, 12, 19, 26

2022

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- *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...” (Matt 28:19)*

II. The BIG Picture: Covenant Theology

Covenant Baptism is one of the two prescribed ceremonies (“sacraments”) that Jesus instituted to MAKE VISIBLE the “Covenant of Grace.”



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“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**.” (Westminster Confession of Faith 7.1)

II. The BIG Picture: Covenant Theology

A “Covenant” is...

“...a relationship under sanctions” (M. Kline)

“...a binding, mutual relationship with attending obligations”
(L. Duncan)

“... a divinely established solemn bond with mutual obligations and attending sanctions (or consequences)”
(C. Wynne)

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“Anatomy” of a Covenant:

- (a) Two parties (God and Adam/posterity)
- (b) A condition to be met (perfect, personal obedience)
- (c) Dual “sanctions” or consequences (life, death)

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“Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called **the covenant of grace**; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners LIFE and SALVATION by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe. .” (WCF 7.3)

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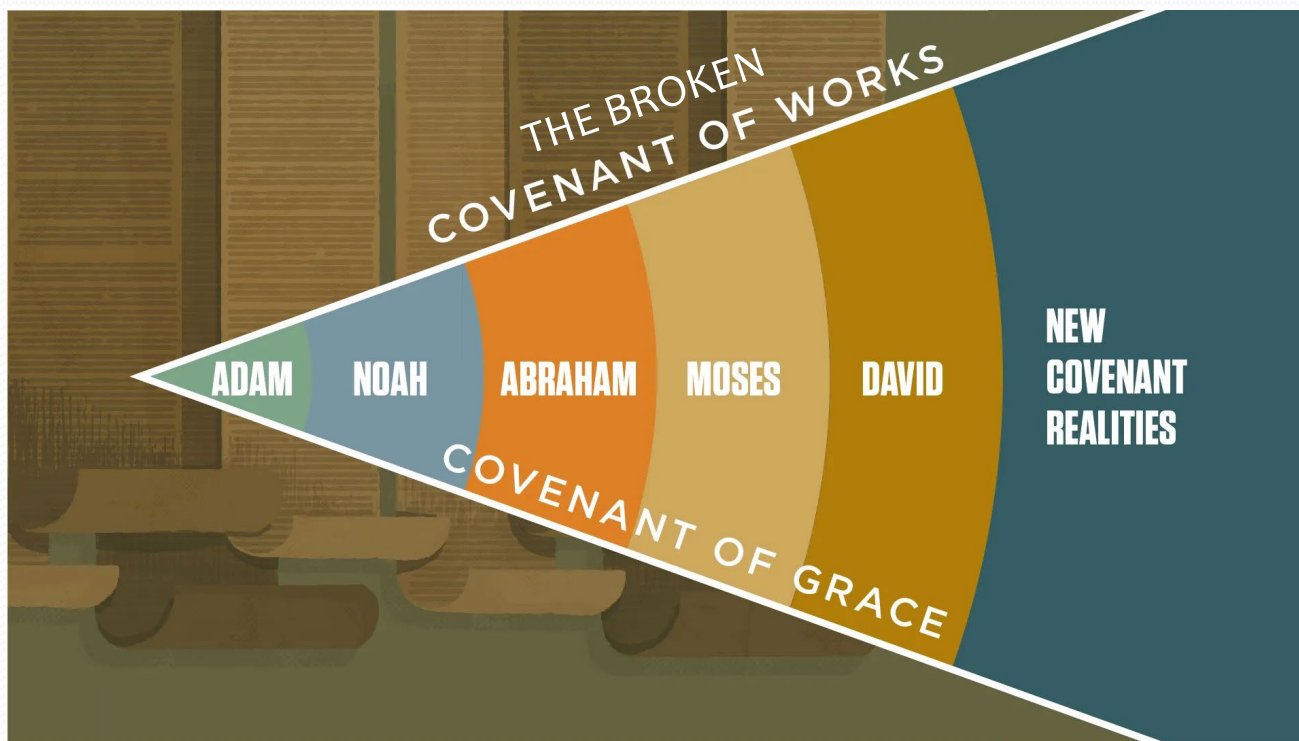
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“Anatomy” of a Covenant:

- (a) Two parties (God and “the Church” in Christ)
- (b) A condition to be met (faith ... in Jesus’s obedience for us!)
- (c) Dual “sanctions” or consequences (life/salvation, death/judgment)

II. The BIG Picture: Covenant Theology

The Covenant of Grace in its “organic unfolding,” through various “sub-covenants” towards Christ’s arrival in the flesh.





