

COVENANT THEOLOGY
Lesson 12 - The New Covenant

I. Introduction

A. Let us begin with an illustration: If I have an old rusted car with 250,000 miles on it and a bad transmission and I put a really nice new paint job on it, would it be right of me to say, "I have a new car"?

1. This describes the paedobaptist's version of covenant theology. In their system the New Covenant is not really new, but it is the same old covenant (in substance) with a new paint job on it (new in regards to external administration).

2. Reformed Baptist (1689) covenant theology rightly recognizes that the New Covenant is really new. It is of a different substance from the Mosaic Covenant (It's not just Moses with a new paint job). It is NOT LIKE the covenant that God made with Israel as he brought them out of Egypt. And it also has a different substance from the Abrahamic Covenant, for that Covenant (along with the Davidic) contained promises AND conditions pertaining to ethnic and earthly Israel. These things have been fulfilled in Christ. He fulfilled the promises and kept the conditions. So the New Covenant is *really* new in our view.

3. At the same time RB Covenant Theology avoids the serious error of the classic dispensationalist, some of whom goes so far as to say that there was no grace before Christ - salvation was to be earned before Christ. The paedobaptists make everything to be the Covenant of Grace (all of the redemptive covenants are different administrations of the Covenant of Grace). The Dispensationalists (the extreme ones) say there there was no grace prior to Christ, only works, breaking up history into strict dispensations (eras) where God administers his kingdom in ways that are radically differ from one period to the next. But I think we get it right when we say, on the one hand, the New Covenant is really new. It is the Covenant of Grace formally ratified. But on the other hand this Covenant of Grace was not completely lacking before Christ, but was present from Adam onward in the form of promise being formally ratified and fulfilled by the blood of Christ, who is the mediator of the New Covenant, which is so much better (book of Hebrews) than what came before.

B. "The Chart" Explained

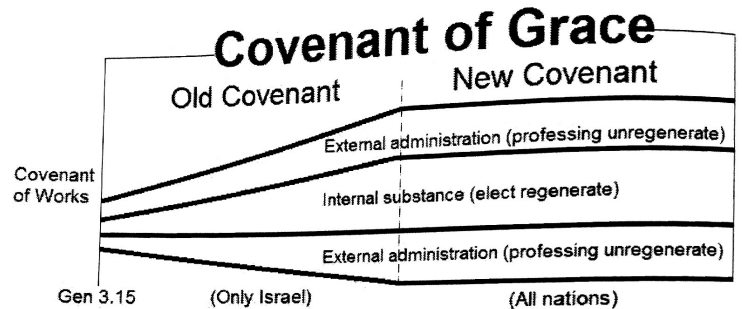
1. Where do we agree with our paedobaptist brothers and sisters?
2. Where do we differ?

II. Key Old Testament Texts

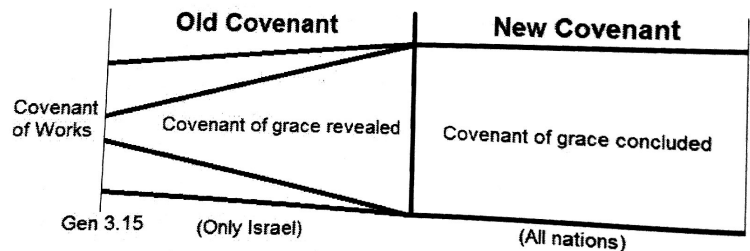
A. "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34, ESV)

1. A word of promise, hope
2. Discontinuity
 - a) "...not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt..."

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Paedobaptist chart



Baptist chart

- (1) "...my covenant that they broke..."
 - (a) The Old Covenant was breakable - not so with the New
 - i) Notice the total lack of the "if, then" pattern in the description of the New Covenant which follows. It is only, "I will". This cannot be said of any preceding redemptive covenant.
 - ii) In the paedobaptist scheme, the new covenant is breakable (inconsistent with their belief in particular redemption (see Hebrews 10)).
 - (1) For the paedobaptist "apostasy" is the breaking of the New Covenant... being in and then out.
 - (2) For the Baptist "apostasy" is making a profession of faith and then walking away. We do not consider those who make a profession on'y to walk away to have ever been a part of the covenant. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us." (1 John 2:19, ESV)
3. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord:..."
 - a) "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts." This is not entirely new considered by itself
 - b) "And I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (This is not entirely new considered by itself)
 - c) "And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord...'" (This is new!)
 - (1) Jeremiah's ministry, for example, was to plead with his kinsmen (who were a part of the Mosaic Covenant (circumcised according to the flesh) to "know the Lord".
 - d) "For they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord." (This is really, really new! All who are members of the New Covenant "know the Lord"!)
 - e) "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (This is not new if it stands alone, but it is new in light of what is said under "d". Some under the Old Covenant had their sins forgiven (David), but not all (Ahaab). "For every David there were a dozen Ahab's" (White, Recovering a Confessional Heritage, 363)

III. Key New Testament Texts

- A. Read the whole New Testament which shows Christ as the fulfillment of the Law, Prophets and Psalms.
- B. "New Covenant" (Clearly, the NT has been ratified in full, contrary to what some Dispensationalists would claim)
 1. "And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'" (Luke 22:20, ESV)
 2. "In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (1 Corinthians 11:25, ESV)
 3. "...who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:6, ESV)
 4. "For he finds fault with them when he says: 'Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...'" (Hebrews 8:8, ESV)
 5. "In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." (Hebrews 8:13, ESV)
 6. "Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant." (Hebrews 9:15, ESV)
 7. "...and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." (Hebrews 12:24, ESV)
- C. Hebrews 8 and 10 (Really, the whole book of Hebrews...)
 1. Shows that Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant, the one who has paid for the sins really and full for all who are in the Covenant.
 - a) "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:10, ESV)

IV. Conclusion - The New Covenant Defined

- A. See the London Baptist Confession
 1. Chapter 7, paragraph 2 defines the New Covenant as it pertains to us - what is promised to us and what it requires of us.
 2. Chapter 8 shows what was required of the mediator of the New Covenant, who is Christ Jesus our Lord.
- B. How does this impact Baptism?
 1. The sign of the covenant should be given to those in the covenant, namely, those who repent and believe.
 2. No longer are children *born* into a redemptive covenant as they were under Abraham and Moses (they are born into Adam and the covenant he broke). It was right for every child born to Abraham and under Moses to be circumcised because they were born INTO the covenant of circumcision. Some were elect, some non-elect. Not so in with the New. It is those who believe who are in the New. All who are in the New "know God". All in the New are elect. We should labor to apply baptism (which symbolizes washing and regeneration, by the way) to those who have made a credible profession of faith. We know that some make false professions.