

**THEOLOGICAL NOTES** edited from **Abraham's Four Seeds** by John G. Reisinger, 1998, 33 pgs  
[http://solochristo.com/ SC/SoloChristo.htm](http://solochristo.com/SC/SoloChristo.htm).

Subtitled: A Biblical Examination of the Presuppositions of Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism.

**From: Introduction**

The purpose of the book is to demonstrate how a correct understanding of Abraham's four seeds is a key to harmonizing Scripture. New Covenant Theologians [such as this author] believe that both **Covenant Theology (CT)** [Apdx.1 below] and historic **Dispensationalism (DT)** [Apdx.2], as **systems**, are unbiblical even though they contain truth and are held by many godly men; that their basic presuppositions are either assumed or wrongly deduced from their theological systems [the reasoning of each is fundamentally circular]. One does not have to be locked into either DT or CT. The Reformation, great as it was, never totally got rid of all of Rome's errors. Some great men brought some priestcraft over into their basic presuppositions at the time of the Reformation. Their view of the relationship between Church and State (the doctrine of Sacralism) is the logical conclusion and application of their CT. It was this view that kept the **Puritans** from establishing churches that could live and worship consistently in the spirit of the New Covenant. Their view of the ordained ministry (holy orders) made any practical use of the priesthood of believers impossible. This is also the reason that present day **Pres-byterian** groups, such as the PCA, cannot effectively deal with the issue of **Theonomy** within their ranks. The Theonomists have both the Westminster Confession (**WCF**) and Puritan history on their side.

**Reformed Baptists** are among the leaders in the present day revival of Calvinistic literature. We gladly acknowledge our debt to the **Reformers** and **Puritans** and do not hesitate to own them as our forefathers in certain aspects of our faith. However those same men, almost without exception, bitterly persecuted, and in some instances, actually killed some of our other forefathers among the early Baptists. We find ourselves in the odd position of being stepchildren of both the **Reformers** and the **Anabaptists**, but the true heirs of neither. Our clear-cut view of the Doctrines of Grace and the unity of the Scriptures aligns us with the **Reformers and the Puritans**. The **Anabaptists** will never teach anyone the Doctrines of Grace. Our view of the unity of the Scriptures makes it impossible for us to accept the DT set forth in the Scofield Reference Bible. On the other hand, our **Baptistic view** that the New Covenant in Jesus Christ has replaced the Old Covenant at Sinai makes it just as impossible for us to accept the CT set forth in the **WCF**. It was that very **Covenant view of Scripture** that was used by the Puritans to justify the use of the sword against our **Baptist forefathers**. The true heirs of the Puritan view of CT are those who today espouse what is called **Theonomy**.

More and more writers and preachers are demonstrating that both historic DT and classical CT are bankrupt as far as being complete systems. Both systems are being greatly modified today,<sup>1</sup> and there is a move toward seeing some truth in both systems. In no sense does this mean there is an attempt to synthesize the two systems. It means that **people in both camps are starting with the Scriptures and discovering two things** - (1) their own system is not totally consistent with many texts of Scripture, and (2) those same texts are forcing them to accept some things held by the other system. This is happening because honest men are admitting that they simply cannot prove some of their basic presuppositions with actual texts of Scripture. They realize that they assume the

basic system **before** they ever get to the Word of God itself. Both of these systems assume as facts their basic presuppositions without any clear Biblical proof.

-----

1. Some have actually changed the basic presuppositions upon which their respective systems rest and are therefore not being intellectually honest when they continue to apply either of these labels to themselves.

-----

The Word of God itself must once more become the final authority in the conscience of Christians which means that the remaining vestments of Rome be removed from our Calvinistic churches. I wrote in my booklet When Should A Christian Leave A Church? Let us not make the same mistakes that the Reformers made. They thoroughly reformed the gospel message of justification by faith but failed to reform some other doctrines ... They ... held on to sanctification by the law. They rejected the Church's authority over your soul, but hung on to the Church's authority over your conscience. They discarded priestcraft and substituted clericalism. They rejected the authority of Church tradition (which taught Papal infallibility) but replaced it with man-made creeds that soon became as authoritative as Scripture ... They cried sola Scriptura while waving a creed in one hand and a sword in the other.

#### From Chapter One: The Importance of Abraham's Seed

The whole of the history of redemption revolves around Abraham and his seed. There is no information that will help us to see **the one unifying message of redemption** through our Lord Jesus Christ in both the OT and NT Scriptures as much as knowing exactly what was promised to Abraham and his seed and who that seed is to whom those promises were made. <sup>A</sup> This is one of the crucial points of difference that **separates DT and CT at their basic starting points**.

-----

**A.** Our view of history, prophecy, the future of the Jews, the nature of the church, baptism, the kingdom of God, the relationship of the law and the gospel, and many other things are radically affected by our answer to these questions. **The really basic differences between CT and DT are over the answers.**

-----

The real difference between a historic **Baptist** and a **Paedobaptist** is not the mode of baptism, but rather who is the true heir of God's promise to Abraham and his seed. The answer to that question is also what distinguishes NEW COVENANT Theology (NCT) from both CT and DT. **Both the Dispensationalist and the Covenant theologian insist on making physical children to be the objects of God's promise to Abraham and his seed.** **A Dispensationalist pleads** the unconditional covenant made with Abraham and his seed as the foundation of his belief in a separate and future purpose for the Nation of Israel. **A Paedobaptist pleads** the **very same** thing as the foundation for his infant baptism. One or both of these theological camps is confused about who Abraham's seed is and exactly what specific blessing was promised to that seed.

If CT can exegetically establish its view of Abraham and his seed from the Scriptures, then not only is DT non-sense (and visa versa), but the Baptist view <sup>B</sup> of baptism is proven to be a denial of the

major covenant promise given to Christian parents (heresy). If neither DT nor CT can prove from Scripture alone that they really understand Abraham and his seed, then **both of these systems may be wrong at their starting points.**

-----

**B. Baptists believe in baptizing every covenant child** included in the promise made to Abraham and his seed. However they insist that saving faith is the prerequisite and only proof that any given person is the seed of Abraham and an heir to the promise.

-----

**The starting points of both CT and DT**, considered as complete Systems of Theology, are not established with the Word of God but with logic applied to previously accepted theological concepts that may or may not be true. **Both systems do exactly the same thing that evolution does. They assume the system is true without proving the basic assumptions and then establish specific doctrines by applying logic to the assumed facts or system.** Everything seems to fit as long as one does not try to prove the basic presuppositions where the whole system can be seen to rest on arbitrary assumptions. Because of electing grace, the Holy Spirit is the only ground for any person being the object of any spiritual promise given to Abraham and his seed (**Rom.9:11, 23-24**). **Both DT and CT either deny or ignore** this fundamental fact.

#### From Chapter Two: **Who is Abraham's Seed?**

**Ishmael** was the true natural seed of Abraham, but God did not establish his covenant with Ishmael. Likewise, God did not include **Esau** in the covenant. Esau, like Ishmael, was signed and sealed with the same covenant sign of circumcision as was his twin brother Jacob. [In the same way evolutionists make sweeping generalities], both Dispensationalist and Covenant Theologians ignore these Biblical facts when they speak loosely and in generalities about the promise of God to Abraham and his seed and make it mean the physical children of either Jews or Christian parents. **CT ignores the obvious fact** that God **hated** one covenant child, Ishmael. God **loved** one covenant child (Jacob) in a way that He did not love the twin brother (Esau) even though both covenant children had the same believing parents and were both signed and sealed with the same covenant sign (**Rom.9:13**).

**When a covenant theologian says**, The covenant at Sinai cannot possibly be a legal covenant since it was made with a redeemed people, he is mixing apples and oranges, and **when a Dispensationalist treats** Israel in the wilderness as saved but not victorious, they are mixing oranges with lemons. **Both systems [by a false analogy] are treating a physical redemption as being equal to spiritual salvation.** **A covenant theologian cannot make the clear Biblical distinction** concerning the difference between a gracious purpose and a gracious covenant and stay within the framework of his system of theology. In his theology, the Law-covenant at Sinai must be a covenant of grace. **This insistence** is purely on the grounds that covenant theology's system cannot have a legal covenant after **Gen.3:15** without destroying the one covenant with two administrations theory.

The following statement, if understood, will help to clear up a lot of confusion: *The Nation of Israel was not the Body of Christ, even though the Body of Christ is indeed the true Israel of God.* **CT cannot accept** the first part of that statement and **DT cannot accept** the second part. **The basic**

presuppositions of **CT make it mandatory** that Israel be the Church and be under the same covenant as the Church, and the one thing a **Dispensationalist must maintain** is the Church's present and future distinction from Israel which makes it mandatory that Israel and the Church can never be under the same covenant or inherit the same blessings. What is essential to one system is anathema to the other. **DT cannot get** Israel and the Church together in any sense and **CT cannot get** them apart. **DT cannot see** that the Church is the true Israel of God and the fulfillment of the promises that God made to Abraham and the fathers, and **CT cannot see** that the Church, as the Body of Christ, did not and could not exist in reality and experience until the personal advent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. **DT insists** that Israel and the Church have totally different promises and destinies (one earthly and the other heavenly), and **CT insists** that Israel and the Body of Christ are equally the same redeemed Church under the same covenant of grace and governed by the same identical canon of conduct.

**DT drives a wedge** between the OT and the NT and never the twain shall meet as specific promise (OT) and identical fulfillment (NT); and **CT flattens** the whole Bible out into one covenant where there is no real and vital distinction between either the Old and New Covenants or Israel and the Church.

We will never understand either the Biblical history of redemption or the relationship between the two major covenants in Scripture (**Heb.8:6-13; Gal.4:21-31; 2 Cor.3:6-18**) until we grasp the truth and implications of the last paragraph. Neither the supposed Covenant of Works with Adam nor the supposed Covenant of Grace with Adam after the fall are mentioned in any text of Scripture. They are not covenants that grow out of the Bible itself, but they are constructs that must be logically deduced from a theological system. Those who insist on using these two theological covenants must, to be consistent with their system, either ignore or deny the existence and theological implications of the two Biblical covenants (the Old Covenant at Sinai and the New Covenant that replaces it) constantly contrasted in both the Old and the NT Scriptures. Once we understand the Biblical relationship between the Nation of Israel and the Body of Christ, we will have trouble accepting either DT or CT as a theological system.

**CT insists on equating Israel and the Church, and totally loses the true newness of the New Covenant** and its function in the conscience of a believer. **DT fails to see** the Church as the true fulfillment of God's promise to the fathers, and it totally loses the unity of the Scriptures and God's single goal in redemption. We reject both of these views as being based on an incomplete understanding of the true unity of Scripture as it respects the true Seed of Abraham (Christ) and the eternal purposes of God in the redemption of His one elect people (believers of all ages).

The NT Scriptures clearly establish that the **Davidic covenant** was fulfilled in the resurrection and ascension of Christ (**Acts 2:22-36, see Apdx 5**). That the Davidic throne is not waiting to be set up in the future, but it is already established denies one of the basic tenants of DT. The following quotation shows this clearly: The Davidic covenant is most important as assuring the millennial kingdom in which Christ will reign on earth. Resurrected David will reign under Christ as a prince over the house of Israel ... the Davidic covenant is NOT fulfilled by Christ reigning on His throne in heaven ... It is rather an earthly kingdom and an earthly throne (**Mt. 25:31**). The Davidic covenant is, accordingly, the KEY to God's prophetic program YET TO BE FULFILLED.<sup>2</sup>

-----

2. Walvoords key locks up far more Scripture than it unlocks. Lewis Sperry Chafer, revised by John F. Walvoord, Major Bible Themes, p.145.