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- (1) A “Covenant” is a divinely established bond between God and man with promises and obligations.
- (2) Two major covenants in Scripture: Covenant of Works (with Adam) and Covenant of Grace (in Christ).
- (3) The Covenant of Grace (i.e., the gospel!) organically unfolds across the Old Testament, leading to Christ’s arrival.
- (4) Although all who are consecrated to God in the Covenant of Grace **deserve the DEATH sanction** from the broken Covenant of Works, to them **God offers and applies the LIFE Christ has earned** (by His obedience, not ours), to be received through faith in him!

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(A) OATH-TAKING

(B) BLOOD-SACRIFICE



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“You are standing today all of you before the LORD your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, ¹¹ your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner ...¹² so that you may enter into **the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God is making with you today,¹³ that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and **as he swore to your fathers...**”** (Deut 29:10-12)

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“And the people said to Joshua, ‘The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.’ ²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day..” (Josh 24:25)

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OATH-TAKING:

“ ‘Oath’ so adequately captures the relationship achieved by ‘covenant’ that the terms may be interchanged. ”

– O. Palmer Robertson

*“I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant” (Ps 89:3)*

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BLOOD-SACRIFICE:

“...not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, **he took the blood of calves and goats**, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, **and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people**, ²⁰ saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” (Heb 9:19-20)

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“**And [Abram] brought [the LORD] all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other.** But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.” (Gen 15:10-11)

II. The BIG Picture: Covenant Theology

BLOOD-SACRIFICE:

“Therefore, thus says the LORD: You have not obeyed me by proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and to his neighbor; behold, I proclaim to you liberty to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine, declares the LORD. I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. ¹⁸ **And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts—** ¹⁹ the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land **who passed between the parts of the calf.** ²⁰ And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth. (Jer 34:17-20)

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Two Key Features to the “Covenant of Grace”:

(A) OATH-TAKING – God promises life, we promise faith and obedience.

(B) BLOOD-SACRIFICE – God pictures the judgment we deserve & the judgment Christ would endure to give us LIFE!



III. The Covenant and Circumcision

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When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”³ Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him,⁴ “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.⁷ **And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.**⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” ...
(Gen 17:1-14)

III. The Covenant and Circumcision

⁹ And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ **This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.** ¹¹ **You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.** ¹² He 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, ¹³ both 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.** ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” (Gen 17:1-14)



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 - (a) God’s oath to bless Abraham and his offspring.
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3. The sign was to be applied to Abe’s male infant offspring (v. 10).



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Since the fall of Adam, how can any covenant member (i.e., any Israelite) ever hope to avoid the death-judgment of the slain animals, the judgment symbolized by circumcision?



IV. Circumcision and Christ

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“As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him...When the sun had gone down and it was dark, **behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.** ¹⁸ On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your offspring I give this land...’” (Gen 15:12, 17-18)

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“And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. **And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.** ¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The Lord will provide’...” (Gen 22:13-14)

IV. Circumcision and Christ

“By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that **he was cut off** out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?” (Is 53:8)



IV. Summary

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Circumcision in Old Testament:

- Symbolized an oath /consecration to the Lord in the Covenant of Grace.
- Symbolized the divine judgment the recipient already deserved as a child of Adam.
- Communicated the promise of life to those who would identify (by faith) with the divine Redeemer-Substitute/Judgment-Bearer (Christ).
- Symbolized the judgment (“cut off”) that would befall all those consecrated to God who trusted in their own sinful obedience, rather than God’s Provision.
- Was applied to Israelites and their infant male offspring.

IV. Summary

Circumcision was a covenant sign instituted by God, wherein the bloody ritual signified and assured Israelites (upon condition of faith) of ...

- their union with Christ,
- and of their partaking of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace,
- and of their consecration to be the Lord's.