-----

**Israel** must be seen as the natural seed of Abraham despite the fact that some Israelites were true believers and thus, through faith, they were also part of the spiritual seed. Israel as a nation must never, except as a type, be mistaken for or confused with the Church as the Body of Christ even though they (Israel) had special national covenantal privileges. Covenant Theologians are just as convinced as Walvoord that their understanding of covenants is vital. Walter Chantry says: *It would be nearly impossible to overstate the central importance of the Biblical teaching on covenants ... CT is at the heart of Biblical truth. Those who are its enemies will do great harm to the church of Christ. The Two Covenants, by Walter Chantry, p.1, 8.* CT would have labeled Ishmael a covenant child” despite the fact that his circumcision did not put him under any covenant of grace.

#### From Chapter Four: **Abraham's SPIRITUAL Seed**

The Scofield Reference Bible gives the following as one of the fulfillments of the Abrahamic Covenant: (b) (fulfilled) in a spiritual posterity. *Look now toward heaven...so shall thy seed be (Jn.8:39; Rom.4:16-17; 9:7-8; Gal.3: 6-7, 29)* viz. All men of faith, whether Jew or Gentile ... I do not accept Scofield's typology of making heavenly = spiritual seed (Church) and sand = earthly seed (Israel), but the above quote is correct that **all men of faith, whether Jew or Gentile, are the spiritual seed of Abraham**. CT sees the importance of this phrase as it is used in the OT Scriptures. There is no question that the promise stated in **Rev.21:3** is the heart of the gospel promise as prophesied in the OT. However, **both DT and CT misunderstand the implications of this phrase**. **The Dispensationalist does not see** that the Church is the true Tabernacle, or dwelling place, of God that was predicted and prophesied in the OT Scriptures. That system of theology cannot see the Church as the true Israel of God that fulfills the covenant promises to Abraham. **They adamantly naturalize specific things that NT Apostles spiritualize.**

**The Covenant Theologian also misses the boat in the opposite direction. He fails to emphasize that the goal of God was never realized in any true spiritual sense by the Nation of Israel.** That nation never truly became God's people in any spiritual and eternal sense - they were never a true holy nation nor were they ever the true people of God. If God was indeed Israel's God in the sense that He is the Church's God, then why did He cast Israel off as a nation? Can God ever deal with the Body of Christ in the same manner that He dealt with the Nation of Israel? This is the very question that Paul deals with in **Rom.9-11**.

**God was conditionally Israel's God in a national sense.** God indeed dwelt among them [in their midst but separate from them] in a way that He did not dwell among any other nation, but in no sense were they the temple of God as the Church is today. Israel was His special nation among all the nations in the earth, but that relationship was not a saving spiritual relationship nor was it based on an eternal Covenant of Grace. God dwelling among Israel in the tabernacle and indwelling the individual believer today as the true tabernacle are two different things. The special national relationship between God and the Nation of Israel was based on the legal covenant made at Sinai, and **that**



special covenantal relationship was finally nullified by God because of Israel's continual failure to keep the covenant.

Can God say and do to the Body of Christ what He said and did to the Nation of Israel? Could that nation have been purchased by the death of Christ and put under the covenant that was ratified by His blood (1 Cor.11:24-26), and then be cast off by God? If Israel was under the same covenant as the Church, then how can we be sure that God will not cast off the Church? Why is the Church's eternal security guaranteed when Israel's was not if both the Church and Israel are redeemed and under the same covenant? The Biblical answer to these questions is simple. The Body of Christ can never be disowned by God because she is under a new and better covenant than the old covenant that Israel was under.

Theologians ignore the big word IF in Ex.19:5 and then build their whole position on the gracious statement in Ex.19:4 & 20:2. Every word like elect, chosen, loved, redeemed, son, etc. that describe Israel's relationship to God as a nation have a totally different meaning when used of the Church's relationship to God. You cannot mix spiritual and natural or treat the type as if it were the reality. The failure to see this clear truth is one of the glaring self-contradictions in both DT and CT. The words God will be their God can never be applied in a redemptive sense to any nation or individual that is cast off by God: Both CT and DT are constantly forgetting the above truth by mixing apples and oranges. They use typology as if it were the reality of the thing typified. DT will build a doctrine of carnal believers on the notion that Israel in the wilderness was a redeemed people. Since they applied the blood to the door posts in faith, they were truly saved. In other words, they had enough faith to be redeemed but not enough faith to enjoy a victorious life. Here is the Dispensational view: Kadesh-barnea is, by the unbelief of Israel there, and the divine comment on that unbelief (Num.14:22-38; Dt.1:19-40; 1 Cor.10:1-5), invested with immense spiritual significance. The people had faith to sprinkle the blood of atonement (Ex.12:28) and to come out of Egypt (the world), but they had not faith to enter into their Canaan rest. Therefore, though redeemed, they were a forty year grief to Jehovah. Scofield Reference Bible, p.185 CT does the same thing. Teachers of this system vehemently reject the clear truth that Sinai was a legal covenant simply because it is impossible for God to put a redeemed people under a legal covenant, and Israel was truly redeemed—And by redeemed, the covenant theologian means saved. One group is just as bad as the other in their use of typology.

The following quotation is from a widely used commentary on the Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 43, dealing with the preface to the Ten Commandments. When God delivered His people out of slavery in Egypt, it was not because they had kept the ten commandments. No, He first delivered them, and then gave them the Ten Commandments. So they were not expected to try to keep the law in order to be saved. Rather they were expected to do this because they already had been SAVED. And this is exactly the way it is in the life of a Christian. G.I. Williamson, The Shorter Catechism, 1972, p.8.

No Covenant Theologian would say, I believe that every single Israelite that left Egypt in the Exodus was a justified believer in Christ. However, their system of theology is forced to treat the Nation of Israel as if that were the case. Williamson's statement is arguing a key theological point and he is treating typology as absolute fact. He equates Israel's physical salvation with the spiritual salvation

of the Church in his argument. Williamson would never say, The Exodus experience was equal to true justification by faith for every single Israelite that was involved. However, he must actually **treat** them that way in his theological system. This is the only ground upon which he can reject the Mosaic Covenant as a legal covenant of works. Presently, I am only trying to show that **CT and DT both treat the Nation of Israel and her position before God as if it were a nation of justified believers instead of merely a type**. The result of using typology in this manner is confusion and contradictions.

**Any view** of the blessings promised to Abraham and his seed that does not begin in **Rev.13:8** with Christ as the Lamb slain eternally in Gods purpose, and wind up in **Rev.21:3** uniting the redeemed of all ages before the Lamb's throne fully beholding His glory, has not really grasped the Biblical history and goal of Gods redemptive purpose and work. Likewise, **any view** that tries to push the realization of this goal back into the OT as a means of preserving the so called unity of the one Covenant of Grace destroys the true unity of Scripture as that unity is built around Jesus Christ, the true Seed of Abraham.

### From Chapter Five: **Abraham's UNIQUE Seed - Christ**

**Understanding Christ's place in Scripture is the key to the true unity of the Scriptures**. He is the Keystone of our salvation as well as being the Key and Keystone of all Scripture as opposed to either **dispensations** or **covenants**, even though an understanding of both is necessary to a correct interpretation of Gods Word. These concepts may give unity to our system, but they will soon force us to twist or ignore some very clear texts of Scrip-ture that don't fit the system. **God's dealing with national Israel is the Dispensationalists key to Scripture and his time clock for all of history. One all-embracing covenant of grace is the Covenant Theologians key to Scripture and his framework for all of history**. In attempting to bring unity and clarity to the Bible, both systems muddy up the water and force the Bible to fit into their respective schemes.

**The primary purpose of this book is an examination of the basic presuppositions of both DT and CT**. Both use the unconditional promise that God made to Abraham and his seed as a basic building block in their respective systems. If they do not understand either the promise itself or to whom the promise was actually given, then everything built on that misunderstanding is automatically in error to some degree. **Neither can be helpful** to a correct interpretation of Scripture if their own understanding of such a fundamental concept as the promises made to Abraham and his seed is wrong.

Using **Gen.3:15** as a proof text for a covenant of grace with Adam is demonstrative of a theological **invention** rather than a truth established by Biblical exegesis. Can God revealing a specific purpose in a threat to Satan be turned into God making a formal covenant with a man? <sup>3</sup> God speaking to Satan and informing him of his certain doom is a far cry from God entering into a covenant of grace with Adam. Wouldn't using **Gen.3:15** to prove the establishment of a covenant necessarily require it to be made with Satan according to the text? If there is such a thing as an eternal covenant of grace between the members of the Trinity, then Gods action in **Gen.3:15** is a definite step taken in time and history to bring His purpose in that covenant of grace to pass. However, even if such a covenant could be proven to exist, it is still a far cry from God putting either Adam or Abraham under a covenant of grace. Why not just let the verse mean what it says? God told Satan his days were numbered and it would be the seed of the women that would do him in.

-----

**3.** For a clear example of Covenant Theologians confusing the Covenant of Redemption with the Covenant of Grace, see Johnathan Edwards': Towards a Biblical Hermeneutic. In his battle with the half-way covenant, Edwards insisted that a child could be not considered in the Covenant of Grace in any sense until they demon-strated a living repentance and faith.

-----

The phrase *in thee shall all nations be blessed* as given to Abraham is equivalent to believe on the coming Christ according to the Apostle Paul because it is the gospel promise of Christ Himself that gives the Scripture its true unity. Compare Paul's words used to describe Gods dealing with Abraham with the terminology used by CT to describe the same event. Paul said that God preached the gospel to Abraham and in essence told him to believe in a coming Messiah. Do these words mean God made a covenant as CT teaches? God indeed made a covenant with Abraham in **Gen.15**, however, the terms of it involve Abraham's physical seed inheriting the land. **Here is a clear textual example of CTs constant practice of using non-Biblical terms to replace clear Biblical language**. Where in all of the Word of God does the Holy Spirit call the gospel the Covenant of Grace or does any verse remotely imply that when God graciously makes known the gospel promise to an individual or a whole nation that He is thereby putting that individual under a covenant of grace?

**Gen.3:15 & 12:3** emphatically prove that the one gospel of grace has always been, and will always be, Gods only way of saving sinners. Likewise the one gospel of grace was preached from the dawn of sin. Is proclaiming the gospel of grace to a person the same thing as putting that person under a covenant of grace? **CT makes these two things synonymous and then draws all kinds of deductions from the non-Biblical phrase covenant of grace** that could not be drawn from the Biblical phrase preached the gospel. One might deduce sprinkling children as a sign of the covenant from the one phrase, but it would be impossible to do so from the other. Despite Israel's special covenant relationship, most of them never inherited a single spiritual promise that had been made to Abraham and his seed. All of the members of any institutional church especially the national church as advocated by CT are likewise not necessarily in Christ. Do they as individuals have a separate spiritual promise apart from personal repentance and faith in the universal gospel of Gods grace?

According to Peter and Paul, **the Old Testament prophets were talking about the gospel age in which we now live**. The words in these verses cannot be made to mean anything else. It is probably significant that the Scofield Reference Bible does not cross reference **Acts 3:24-26** back to Genesis **12:1-3** or to anywhere else. It ignores the fact that Peter is quoting, interpreting, and applying the true meaning of Gods covenant with Abraham. If ever there was an Old Testament text quoted by a New Testament Apostle that should be cross-referenced and explained, it is this one. This is doubly true if we are trying to understand what God meant in his covenant with Abraham and his seed concerning the promise to bless him and his seed by turning away everyone of you from his iniquities. Obviously **DT cannot fit Peters spiritualized interpretation of the promises made to Abraham and his seed into their system**.

DT is forced to put into the future what Peter in this text specifically says has already been fulfilled.



They must also naturalize the blessing promised to Abraham that Peter clearly spiritualizes. Regardless the reason the verse was not cross referenced by Scofield, it is impossible to take Peters words literally and then fit the postponed kingdom view into this passage of Scripture. People that insist on a literal interpretation of the words of Scripture will not do it when a New Testament Apostle literally spiritualizes an Old Testament prophecy. Peter's natural language of This is that which was spoken by the prophet cannot be taken literally by a Dispensationalist.

The single most important question concerning Abraham and the promises made to him in **Gen.12:1-3** is, In choosing, calling, and entering into covenant with Abraham,

(A) is God making an unconditional covenant that begins a whole new program involving an earthly people (the Nation of Israel) with a permanent and separate identity in a specific and clearly defined physical land (Palestine), in distinction to a heavenly people (the church) with its spiritual blessings in the heavenly places; or

(B) is God taking the first step to fulfill the prediction made in **Gen.3:15** concerning the Unique Seed coming to die on the cross in fulfillment of the one eternal unchanging purpose of grace (**Rev.13:8**) for His one true elect people?

Every Dispensationalist would agree with the first choice, but some of them want to delete the word permanent, and then say, I agree with both choices. The foundation of consistent DT rests on God beginning, with Abraham, a new program with an earthly people that must culminate in their inheriting and keeping the land of Palestine permanently. This purpose of God for Israel is totally separate from His program for the heavenly people, the Church. Israel will inherit physical Palestine and the Church will inherit heaven. The second program of God, the church, is supposedly not made known until Paul reveals it in the book of Ephesians.

In taking such a view of the Abrahamic covenant, DT fails to see the totality of the continuity of the single goal of redemption in **Gen.3:15 & 12:1-3** as that goal is developed in the rest of Scripture, especially by the NT Apostles in their inspired interpretation of Gods dealings with Abraham. That system also fails to appreciate how clearly Abraham himself saw that the physical land of Palestine was not the real and final fulfillment of Gods promise to him and his seed (**Gen.22:18; Jn.8:56; Heb.11:9-10**).

He is merely choosing and designating the seed line that will bring to pass the promise of **Gen.3:15** and the goal of **Rev.13:8**. DT, at this point, introduces a disunity into the purposes of God that makes it impossible to see the events happening in the NT Scriptures to be the very things that were promised to the fathers all the way through the OT. The whole concept of the postponed kingdom begins in misunderstanding the promise of God to Abraham in **Gen.12**. Once this has occurred, it is impossible to use the NT Scriptures to understand and interpret the kingdom prophecies in the OT. One has to force OT concepts into the NT Scriptures.

**How far will men go in order to defend a position dear to their hearts?** In 1972 the General Association of Regular Baptists had a heated discussion over the doctrine of Gods sovereign election. An attempt was made to strengthen the article in the doctrinal statement that dealt with salvation and election. A strong group of Armenians not only managed to kill the amendment concerning the election of believers, but they also strengthened the article dealing with Gods choice

of the Nation of Israel. I'm sure they did not intentionally borrow the language of the Covenant theologian, but all they managed to do was move the Covenant of Grace concept from the Church to the Nation of Israel. Notice that **the following Dispensational statement applies CT terminology to Israel:**

We believe in the sovereign selection of Israel as Gods eternal covenant people, that she is now dispersed because of her disobedience and rejection of Christ, and that **she will be re-gathered in the Holy Land and, after the completion of the church, will be saved as a nation at the second advent of Christ. Gen.3:14-17; Rom.11:1-32; Ez.37** (From The Constitution of the General Association of Regular Baptists Churches as amended June 1972). **The DT of the General Association of Regular Baptists is adamant that there is an everlasting Covenant (of grace) with Israel.** They merely transfer the Covenant of Grace from the Church to the Nation of Israel and make inheriting the land of Palestine to be equivalent to eternal salvation rest. We could correctly call their system **Covenant (Israel) Theology.**

**Militant Dispensationalists are usually, strongly Arminian in their view of freewill.** Suppose we ask the following question: How can we be sure that Israel will exercise their freewill in the future and let God save them? The amazing answer would be **hyper-Calvinism as it regards Israel. God is going to make them believe!** Why is it so unfair for God to give faith to an individual elect Gentile today, and not only fair but actually obligatory that He give faith to the whole Jewish nation in the future? So much for consistency.

DT clearly acknowledges that the Gospel is one of the things being promised in **Gen.12:3**. In a footnote explaining the Abrahamic Covenant, Scofield says . . . (7) In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. This is the great evangelic promise fulfilled in Abraham's Seed, Christ (**Gal.3:16; Jn.8:56-58**). It brings into greater definiteness the promise of the Adamic Covenant concerning the Seed of the woman (**Gen.3:15**). From: Scofield Reference Bible, **p.25. We basically agree with this statement.** However, **Scofield then proceeds to make the rest of the things promised apply to the physical Nation of Israel as the seed of Abraham and these aspects of the promise soon overshadow everything else.**

**CT**, on the other hand, **tries to establish continuity from Gen.3:15 to 12:1-3, and the rest of Scripture, on the basis of a formal and definitive covenant of grace that has no textual basis in Scripture.** It is the product of **theological deductionism.** The concept itself may or may not be useful in some discussions, but using the term as a building block for understanding the foundation of all Scripture is to exalt terms developed by theologians above the actual words used by the Holy Spirit in the Bible itself. We should always be skeptical when someone insists on using words and phrases to prove key points in their systems, especially when they have no texts of Scripture. It always gives me the impression that someone is trying to teach us something that the Holy Ghost forgot to mention. **Dr. Gordon Clark, a strong Covenant Theologian, has given some excellent advice to all theologians . . . A Christian theologian should use Biblical terms in their Biblical meaning . . . From : First Principles of Theology, unpublished manuscript, p.402. I would change that into two statements:** (1) a theologian should always use the actual terms that the Scriptures uses; (2) he should use those terms only with the specific meaning given to them by Scripture. We should never substitute theological terms for Biblical terms, and we should not load Biblical words with theological

meaning, unless that meaning can be clearly established by other texts of Scripture. Both DT and CT constantly violate this principle and use theological terms to prove their arguments instead of using Biblical texts and terms. The words of the creeds and church fathers have a distinct tendency to replace the words that were uttered by inspired prophets and apostles in the Bible. Isn't the doctrine of verbal inspiration in danger of being unconsciously denied by theologians who manufacture theological terms not found in Scripture and then use those terms as the sole support of a given point in their system of theology? Suppose they refuse to accept and use the specific words and terms inspired by the Holy Spirit Himself because those terms will not fit into their system?

What question comes to your mind when you see that recurring phrase *commonly called* in the WCF following a key theological term? Commonly called that by whom? Clearly not by any apostle or prophet in Scripture. What does the confession actually mean by commonly called? We do not have any specific Biblical texts to support this term or phrase, but we know it is correct, because it is essential to our theological system, hence it is commonly used by theologians all the time.

When the Romanist quotes **the Church Fathers** for authority instead of appealing to a verse of Scripture (because they have none) we call it the tradition of the fathers and reject their doctrine. When the Puritans or their heirs appeal to **established creed** (for the same reason the Romanist appealed to the fathers) or to human logic, it is called the Analogy of Faith. We would do well to believe that John Brown was right when he accused the Puritans of putting the Word of God back under the very fetters that Luther and Calvin had destroyed with true Biblical exegesis. In the age [of Luther & Calvin] that followed, the fetters which had been shattered were strangely repaired by many of the second and third series of Protestant expositors; and, with some notable exceptions, humanly constructed theories for harmonizing the varied statements of Revelation, under the plausible name of The Analogy of Faith, were by them not only used as a correct means of interpreting the Scriptures, but so elevated above all other means as to control, and indeed, in a great degree, to supersede them. From An Exposition of Galatians, by John Brown, Banner of Truth Trust, p.vii. He was talking about men like those who framed the WCF who had, with the Analogy of Faith, made many of their dictums to be the truth of God without any textual verification.<sup>4</sup> God help us when men in power start using a creed over our conscience and refuse to discuss the actual Word of God itself.

-----

**4** The WCF is just as much a political document as it is a religious document. The framers of the Confession were writing a document of law to govern society in the same sense that the Congress of the USA writes laws. The Confession was religious in nature, but it was still a secular government document. The church men (Westminster Assembly) who wrote the Confession were commissioned by political men (Parliament) to do so, and Parliament had to approve the confession before it could be used. Once approved by Parliament the document was part of the civil laws of the land. The Confession was finished by the Westminster Assembly (the religious body) and sent to and approved by Parliament (the political body) without any Scripture proof texts. The Scripture proof texts were added several months later.

-----

DT cuts the Bible in half and never the twain shall meet. CT does the exact opposite and merges two distinctly different covenants (the Old and the New) into one covenant with two administrations. DT cannot get the OT into the NT in any sense, and CT does not even have a really New Covenant. They have a newer and older version of the same covenant. DT cannot get the two Testaments together, and CT cannot get them apart! The basic mistake of both of these systems lies in their misunderstanding the promises made to Abraham and his seed in Genesis. This error is the result of failing to see that the true unity of the whole Scripture involves both a Dispensational and a Covenantal change. How many distinct covenants are there? Two - the old legal covenant at Sinai and the new gracious covenant that replaces it. What distinct and unchanging purpose of God runs through them? God's one election of grace. Neither DT nor CT can see both of these things at the same time simply because of their doctrine of the Church. Regardless of your response to the foregoing evaluations of both CT and DT, at the moment we are only insisting that God's dealing with Abraham is not, as DT claims, a new purpose and program for Israel, nor is God, as CT insists, establishing a Covenant of Grace with Abraham and his physical children. God is merely taking the first step in bringing Christ, the true Seed, into the world in fulfillment of **Gen.3:15**. He is announcing the gospel of grace, and it is this gospel promise of Christ that unifies all of Scripture around the Person and work of Christ Himself.

**Acts 2** is a very crucial passage that bridges the Old and the New Covenants. Neither DT nor CT can correctly grasp the heart of Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost. DT cannot see Pentecost as the true fulfillment of the kingdom promises given through Joel and David. Their system cannot see the Church as the true Israel of God in any sense. CT, on the other hand, cannot see a totally new age, a new people, and a new experience coming into being at Pentecost as proof that the Old Covenant has passed away and the promised New Covenant has taken its place. (See **Heb.8:6-13**)

*Chapter 6 with Theological Notes is incorporated as Apdx 5*

#### From Chap. Seven: **ABRAHAM'S SPECIAL NATURAL SEED - THE NATION OF ISRAEL**

The redemption from Egypt does not equal justification by faith; national adoption does not equal sons of God; election as a nation among nations is not equal to chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world unto salvation; the national and physical redemption from Egypt by blood is not equal to the eternal spiritual redemption by the blood of Christ; and called of out Egypt is not the same as the effectual call in **Rom.1:7**, etc. An unsaved Israelite was just as much redeemed from Egypt as a believing Israelite. Every unsaved Israelite could say, God loved me in a way that He did not love the Egyptians, and He redeemed me from Egypt by His mighty power because I am the seed of Abraham. However, when a Christian uses the identical words, these same words mean something entirely different. Again, both DT and CT often treat these things as synonymous. The following comment on **9:4** throws a lot of light on this particular point:

The Nation of Israel was a nation adopted by God as a type of the adoption of His children in Christ Jesus; and in that typical sense, in which they were the children of God as no other nation ever was, they are frequently spoken of in Scripture, **Ex.4:22; Jer.31:9-20**. In this way our Lord Himself recognizes them, when anticipating their rejection, He says, the children of the kingdom shall be cast out, **Mt.8:12**. Robert Haldane, Commentary on Romans, **p.444**

The exact same things that Haldane says about Adoption can be said about the words loved, chosen, and redeemed, etc. when applied to the Nation of Israel. The failure to see this is a basic error in Covenant Theology's view of the church. Their whole doctrine of the church is built on making a one-on-one comparison of Israel and the church. Both CT and DT treat all of those statements as if they were spoken in the light and experience of New Testament meaning instead of seeing them in a purely physical and national sense.

Both a dispensational and a covenantal change took place when Christ completed His work of atonement. In reality, this is the Biblical option to both DT and CT that I, as a Baptist who is thoroughly Reformed in theology (though not CT), clearly see in the Word of God. Don't equate CT with Reformed Theology. A Baptist can consistently hold CT, but he must be grossly inconsistent to hold to the CT of the WCF. We totally reject the Reformers doctrine of sacramentalism, but agree with their view of sovereign grace in salvation. We also agree with much of Luther and Calvin's view of law. The Reformers position is far closer to our view than it is to that of the later Puritans.

### From Chapter Eight: **To Whom Are The Covenant Promises Made?**

The apostle Paul's real point in arguing that not all Israel is Israel and not all are children of Abraham (**Rom.9:6-7**) is that the Israel within Israel is a matter of sovereign election (**v.11**) and effectual calling (**v.24**), and has nothing to do with physical lineage. It is a Biblical key that unlocks many passages of Scripture. Neither DT nor CT applies this truth to their particular system of theology in a consistent manner. Really grasping Paul's basic argument in **Rom.9-11**, allows one to answer many apparent problems that neither DT nor CT can solve.

### From Chapter Nine: **The Abrahamic Covenant**

If all we had was the OT, it would be very easy to hold the same view of Israel and the land of Palestine as that held by DT. **Gen.15:8-17** records the actual covenant God made with Abraham and **v.18** again states the essence of that covenant to be the physical land. DT insists that this is an unconditional promise that has never been literally fulfilled and is therefore still in force in reference to the physical Nation of Israel. CT uses **Gen.17:7** as a key proof text to prove that their physical children are still included in God's covenant (of grace) with Abram. They ignore the fact that verse eight is speaking to the same people and promising them the physical land of Palestine as an everlasting possession. DT uses verse eight to prove that the physical Jews have the land of Palestine unconditionally promised to them in the future.

Dispensationalists are right when they insist that the heart of the Abrahamic Covenant as expressed in the language of the OT is the promise that Israel will inherit the land of Canaan forever. They are wrong in not seeing that the NT Scriptures spiritualize the land promise, but the answer is not to deny what the Old Testament Scriptures clearly say. The Dispensationalist is left with a theology of Israel and the land that is built entirely on the OT Scriptures. It also leaves him with an expectation of a future natural fulfillment that is identical to that held by the people who rejected and crucified Christ because they were not interested in either Him or His kind of kingdom.

DT keeps insisting that the faithfulness of God to keep His covenant is at stake in Israel inheriting the land of Canaan sometime in the future. This reasoning misses the whole point of the real promise. Suppose a father promised his son a car if he graduated from High School with a B



average. The boy pictures in his mind a small compact. He really works and graduates with a B+ average. On his graduation day his father hands him a set of keys and says, Your new wheels are in the garage. The boy rushes out to the garage trying to imagine which compact and what color awaits him. Imagine his amazement if he found a brand new \$30,000 sports car with every option imaginable. Would you expect the boy, in great disappointment, to go in to his dad and say, Gee, I was expecting a VW or a Pinto?

Do you think that any OT believer, including Abraham himself, would trade what they now possess in the presence of God for every inch of Palestine? Do you really think a believing Jew in the future would feel let down if all they got was heaven itself? If you were a Jew living in the celestial city, would you feel that God had gone back on His Word for giving you a heavenly city instead of the earthly city of Jerusalem? Would you lament His unfaithfulness to His unconditional promise made to Abraham?

Both the Dispensationalist and the Covenant Theologian bring the promise of Abraham and his seed into the present age in a physical sense via the lineage of their physical children. They both insist that the promise made to Abraham and his seed is an unconditional covenant and is therefore still in effect for physical seeds. The Dispensationalist naturalizes the seed to mean physical Israel, and the Paedobaptist naturalizes the seed to mean the physical children of believers. The Paedobaptist wants to make the Abrahamic covenant to be a special covenant with believers concerning the salvation of their physical children that is still in effect today. The Dispensationalist wants the same covenant to be a special covenant still in force with Jews concerning the land of Palestine. In the end, the Paedobaptist does exactly the same thing with Abraham's seed as the Dispensationalist does! He merely does it for a different purpose. The Dispensationalist will not accept the NT revelation of what was in Abraham's heart, and CT insists on reading that revelation back into the OT Scriptures.

### From Chapter Ten: Who Then Is Abraham's True Seed?

The problem always comes back to the question, Who is Abraham's true seed? Charles Hodge, a Paedobaptist Theologian, has some excellent comments on **Rom.9** that are very helpful in answering this question. The apostle now approaches the subject which he had in view, the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. That God had determined to cast off his ancient covenant people and to extend the call of the gospel indiscriminately to all men, is the point which the apostle is about to establish. He does this by showing, in the **first** place, that God is perfectly free thus to act, **v.6-24**, and in the **second**, that he had declared in the prophets that such was his intention, **v.25-33**.

That God was at liberty to reject the Jews and to call the Gentiles, Paul argues, by showing that the promises which he had made, and by which he had graciously bound himself, were not made to the natural descendants of Abraham as such, but to his spiritual seed. This is plain from the case of Ishmael and Isaac; both were the children of Abraham, yet one was taken and the other left. And also from the case of Esau and Jacob. Though children of the same parents, and born at one birth, yet Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated, is the language of God respecting them, **v.6-13**.  
From: Epistle to the Romans, by Charles Hodge, **p.303**.

Hodge correctly understands Paul's argument. By *not all Israel is Israel*, Paul clearly means exactly what Hodge states ... the promises which he (God) has made, and by which he had graciously bound himself, were not made to the natural descendants of Abraham as such, but to his spiritual seed. Hodge then labors to show how the Jews totally misunderstood God's covenant with Abraham by thinking it meant physical children. His exposition of this section is superb. One wishes that Hodge would have consistently applied his own statements to his theology of infant baptism. **v.6** . . . It was a common opinion among the Jews, that the promises of God being made to Abraham and to his seed, all his natural descendants sealed as such, by the rite of circumcision, would certainly inherit the blessings of the Messiahs reign . . . The reason the rejection of the Jews involved no failure on the part of the divine promise is that the promise was not addressed to the mere natural descendants of Abraham . . . His object is to show that the promises made to the children of Abraham were not made to his natural descendants as such . . . **V.8**. That is, they which are the children of flesh, these are not the children of God." Ibid, **p.305-306**.

This is the heart of the issue. God did not cast off a physical nation and then replace it with a physical church. He fulfilled the true promise to Abram by creating a spiritual regenerate nation, the Body of Christ. How can Hodge not see that his Paedobaptism makes the very same mistake that the Jews made? It should be enlightening for one to really understand the ground upon which infant baptism rests and read the above comments substituting Christian parents for Jews,<sup>5</sup> Hodge wants to eliminate the Jews, as the natural seed, from the covenant made with Abraham because, as he says, The promises were NOT made to the natural descendants of Abraham, but to his spiritual seed. However, Hodge then wants the identical covenant of Abraham to include the natural descendants of believers today.

-----

**5** ... It was a common opinion among the Jews [Paedobaptists], that the promises of God being made to Abraham and to his seed, all his natural descendants sealed as such, by the rite of circumcision [baptism], would certainly inherit the blessings of the covenant.

-----

Paedobaptists actually claim for their physical children through the Abrahamic Covenant more than Abraham himself could claim for his physical children in the same covenant. Hodge sees this clearly as it relates to the Jews, but then he turns right around and uses the identical argument and the same covenant promise that the Jews used in order to prove his infant baptism. Neither Covenant Theologian nor Dispensationalist will accept the fact that *and thy seed* cannot, in any sense, be made to mean the physical children of either a Jew or a Christian. They both insist that the heart of the Abrahamic covenant was made with parents and their physical children; and since that same covenant is still in effect today, then the physical children must still be included. Both of these systems of theology refuse to accept the clear Apostolic interpretation given in the NT Scriptures of to you and your seed and not all Israel is Israel. If **Rom.9:6** means anything even close to what Hodges exposition states that it does, then neither a Jew nor a Christian parent may apply the words and to thy seed in **Gen.17:7-8**, to their physical children today.

When all of the smoke clears, it is apparent that we have to naturalize the whole covenant in **Gen.17:7-8** or else we have to spiritualize the whole covenant. Neither the Dispensationalist nor the

Covenant Theologian is willing to either naturalize or spiritualize the whole passage. They both want to naturalize one part and spiritualize the other. They just choose different parts. In reality both systems ultimately wind up with **a hermeneutic that makes the OT Scriptures interpret the NT Scriptures** instead of visa versa. As long as both of these theological systems insist that the promise to Abram and his seed means physical children, they will both continue to insist on maintaining the very thing that has been forever done away in the New Covenant.

DT insists the Israel/Gentile distinction is still true in the church age. Israel is still Gods special covenant nation, and as such God has still unconditionally promised them things that He has not promised the Gentiles who are outside the covenant. Abraham's physical seed will inherit the land of Palestine because that is part of the unconditional covenant made with Abraham as the father of the Jewish nation. The covenant with Abraham and the Nation of Israel comes into the New Testament still in force and unchanged in any way. For God to cast off the natural seed of Israel would be to deny Himself and His oath. The seed, the nation, the land, etc. are all physical and are to be understood literally. The special nation is still under Gods unconditional covenant and has future purposes distinct from the Church. Jewish children, by birth, have the right and obligation to the covenant sign of circumcision and all that it promised, including the future promise of inheriting Palestine.

The covenant theologian does exactly the same thing. He insists that the very same Israel/Gentile distinction, by another name (covenant community/all others), is still in effect because the unconditional covenant (of grace) with Abraham (the believer) and his children (physical seed) is still in effect. CT sees nothing really new, in the sense of different in nature, in the New Covenant. In actual fact, he does not even have a distinct new covenant. The new covenant of CT is merely a spiritualized administration of the identical covenant that Israel (the Jewish church) was under. [The theological note, *Gods Covenant of Grace* in the *New Geneva Study Bible* and *The Reformation Study Bible* substantiates many of these points. It speaks of the covenant at Sinai as a continuation of the covenant of Grace and that through Christ God inaugurated a better VERSION of His one eternal covenant ...]

Under the new administration of the one Covenant of Grace everything is still the same because the covenant is the same. **The same things simply get new names.** The Jewish church becomes the Christian church, circumcision becomes baptism, the Sabbath becomes Sunday, etc. Everything is spiritualized and brought over into the new administration of the same covenant. All that has been changed are the outward methods and means of visible representation. The covenant children of believers still have promises made to them which non-covenant children do not have. Covenant children today have the right and obligation to the covenant sign of baptism since they are born into the Church, even as the Israelite child was born into the nation (church) under the old administration of the same covenant. All that has really changed according to this system is the sign of the covenant. The Israel/Gentile distinction is still in effect in a quasi-spiritual/physical manner as it respects covenant and non-covenant children, and the covenant community (Israel = Church) and non-covenant community (Gentile = unchurched).

One of the basic errors of both CT and DT is their doctrine of the Church. DT does not see the Church as the true fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and the Nation of Israel. They do not

believe the Church is the true seed of Abraham to whom the real promises were made. This system of theology introduces a disunity into the Scriptures and the purposes of God at **Gen.12** from which it can never recover. It separates Israel and the Church in such a way that makes their distinction from each other to be total and permanent. In reality, there is no such thing as a true spiritual Israel in DT.

CT, on the other hand, does not see the Body of Christ as a totally new thing created by the Holy Spirit at His personal advent on the day of Pentecost. They do not see the whole physical nation concept finished forever and a new thing, the Church as the spiritual Body of Christ, brought into being (**Eph.2:12-21**). The Covenant theologians doctrine of the Church makes it impossible for him to realize that many of Paul's doctrinal statements could never have been spoken or written by any prophet before the day of Pentecost. The Jew could not conceive that every one of the distinctions and advantages that he enjoyed under the OC (**Rom.3:1-3**) were forever gone and that he was now put on the same level with the Gentile - neither he nor his physical children any longer have any special covenantal claim on God.

In reality, the Covenant Theologian has the identical difficulty believing that same thing in reference to his children. **He insists that his children are in a different category before God than non-covenant children.** There is no difference somehow just cannot mean his children. After all, his children are covenant children and therefore under the unconditional covenant of grace that God made with Abraham and his seed. That covenant gives the believer a special promise for his physical children. There is no difference simply cannot mean that a believers children are in the same category before God as a child born in a non-covenant, or pagan, home.

Much Reformed preaching, especially by some Reformed Baptists, is designed to bring the law down on the conscience in a way that cannot avoid legalism and fear. Preachers vehemently deny that they are setting men under the law in order to be saved. However, when these same preachers consistently appeal to fear as the primary motive essential to produce holy living, the end result is experientially the same as it affects the conscience before God.<sup>6</sup> A **legalist** sincerely believes that a conscience freed from the fear of the law is the breeding ground of antinomianism. He honestly believes that bringing the law down on the conscience is the only way to produce holy living.<sup>7</sup> Paul constantly says that the exact opposite is true. The conscience freed from the law by a realization of Gods amazing grace and unchanging love is the only way that true holiness or law-keeping can ever take place.

-----

**6.** For a lengthy discussion of the law and the conscience see the article on John Bunyan's View of The Law, also available on both audio and video cassette tapes.

**7.** Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones puts the following words into the mouths of the objectors of Paul's doctrine of free from the law: At once his opponents take up the cudgels and say, `Surely these are very wrong and very dangerous statements to make; surely if you are going to abrogate the Law and do away with it altogether, you are doing away with every guarantee of righteous and holy conduct and behavior. Sanctification is impossible without the Law. If you treat the Law in this way and dismiss it, and rejoice in doing so, are you not encouraging lawlessness, and are you not almost inciting people

to live a sinful life? Law, they believed, was the great guarantee of holy living and sanctification. From The Law: Its Function and Limits, by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, p.4-5.

-----

The **legalists** great mistake is confusing the means with the ends. His goal of holy living is the goal that we all have. We all long to see the holiness demanded by the law embodied in our own lives as well as in the lives of those to whom we preach. **Our difference with the legalist is over what kind of preaching will produce Biblical holy living.** What kind of theology in men's hearts will produce a love that obeys the law? The two different answers to these questions is the difference between a law-centered preaching and a Christ-centered preaching.

At the close of a message on **Eph.2:14-18**, a noted Reformed Baptist preacher committed to CT said, I have struggled to find an application for this message. I could see why the man had such difficulty finding an application. He had waffled all the way through the sermon without actually explaining the text. He kept insisting that we must remember that the law at Sinai was a `gracious covenant given to a `redeemed people for their sanctification. The man was so scared of setting the believers conscience free from the fear of the law, that he could not in honesty exegete the text. He reminded me of some hyper-Calvinists who simply cannot read out loud the words in **Jn.1:29**.

The covenant theologian cannot see that many things which are spoken of Israel as a nation could never be spoken of the Church and visa versa. The visible/invisible Church idea is not a Biblical concept as it is used by the Covenant Theologian. It is another **theological invention** that allows a congregation to deliberately and consciously include both believers and known unbelievers in its membership. Baptist churches may have unregenerate people as members, but it is never with a conscious knowledge and consent. **[Heb.3:1 addresses holy brothers who share in the heavenly calling. V.5 speaks of Moses faithfulness in all His (God's) household as a servant, referring to the mixed multitude of believers and nonbelievers comprising Israel governed by the law. V.6 contrasts this with Christs faithfulness over all His (God's) household as a son and stipulates that this household is comprised of we believers who hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end and v.14, we who have come to share in Christ as believers who hold fast till the end the confidence we had at first.]**

Charles Hodge, in his section trying to prove infant baptism, argues that it is not even Gods purpose to have only regenerate members in the so called visible church: The Visible Church does not consist exclusively of the Regenerate. It is no less clearly revealed that it is not the purpose of God that the visible Church on earth should consist exclusively of true believers... From: Systematic Theology, Chas. Hodge, **Vol.3, p.548**.

**A false profession of faith and a non-profession of faith are two different things.** Accepting a hypocrite (only because we cannot see his heart) who has made a false confession of faith is a totally different matter than knowingly saying unbelievers may be church members **[ie, baptizing the dead and pretending that they belong with the living]**. The Baptist concept of visible/invisible Church is radically different than a Paedobaptists view. The Church as believers only and the church as believers and their children are two totally different concepts that have far-reaching consequences. A CT concept of the Church is absolutely essential to the practice of infant baptism. Hodge makes



an amazing admission when introducing his section on infant baptism:

Infant Baptism. The difficulty on this subject is that baptism from its very nature involves a profession of faith. It is the way in which by the ordinance of Christ, He is to be confessed before men; but infants are incapable of making such a confession; therefore they are not the proper subjects of baptism. Or, to state the matter in another form: the sacraments belong to the members of the Church; but the Church is the company of believers; infants cannot exercise faith, therefore they are not to be baptized. In order to justify the baptism of infants, we must attain and authenticate such an idea of the church as that it shall include the children of believing parents . . . Ibid, p.546

By applying logic to his CT, Hodge manages to deduce a view of the church that will justify baptizing babies. It is this kind of theological truth that the Westminster Confession is referring to when it says **good and necessary consequences may be deduced** (Art.1, Sec.VI). I am certain it was not the intention of the framers of the Confession to equate logic and Scripture, but the practical result as seen in their system is the same as if it were intended. **A Christian should have only one source of absolute truth**, namely, texts of Scripture, upon which to build his basic presuppositions. The Westminster Confession uses two equal sources of truth to establish its basic presuppositions, namely, texts of Scripture plus the theological implications that logic can deduce from its system of theology. Infant baptism, by Hodges and our admission, is not a result of textual exegesis but purely a theological necessity deduced by logic.

### From Chapter Eleven: Who Is The Great Nation?

In a natural sense the great nation part of the promise to Abraham was fulfilled in Ishmael (**Gen.17:20**). It was also fulfilled in a special natural sense in the Nation of Israel. However, the NT Scriptures make it clear that this promise was not really fulfilled until Christ came. The Church is the true nation promised to Abraham, and all her children are kings and priests. DT totally misses this truth because of its view of Israel and the Church. They see this Church Age as a parenthesis in between the past and future dealings of God with the physical Nation of Israel [see RPCD chap.4 <http://pop.eradman.com>]. However, the New Testament Apostles tell us that the present Church Age has been Gods prophesied goal ever since **Gen.3:15**.

The Covenant Theologian confuses what he calls the visible church, including believers and their children, with the Body of Christ which is purely spiritual. He makes the visible Church take the place of physical Israel on a one-on-one basis. This system merely replaces a physical nation with a physical religious organization. This is the only ground upon which one can bring the signs of the Old Covenant (Circumcision and the Sabbath) over into the Church, and most covenant theologians will admit this.

The argument in Hebrews eight makes it impossible for us to hold the basic presuppositions of either DT or CT. We will clearly see in that passage a specific new covenant replacing a specific and different old covenant. This makes the one covenant/two administrations view impossible. Verses 6, 7, and 13 show that God has made this new covenant with the house of Israel. Since the context demands that this covenant is in effect right now, the church must be the house of Israel in some sense. This makes the Dispensational view impossible in this chapter.

The spiritual nation and the gracious covenant have been the goal of God in redemptive history since the dawn of sin. **The physical Nation of Israel has no separate purpose or future independent of the Body of Christ.** The Church inherits the true spiritual blessings promised to Israel in the Law-covenant at Sinai because her Lord has kept the covenant for her. Christ earned every blessing the law-covenant promised by being born under that covenant (Gal.3:24-4:7), and then rendering to it the perfect obedience that it demanded (**Phil.2:5-11 & Rom.8:1-4**). This was the only way that He could earn (for us) the righteousness that was necessary to inherit the blessings that the law-covenant promised. Christ also endured every curse that same law-covenant threatened when he died on the cross under the judgment of God. This is **Biblical Federal Theology** [see [Justification By Imputation http://pop.eradman.com](http://pop.eradman.com)].

This is what Paul means in **Rom.6:14** and other places when he says You are NOT under the law (as a covenant where the blessings are earned by merit) but you are under grace (as a covenant where blessings have already been earned by our blessed Surety).

**ONE:** Neither DT nor CT understand the Biblical doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ in the redemptive purposes of God.

**A.** DT does not see the Body of Christ as the true Israel of God in fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and his seed. This system of theology insists on different promises for Israel and for the Church.

**B.** CT does not see that the Old Covenant believer never really inherited the promises made to Abraham and his seed (**Heb.11:13, 39**). That system reads the doctrine and unique experiences of the Body of Christ back into the OT Scriptures. CT must do this because their system cannot make a clear distinction between the Nation of Israel and the Body of Christ.

**C.** DT does not see that the Body of Christ is the very thing God has been working towards ever since the Fall. It does not realize that the great days of the Messiah prophesied by all of the OT prophets are NOT something to be experienced in a future earthly millennium. The very days in which we now live are the days of which the prophets spoke (**Acts 3:24-26**). The inability of DT to see this fact grows out of their insistence on separate purposes for Israel and the Church. That system cannot see the Church in view anywhere in the OT Scriptures. They are locked into that by their basic presuppositions.

**D.** CT makes the exact opposite mistake. It does not realize that a New Covenant believer experiences the reality of spiritual blessings and a new status that could never have been experienced before the personal advent of Christ and the personal advent of the Holy Spirit. This grows out of their insistence on making Israel to be the Church and then putting Israel and the church both under the same covenant.

**TWO:** Neither of these systems really has a true New covenant replacing an Old covenant where both covenants relate to the same redemptive purposes of God for His one true people. This is why **Heb.8** does not fit either system.

**A.** DT must push the NC with the house of Israel in Hebrews eight into a future millennium. This passage cannot refer to the present time and the Church in that system of theology.

**B.** CT insists that the NC in Hebrews eight really is not a new and distinctly different covenant but merely a new administration of the same covenant that Israel was under.

**THREE:** Neither one of these systems see the true relationship of Israel and the Church. Both DT and CT insist on bringing the physical aspect of Israel as a nation into the NT either directly or indirectly.

**A.** CT finds its basic structure of the Church in the OT Scriptures and merely adds the Gentiles to what already existed. They ignore the NT Scriptures that teach a whole new thing was created and established at Pentecost on a totally new foundation (**Eph. 2:14-22**).

**B.** DT fails to see the Church as the true fulfillment of Gods one eternal purpose. CT on the other hand fails to see the uniqueness and newness of the Church as the Body of Christ.

The unconditional promise that God made to Abraham has nothing at all to do with plural seeds. It can have nothing to do with physical Jews and Palestine or with the children of believers and their salvation. Are you personally Abraham's seed and an heir with him according to the promise? The answer has nothing at all to do with your family lineage or what religious rites or ceremonies were performed on you. It has to do with whether you are in Christ. It has to do with the power of the Holy Spirit revealing Jesus Christ to your heart in saving grace and power.

### Appendix One: **Covenant Theology**

The following quotations are taken from the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) which is the most widely accepted and revered document to come out of the Reformation. WCF represents both the historical and the present view of consistent Covenant Theology (CT). There have been differences of opinion on what the Confession actually means and how it is to be worked out, but Presbyterian groups have not challenged the Confession itself in the area of covenants, the law, or the church.

**Basic presupposition:** Covenants are the key to understanding and unifying all of Scripture.

#### **1. Man is always in covenant relationship with God.**

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 Gods part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. **1 Chap.7, Sec.1 Isa.40:13-17; Job 9:32-33; 22:2-3; 35:7-8; 1 Sam.2:25; Ps.100:2-3; 113:5-6; Lk.17:10; Acts 17:24-25.**

#### **2. The whole of Scripture is covered by two covenants.**

**The Covenant of Works** was made with man (**Gal.3:12**) before the fall, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity (**Rom.10:5; 5:12-20**), 2 upon condition of perfect and personal obedience (**Gen.2:17; Gal.3:10**). **Chap.7, Sec.2**

**The Covenant of Grace:** was made with Adam immediately after his fall. Incapable of life by the covenant of works, the Lord was pleased to make a second (**Gal.3:21; Rom.8:3; 3:20-21; Gen.3:15; Isa.42:6**) whereby he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved (**Mk.16:15-16; Jn.3:16; Rom.10:6, 9; Gal.3:11**); and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit. to make them willing and able to believe (**Ez.36:26-27; Jn.6:44-45**). **Chap.7, Sec.3.** This covenant was differently administered in the

time of the law, and in the time of the gospel ... (2 Cor.3:6-9) **Chap.7, Sec.5.**

**3. The promised blessing in the covenant of works was life**, and Adam was given the ability to earn this promised blessing of life by his obedience to the terms of covenant . . . life was promised to Adam . . . upon condition of perfect and personal obedience. **Chap.7, Sec.3.** God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and his posterity, to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it; and endued him with power and ability to keep it (**Gen.1:26-27; 2:17; Rom.2:14-15; 10:5; 5:12-19; Gal.3:10, 12; Ecc.7:29; Job 28:28**). **Chap.19, Sec.1.**

**4. The content of the covenant of works** that Adam was to obey in order to earn life was the ten commandments, commonly called [not by any writer of Scripture] the moral law. This law [given to Adam as a covenant of works], after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai in ten commandments, and written in two tables . . . (**Jas.1:25; 2:8,10-12; Rom.13:8-9; Dt.5:32; 10:4; Ex.34:1**) **Chap.19, Sec.2.**

**5. The proviso of the covenant** was perfect, entire, exact, and personal obedience for a probationary period. Both **Chap.7, Sec.2, and Chap.19, Sec.1** speak of Adam being put under the covenant of works and his being promised to be rewarded with life upon fulfilling the covenants conditions.

**6. Adam, by his sin** (his failure to obey the covenant of works and earn life), forever lost the opportunity to earn life by works [by meeting its terms and earning the blessing of life it promised]. the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace . . . **Chap.7, Sec.3.**

-----

Do the Scriptures ever represent the tragedy of Adams fall as losing an opportunity to earn life or do they represent the fall as Adam losing the life and righteousness that he already had by virtue of the fact that he was created righteous in the image of God? Nowhere are we told Adam failed to get something that he did not have. The Scriptures always speak of his losing something that he already had. (Compare the Heidelberg Confession where the whole idea of a covenant of works is conspicuous by its absence.)

**The so-called Covenant of Grace is in reality the message of the gospel of grace.** This covenant, or actually the gospel of grace, enables sinners today to secure, by faith, what Adam would have earned if he had kept the covenant of works. Nowhere do the Scriptures suggest such an idea or comparison.

Given the basic assumption of CT that there is only one unchanging Covenant of Grace, **some logical deductions necessarily follow:**

1. There can only be one Church, therefore the Nation of Israel has to be one with the Church today.
2. The visible signs, seals and forms of worship change under the new administration, but the one and same covenant is unchanged and still in force.
3. Since the moral law (Tablets of Stone) expresses the nature of God, those tables are the one unchanging canon of conduct that governs the one people of God in all ages. Christ (in the

Sermon on the Mount) and the Apostles (in the Epistles) reaffirm the authority of the moral law (Tablets of Stone) and show us true meaning of the unchanging written on those covenantal tablets. Neither Christ nor His Apostles add any higher laws to the one unchanging moral law written on the Tables of Stone. **The Ten Commandments must be the highest standard of morality that was ever given.**

4. Since Israel is the Church and is under the same covenant as the Church is under today, then children of believing parents must still be considered a part of the Church and should be signed and sealed in Baptism as covenant children. Under the new administration of the one and same covenant only the covenant sign changes, and baptism replaces circumcision. The Sabbath has to be part of the one unchanging moral law, but the day is changed from the seventh to the first, etc. All that changes is the administration of the one and same covenant. The visible signs and seals change but not the covenant. There can only be one covenant with two administration.

### **Appendix Three: Covenant Theology's Two Administrations of One Covenant.**

Professor John Murray in his later writings disagreed with many modern Covenant Theologians concerning a supposed covenant of works with Adam. He even chided them for using the phrase covenant of works in connection with Adam and also for attempting to connect the Mosaic covenant with Adam in any way. Murray also admitted that one of the favorite texts used by covenant theologians as their key proof text to prove a covenant of works with Adam does not prove that at all. **[Earlier writers did not use Hos.6:7 (like Adam they transgressed the covenant") the way modern writers do.]**

Modern writers quote John Murray as the final authority on CT and in the same breath deny that the law-covenant at Sinai was the first or old covenant. Most of Murray's devotees vehemently defend what Murray himself calls an erroneous conception of the Mosaic covenant.

A pamphlet by a Reformed Baptist pastor insists that the so-called Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace are the foundation stones for understanding Scripture. The author never mentioned the two covenants in Galatians four or Hebrews eight; and worse yet, neither of the two covenants that he was talking about are mentioned at all in Scripture. The booklet begins:

***Gen.3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.***

***v.19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.***

... In **Gen.3** we observe two covenants in action. Two very different covenants are in force at the same time ... The Two Covenants, Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace, by Walter Chantry

The very first page assumes as a fact what cannot be established with texts of Scripture. Nowhere in the booklet does the writer attempt any textual exegesis for either of the two covenants that he observes to be at work in Genesis. **This is the typical method used by Covenant Theologians.** They just assume there are two covenants in Genesis without any textual evidence. This is exactly what the Dispensationalist does with charts.

CT insists on putting the word covenant in Genesis where the Holy Ghost has not put it, and then



they refuse to let the word covenant really mean covenant when the Holy Spirit does use that specific word in passages like Hebrews 8.

I left DT because I could not find its basic presuppositions in the Word of God. Writers would make statements that were not actually in the texts of Scripture, but they had to be true simply because the system demanded it. When I began to honestly study the WCF and look up every proof text, I was just as horrified as when I honestly investigated DT. As a Baptist, I expected to find the texts on infant baptism to be totally irrelevant, but I did not expect the same thing to be true of the proof texts used to prove the whole covenant concept as well as the Confessions view of the law.

Covenant theologians are forced into inventing the terms covenant of works and covenant of grace simply because they fail to see the uniqueness of Gods dealings with Israel as a special nation put under law as no other nation ever was before or ever will be again. According to this system of theology, Israel (the Church in the Old Testament) must be under the same covenant that we (the same Church in the New Testament) are under. You cannot put believers (and Israel is the redeemed people of God) under a legal covenant. The system just will not allow for that. Most covenant theologians, in order to be consistent with their system, must deny that the covenant Israel was put under at Sinai was really a conditional and legal covenant of works. Their system demands that Sinai be a covenant of grace since there can be no law-covenants made after **Gen.3:15**.

Yes, God had a gracious purpose in putting the Nation of Israel under the law as a covenant, but that fact cannot change the law-covenant into a covenant of grace. The law, as a covenant, was intended to be the needle that pierced the conscience so that the thread of the gospel could follow and heal. However, to be able to accomplish that ministry of death, the law had to have the teeth of a true legal covenant with the power of life and death. If the Decalogue could not make men feel lost in sin and condemned by God, then how could it prepare the sinner for the gospel? And how could it accomplish such a ministry without having the authority of a covenant of life and death?

CT consistently **confuses** Gods eternal purpose in electing grace with the specific and different covenants that God made, in time and history, with specific people or nations. They are **forced to bleed** the word covenant of its Biblical meaning and make it impossible to give the word a uniform definition. They will sometimes let it mean covenant and other times insist it cannot mean covenant but means administration. They then **force the word** covenant into places where it does not belong.

**CT literally builds its whole system on two deliberate mistakes.** It puts two covenants into **Gen.2 & 3** even though those chapters never mention either of the two covenants. The two unproven covenants then become the foundation of the whole system of CT! If there is no covenant of works with Adam in the garden whereby Adam could have earned eternal life by his obedience or if God did not make a formal covenant of grace with Adam immediately after the fall, then the system of theology set forth in the WCF is without any Biblical foundation.

**Both of CT's major covenants are Biblico-theological covenants** - not derived from specific texts of Scripture. They are non-textual covenants which are the good and necessary consequences deduced from the very system that they are supposed to support! **The covenant of works and the covenant of grace are the foundation blocks of the very system that is used as the basis for deducing**, as good and necessary consequences, the very same two covenants used as the

foundation that it is trying to establish. This is **circular reasoning** at its worst > The word covenant cannot mean covenant in **Heb:8** even though the Holy Spirit says covenant. There must be two covenants in Genesis chap.2 and 3 even though the Holy Spirit does not mention either one of them, and there can only be one real covenant in Hebrews 8 even though the Holy Spirit says there are two.

Once you read the two non-Biblical covenants into **Gen.2 & 3**, you are then forced to deny that the Biblical Old and New covenants spoken of in **Heb.8, 2 Cor.3, and Gal.3 & 4** are actually two distinctly different covenants. Of theological necessity, these two covenants simply must be two different administrations of the same covenant. After forcing two non-Biblical covenants into **Gen.2 & 3**, **CT must now delete from Scripture the true Biblical covenant of works** (the Old covenant) made at Sinai and turn it into a covenant of grace. **They must also delete the Biblical covenant of grace** (the New covenant) established in the blood of Christ and turn it into a new administration of the same legal covenant that was given to Israel at Sinai. From this point on, the covenant theologian will use the non-Biblical phrase covenant of grace as if he were quoting a text of Scripture.

When a covenant theologian uses the term covenant of grace, (Hodge quote) what he really means is the gospel of grace, or Gods one and only method of saving men. This is why he calls the promise of the seed in **Gen.3:15 & 12:3** the covenant of grace. He means that God has always saved men by one method, and that method is by grace through faith. We do not question that men have always been saved by grace alone. The Bible calls that the gospel. Why do Covenant Theologians insist on calling it the Covenant of Grace? Why distort **Acts 2:39** and its clear declaration of the one gospel message to all men into a supposed covenant of grace with Christian parents? Because the Biblical word gospel will not do for the covenant theologian what the non-Biblical phrase covenant of grace will do for him. If he says, God preached the gospel of grace to Abraham and promised to save him by faith and also promised to save all of his children who would also believe the gospel, he is speaking Biblically and we will agree with him. However, such Biblical terminology gives him no grounds to baptize a covenant child. Even Hodge could not find justification for infant baptism without inventing a non-biblical terminology.

When the covenant theologian is speaking about the gospel of grace, he is using Biblical terminology, but when he speaks of the covenant of grace, he is speaking in purely theological terms without textual warrant. Nothing is gained by ignoring Biblical words and substituting theological terms. However, a lot of confusion and error would be avoided if everyone used the same terms that the Holy Spirit put into the Scripture.

A Covenant theologian seeks to establish his basic presuppositions without using specific texts of Scripture because he has no clear texts to use. He must load a word or phrase with the preconceived concepts of his system and then use the loaded word or phrase as if he were quoting an actual text of Scripture. Check how often the WCF uses the phrase commonly called to establish a point instead of quoting Bible verses because at that point they don't have any. The truth they sought to establish did not grow out of texts of Scripture but out of their theological system. Several other statements found repeatedly in the writings of covenant theologians are, The Standards of our Church declare . . . or The Framers of our Larger Catechism correctly state . . .<sup>c</sup>

The fact that God preached the gospel to Abraham does not mean that he was under a covenant of grace any more than the fact that the whole city of Nineveh heard the gospel would mean that God put them under a covenant of grace. The clear truth that God has always saved men by grace through faith, and it is a clear truth, in no way proves that Israel as a nation was under a covenant of grace. **Heb.3:15-4:2** proves beyond question that the Nation of Israel alone was under the great privilege of having the gospel promises. However, most of them died in unbelief and went to hell. It is one thing to be under the preaching of the gospel of grace, but it is quite another to be under the grace promised in the gospel. To be under a covenant of grace and to be secure forever in Christ are one and the same thing in the Scriptures. The Word of God knows nothing of people perishing in hell who were under the covenant of grace.

-----

**C.** Presbyterians treat their confession and catechism as authoritative because they are part of a confessional church” that requires such a commitment to those documents. Some Reformed Baptists have also become creedalists and likewise treat their creeds as absolute in faith and practice. The Baptist doctrine of Individual Soul Liberty” means their confessions of faith are not treated as authoritative over conscience as Presbyterians treat their expressions of belief.

**Acts 2** is about our Lord Jesus Christ of whom prophecy and promises were made. The message, especially **v.39**, is that the promise has been fulfilled — the Messiah Redeemer has come — believe in Him and be saved whoever you are. There is only ONE status before God — GUILTY, regardless of who your parents are, and there is only ONE gospel message to every guilty sinner — REPENT and BELIEVE. This is the one message we must preach to the children of believers as well as the children of unbelievers. Ceremonies (such as baptism) depict realities. Gods Kingdom is spiritual in nature. It can only be entered through spiritual regeneration (rebirth, God...made His light to shine in our hearts...” **2 Cor.4:6**) which cannot be accomplished by a ceremony.

#### Appendix Two: **Dispensationalism** [see RPCD]

The following material is condensed from the book: **Lewis Sperry Chafer**, Major Bible Themes, Revised by **John F. Walvoord**, Academie Books. Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, is recognized as one of the most influential early leaders of DT in this country. **Walvoord**, retired president of the same seminary, is probably the best representative of DT as it is understood today. Since DT does not have a universally accepted creed, this particular book would represent the most widely accepted authorities at the core of the system. **Walvoord** emphasizes the importance of DT:

In the study of Scripture, it is most important to understand that (1) scriptural revelation falls into well defined periods. (2) These are clearly separated, and the recognition of these divisions and their divine purposes constitute one of the most important factors in true interpretation of the Scriptures. (3) These divisions are termed dispensations, and in successive periods of time different dispensations may be observed . . . It is probable that the recognition of the dispensations sheds more light on the whole message of the Bible than any other aspect of Biblical study . . . **p.126**

**Chafer and Walvoord** define the word dispensation as follows: A dispensation can be defined as a stage in the progressive revelation of God constituting a distinctive stewardship or rule of life. Although the concept of a dispensation and an age in the Bible is not precisely the same, it is

obvious that each age had its dispensation . . .

**Scofield** defines the word dispensation this way: **A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God** (p.5, The First Scofield Reference Bible, C.I. Scofield, ed., 1986). The different dispensations are essential if all men are to be proven truly guilty before God. The various testing periods are necessary in order to stop every mouth. Mans relationship to God is not the same in every age. It has been necessary to bring fallen man into divine testing. This, in part, is Gods purpose in the ages, and the result of the testings is in every case an unquestionable demonstration of the utter failure and sinfulness of man. In the end, every mouth will be stopped because every assumption of the human heart will be revealed as foolish and wicked by centuries of experience (p.127).

Each dispensation, therefore, begins with man being divinely placed in a new position of privilege and responsibility, and each closes with the failure of man resulting in righteous judgments from God. While there are certain abiding facts such as the holy character of God which are of necessity the same in every age, there are varying instructions and responsibilities which are, as to their application, limited to a given period . . . . In the dispensations God has demonstrated every possible means of dealing with man. In every dispensation man fails and only Gods grace is sufficient. In the dispensations is fulfilled Gods purpose to manifest His glory, both in the natural world and human history. Throughout eternity no one can raise a question as to whether God could have given man another chance to attain salvation or holiness on his own ability. A knowledge of the dispensations is accordingly, the key to understanding Gods purpose in history and the unfolding of the Scripture which records Gods dealing with man and His divine revelation concerning Himself (p.136).

**The Basic Principles of DT:** In studying the seven dispensations, **certain principles are essential to understanding this teaching**. **First** DT is derived from natural or **literal interpretation** of the Bible. It is impossible to interpret the Bible in its normal, literal sense without realizing that there are different ages and different dispensations. A **second** principle is that of **progressive revelation**, that is, the fact recognized by nearly all students of Scripture, that revelation is given by stages. **Third**, all expositors of the Bible will need to recognize that **later revelation to some extent supersedes earlier** revelation with a resulting change in rules of life in which earlier requirements may be changed or withdrawn and new requirements added. For instance, while God commanded Moses to kill a man for gathering sticks on Saturday (**Num.15:32-36**), no one would apply this command today because we live in a different dispensation (p.128).

Most (not all) dispensationalists hold to seven dispensations. Here is **Chafer** and **Walvoord's** outline:

1. Dispensation of **innocence**: Age of Liberty. [Begins at **Gen.1:26-27**, ends at **Gen.3:6**] (p.129).
2. Dispensation of **conscience**: Age of Human Determination. [Begins at **Gen.3:7**, ends at **Gen.8:19**] (p.129).
3. Dispensation of **human government**: Covenant With Noah. [Begins at **Gen.8:20**, ends at **Gen.11:9**] (p.130).
4. Dispensation of **promise**: Covenant With Abraham. [Begins at **Gen.11:10**, ends at **Ex.19:3**] (p.131).

**5. Dispensation of law:** [The Nation of Israel] [Begins at **Ex.19:4**, ends at **Acts 2** on the Day of Pentecost] (**p.133**). In one sense the dispensation of the law ended at the cross (**Rom.10:4; 2 Cor.3:11-14; Gal.3:19, 25**). But in another sense it was not concluded until the day of Pentecost, when the dispensation of Grace began. Although the law ended as a specific rule of life, it continues to be a revelation of the righteousness of God and can be studied with profit by Christians in determining the holy character of God. The moral principles underlying the law continue, since God does not change; but believers today are not obliged today to keep the details of the law, as the dispensation has changed and the rule of life given Israel is not the rule of life for the church. Although many applications of the law may be made, a strict interpretation relates the Mosaic law to Israel only (**p.134**).

**6. Dispensation of grace:** [The Church] [Begins at **Acts 2**, ends at the Rapture of the Church]. The dispensation of grace was directed to the church alone . . . Under grace, however, failure also was evident as grace produced neither worldwide acceptance of Christ nor a triumphant church . . . The dispensation of grace ends with the rapture of the church, which will be followed by the judgment of the professing church (**Rev.17:16**). The age of grace is a different dispensation in that it concerns the church comprising Jewish and Gentile believers. By contrast, the law of Israel was for Israel only, human government was for the entire world, and conscience extends to all people. In the present dispensation, the mosaic law is completely canceled as to its immediate application, but continues to testify to the holiness of God and provides many spiritual lessons by application. Although all dispensations contain a gracious element, the dispensation of grace is the supreme manifestation both in the fullness of salvation received and in the rule of life (**p.135**).

**7. Dispensation of the kingdom:** [The Millennium] [Begins at the Second Coming, ends with the destruction of the earth and heaven by fire and is followed by the eternal state] (**Rev.21-22**). The dispensation of the kingdom begins with the second coming of Christ (**Mt.24; Rev.19**) and is preceded by a period of time including the Tribulation, which to some extent is a transitional period. In the millennial kingdom, divine grace is also revealed in fulfillment of the New Covenant (**Jer.31:31-34**), in salvation (**Isa.12**), in physical and temporal prosperity, (**Isa.35**), in abundance of revelation (**Jer.31:33-34**), forgiveness of sin (**Jer.31:34**), and in the regathering of Israel (**Isa.11:11-12; Jer.30:1-11; Ez.39:25-29**). The dispensation of the kingdom differs from all preceding dispensations in that it is the final form of moral testing. The advantages of the dispensation include a perfect government, the immediate presence of Christ, universal knowledge of God and the terms of salvation, and Satan rendered inactive. In many respects the dispensation of the kingdom is climatic and brings to consummation Gods dealing with man (**p.136**).

*From Chap 2 repositioned here as Appendix Five: **Christ is the Seed of David.***

*And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. **2 Sam.7:12.***

Where is the true understanding of this promise God made with David given? Peter in his famous sermon on the day of Pentecost connects the Davidic Covenant (**2 Sam.23:5; Ps.89:3, 28**) to the prophecy of Joel to show that both the prophecy made to David concerning a throne and a kingdom, and the prophecy made to Joel concerning the new age, have been fulfilled in the resurrection and ascension of Christ. The giving of the Spirit proves both of these prophecies are fulfilled. It is clear



from Peters sermon that the new age envisioned by Joel is the same thing as the kingdom age promised to David. The new age signs are the proof of some kind of a present Kingship of Christ.

When the amazed people asked, What meaneth this? (**Acts 2:12**), Peter declared that what they were witnessing that very day established, in some sense and to some degree, the following facts:

- (1) Joel's prophecy concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit being poured on all flesh (not just Jews) was being fulfilled (**v.14-21**),
- (2) The covenant that God made with David concerning a throne and a kingdom was also fulfilled (**22-36**).

Peter explained and grounded both of these facts in the events taking place on the Day of Pentecost. The giving of the Spirit was seen as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, and that in turn proved that Christ was sitting on David's throne in fulfillment of God's covenant to him. In other words, Peter was declaring that the Day of Pentecost proved the following:

- It was the absolute proof that the Man they had crucified was not only truly alive from the dead, but He was at that very moment sitting at God's right hand in resurrected glory.
- The ascension of Christ to Davids throne with glory and power was the fulfillment of the specific prophecy made to David in **2 Sam.7** concerning the establishment of the kingdom.

Peter saw the giving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as the fulfillment of the specific prophecy given to Joel concerning the inauguration of the new age. In other words, the personal advent of the Holy Spirit was the proof that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled; and that in turn proved that Christ, David's seed, had been raised up to sit on Davids throne, just as God had promised in the Davidic covenant.

DT cannot see that we now live in the very days promised to the fathers and the prophets. The kingdom, the King, Davids throne, the days of glory, the display of power, etc., must all be pushed into the future. The A-mil on the other hand assumes, with no textual warrant, that we have seen and experienced the full extent of everything that was promised. He must insist that we have seen all of the earthly display of Christs power and glory that will ever be seen on the present earth. Everything else awaits the new heavens and the new earth.

When I hear A-mils lauding the present gospel millennium, [or Gospel-Age aka realized millennium] as the total package for this dispensation, I feel like singing Peggy Lees song, Is this all there is? <sup>E</sup> The kingdom inaugurated and established is not the kingdom consummated in total victory.

-----

**E.** If a Pre-Mil is totally consistent, then he cannot have any kingdom prophecies fulfilled before the second coming of Christ. Likewise, if an A-Mil is totally consistent, he cannot have any kingdom prophecies fulfilled after Christ comes. It is impossible to use the word millennium to denote any prophetic system without creating contradictions and confusion. We need to speak in terms of the Kingdom instead of millennium, and when we do, we will realize that the Kingdom has already come and the Kingdom is yet to come. This is called now/not yet. However, when both an A-Mil and a Pre-Mil say now/not yet, they mean two different things.

-----

**2.** The Feast of Pentecost was 50 days after the Feast of First Fruits. The specific day was already established. We do not call the day upon which the Holy Spirit came the Day of Pentecost because He came on that day. The Holy Spirit came that particular day because it was the Day of Pentecost. **Acts 2:1** says, When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all together in one place. The coming of the Spirit on that specific day was the direct fulfillment of the Levitical feasts, just as the death of Christ was on the Day of Atonement. The events on the Day of Pentecost were the final and full proofs that Christ was the true Passover Lamb. The long awaited promise of the pouring out of the Spirit (**Joel 2:28-29**) had come. The promise of Jesus to the disciples that the Holy Spirit would be in them was being realized. This is the new ministry of the Holy Spirit that had to await the crowning of the victorious ascended Lord and King. It was a work that was clearly foretold in the prophets but not experienced until the exaltation or glorification of Christ.

The giving of the Spirit was the heart of the promise of the gospel in the OT Scriptures, and it is the crowning experience of the gospel under the New Covenant. This is why the Apostles not only emphasized the ascension of Christ to the Father's right hand in their preaching, but they also emphasized it as the fulfillment of the promises made in all of the prophets. Joel's prophecy and the covenant made with David are both clear examples.

Peter's whole sermon hinged on the personal Advent of the Holy Spirit being the following things:

- (1) The fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel
- (2) the fulfillment of the covenant made with David
- (3) the fulfillment of the OT concept of the kingdom promised in all of the prophets.

**Spurgeon** emphasizes the newness of the Spirit's ministry in this age in a sermon, taken from the words and I will put my Spirit within you, **Ez.36:27**, entitled The Covenant Promise of the Spirit.

*Clearly this is a word of grace, for the law saith nothing of this kind. Turn to the law of Moses, and see if there be any word spoken therein concerning the putting of the Spirit within men to cause them to walk in God's statutes. Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol.37, p.217.*

When we put together several verses of Scripture, they show us exactly what this new ministry of the Spirit is, and why it could not begin until the ascension of Christ and the establishing of the New Covenant:

*Therefore being at the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He (Jesus) hath shed forth THIS, which you now see and hear. **Acts 2:33***

*... but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. **Acts 1:4-5***

The baptism of the Spirit is the New Covenant experience of Christ in you and You in Christ, and this experience is only possible because Pentecost has taken place – which was not before the ascension of Christ to glory. The experiential reality of being personally united to Christ in his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension could not possibly precede Christ's own ascension to His newly

earned throne. The giving of the Spirit is the result and absolute proof of His ascension and Lordship.

Old Covenant believers could never have had a realization of being seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (**Eph.2:6**). Ephesians had not yet been written because the historical events described in **Heb.9:11-28** upon which the Ephesian experience is based had not yet occurred.

**3.** It is the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit that created the Body of Christ or New Man of Ephesians. Pentecost united, on an equal footing, believing Jews and believing Gentiles by creating the totally new thing (the Body of Christ) described by Paul:

*...His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God IN ONE Body by the cross ... for through Him, we both have access by one spirit unto the Father. **Eph.2:15-18***

CT cannot make this text refer to the church as a new and distinct entity that never existed before. Its view of Pentecost only allows for a greater effusion of what is already the experience of old covenant believers. Neither the Jew nor the Gentile could have had the access spoken of in this text as long as the veil, the covenant, and the old priesthood were in effect. John Owens sermon on **Eph.2:18** entitled **The Beauty of Gospel Worship contrasts worship under the Old Covenant with gospel worship under the New. Owen first shows how worship under the gospel age gives us access unto God Himself**, and then says the following:

*We have in this spiritual worship of the gospel access unto God as a Father. I showed, in the opening of the words, that God is distinctly proposed here as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our God and Father. Hence are we said to come to the throne of grace, **Heb.4:16**; that is, unto God as he is gloriously exalted in the dispensation of grace, in kindness, love, mercy, - in a word, as a Father. God on the throne of grace, and God as a Father, is all one consideration; for, as a Father, he is all love, grace, and mercy to his children in Christ. When God came of old to institute his worship in giving of the law, he did it with the dreadful and terrible representation of his majesty, that the people chose not to come near, but went and stood afar off, and said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die, **Ex.20:18-19**. And by this dreadful representation of the majesty of God, as the object of that worship, were they kept in fear and bondage all their days. BUT NOW are the saints encouraged to make their approach unto God AS A FATHER [though OT saints did have a relationship to God as Father, **Ps.103:13**]; the glory whereof the apostle excellently expresseth, **Rom.viii.14-15**. That fear and bondage wherein men were kept under the law is now removed, and in the place thereof a spirit of children, with reverent boldness going to their father, is given unto us. This, I say, adds to the glory, beauty, and excellency of gospel worship. There is not the meanest believer but, with his most broken prayers and supplications, hath an immediate access unto God, and that as a Father; nor the most despised church of saints on the earth but it comes with its worship into the glorious presence of God himself. From: The Works of John Owen, **Vol.9, p.59-60**.*

This new access to God as Father is a new and distinct reality under the New Covenant that was not possible under the Old Covenant. <sup>F</sup> It is the baptism by the Spirit of every believer into the Body of Christ that gives New Covenant believers, for the first time, the status of adopted sons (**Rom.8:14**;

**Gal.4:4-7**) and destroys forever all of the distinctions and categories established and enforced by the Old Covenant (**Gal.3:26-29**). It is the new status of sonship that gives the new boldness to approach the throne and know that He Who sits there is our Elder Brother. An Old Covenant believer could never even imagine such a thing. It is impossible to have the in Christ experience where every believer, Jew or Gentile, is united to Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and to each other, as equal brothers and sisters; and, at the same time, be under the law and the distinctions of Jew/Gentile, male/female and bond/free that the Old Covenant mandated.

-----

**F.** For an excellent presentation of this same emphasis, see [Knowing God](#), by J. I. Packer, **pgs.182-184**.

-----

The Old Covenant proved your guilt and forbade you to draw near without a perfect righteousness or an acceptable sacrifice. The New Covenant declares a believer to be both righteous and acceptable in God's sight, and it bids him come boldly without fear into the very Most Holy place that was totally closed off to all but Aaron under the OC.

The law as a legal covenant ended when the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom (**Mt.27:50-51**),<sup>G</sup> and the law, as a pedagogue over the conscience, was dismissed on the day of Pentecost when the promise of the Father took up His abode in every believer as the personal Vicar of the ascended Lord. The giving of the Spirit is the proof of the accepted work of Christ in the heavenly tabernacle, and the given Spirit indwelling the believer is the indelible assurance of our eternal acceptance by the Father. This is the truth that Peter was delivering in his message in **Acts 2:33** (cf. **Gal.3:24-29**):

*Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which now ye see and hear. **Acts 2:33***

-----

**G.** I have developed the significance of **Mt 27:50-51** in a paper entitled The Better Priesthood of Christ. These verses, along with **Heb.8:6**, are some of the most important words in the New Testament in understanding Biblical covenants and the relationship of law and grace.

-----

**Acts 2: 37-41, The Effect of the Sermon** - The unbelieving Jews were convicted of their sin and cried out in fear, What shall we do? Peter repeated the Gospel message and again reinforced it with the prophecy of Joel. Peter exhorted them to repent and be baptized and assured them that they would be saved and would receive the Holy Spirit just as Joel had promised:

. . . the promise [of salvation and the giving of the Holy Spirit promised to whosoever believes as prophesied by Joel] is unto [1] you, and [2] unto your children, and [3] to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. **Acts 2:39** [see **Apdx.4**]

Christ is the Subject of all Scripture - Every type and shadow in the OT Scriptures teaches us something about our Savior.

*And He said unto them . . . that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures . . . **Lk.24:44-45***

The OT Scriptures are not just a book of laws nor do they merely contain the history of the Nation of Israel. They picture Christ the promised Messiah (**Heb.10:5-9**). Christ is the Lamb of God (Jn.1:29) that takes away the sin of the world. He is the fulfillment of the gospel promise that God gave to Abraham, David, and all of the fathers and prophets.

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed His people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. **Lk.1:68-79***

The Seed is here presented and His kingdom of grace is proclaimed. **It would be difficult to get the Dispensational view of a postponed earthly kingdom out of Luke's words.** The pious Jew living prior to Christ's coming was looking forward to a spiritual kingdom. The kingdom described in these verses is the very kingdom that Christ both offered and established - the subject and hope of all of the Old Testament prophets. It is the kingdom of His dear Son into which we have already been translated (**Col.1:13**) and of which we are willing subjects that serve without fear.

He is the both the Sum and Substance of the gospel of sovereign grace (**Acts 2:36, 3:24-26; 7:2-53; 13:32-41**). The preaching of the gospel is nothing less than telling the story that (1) the promised Seed of Abraham has finally come; (2) God has fulfilled, in Christ, all of the promises made to Abraham and his Seed; and (3) now those same promises are being fulfilled in all those that are united to that true Seed, Christ, by a living faith.