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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Covenants of God, or The Counsels of Eternity”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the opportunity and privilege of the study of the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the fact that thou hast in the Counsel to the Eternity, had us before Thee. And we thank Thee for the love that Thou hast shown to us, the good pleasure of Thy will from which Thou hast decided to elect and save bring to Thyself those who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. And so we thank Thee for the joy of salvation, and for the assurance that our destiny is in the hands of a sovereign and completely omnipotent God. We commit ourselves to Thee, and we commit this class to Thee tonight, and pray that it may bring honor and glory to Thee through Jesus Christ. For we ask it in his name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight our subject is “The Covenants of God, or The Counsels of Eternity”. And as is our custom, I want to ask you to turn with me to a couple of passages which we are not using as points from which to expound our subject, but to give us some leading ideas which we will have before us we study this topic. And so turn with me to the Epistle of Paul the apostle to the Ephesians chapter 2, verse 11 through verse 13, and then chapter 3, verse 11. And one verse in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 20, but I’ll call them out again. Ephesians 2, verse 11 through verse 13.

Now, I want you to notice, of course, the occurrence of the word “covenants”. Paul writes verse 11,

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in the time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands. That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

You’ll notice that the expression in verse 12 is a plural one “the covenants” and they are characterized by a promise, “The covenants of promise.”

Now, turn over to the 11th verse of the 3rd chapter, and Paul is speaking about the mystery which has been given him as a dispensation of the grace of God to communicate to the world. The content of it is that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partake of his promise in Christ by the Gospel. And in the 10th verse he says,

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places.” This of course, is the angelic sphere. “Might be known by the church.” That is, by means of the church. “The manifold wisdom of God.” Then he adds, “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Now, that expression in the Greek text, as those of you who have studied “God’s Plan of the Ages” on the tapes will remember, is the expression “The purpose of the ages.” And so it is stated, plainly I think, in this 11th verse beyond any question that God has a purpose that is to be manifested in the ages of divine revelation of himself. So it is

a perfectly scriptural idea to think of the fact that God has a purpose which he is out working in human history.

Now, will you turn over to chapter 13 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and we’ll read verse 20. This is the concluding prayer and benediction of this great epistle, and the author writes,

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” Now, you’ll notice this one is not plural, but singular. “Through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

“The Covenants of God, or the Counsels of Eternity”. The subject of the covenants of God is a subject that is fraught with a great deal of difficulty. And I think now this is due to two things primarily. First of all, the natural difficulty in interpreting and systematizing all that the Bible has to say. For under the subject of “The Covenants of God,” we are really attempting to gather up practically the entire Bible. And if it is difficult for us to understand a certain portion of Scripture, such as one particular book in its completeness and in its complete clarity, it surely is difficult for us to sum up the teaching of the Bible in a brief lesson or two or even in the consideration of this subject, the covenants. So I think it is difficult for that reason, because under the subject of “The Covenants,” we may gather almost all that the Bible has to say together. Now, there are not many men who are able to take the whole of the Bible and put it together and systematize it, so that in a relatively short time, we may be told accurately what the whole subject of the Bible is about. So I think it’s difficult for that reason. But this subject is also difficult because of the sharp contention that has arisen over this topic of “The Covenants.” And I think the sharpness of the contention in Dallas is indicated by the fact

that it is generally thought that dispensationalism is diametrically opposed to covenant theology. And consequently, one of the great conflicts that has raged in the United States over the past few decades is the conflict between so-called dispensational theology and covenant theology.

Now, if you’re interested in a good treatment of the issues, I think, it would be good for you to read Charles Ryrie’s book *Dispensationalism Today* because I think that in that book, you at least will see some of the questions that are at issue. And I would suggest you read it. You will recognize that what I’m going to say tonight, if you really think about it, is a slightly different approach, but I don’t guess we could say as basically different. But I would suggest you read that excellent book that Professor Ryrie has written.

Now, our attempt tonight in this study in one lesson is going to be quite modest. What I want to do is to set forth the essential features of the theological covenants, the essential features of the Biblical covenants, and then try to suggest a relationship between them which will enable you in the reading of the Bible to understand what the Bible has to say on these points.

And so first of all, let’s launch into our subject with Roman I: The Theological Covenants, and Capital A - The History of the Covenant System. Now, by the term “theological covenants” I am referring to the fact that these covenants are largely deductions from the biblical text. They are not inductions. That is, you will not find these expressions in the Bible. You will not find, for example, the expression “The Covenant of Redemption.” We read “The Eternal Covenant” but we did not read “The Covenant of Redemption.” We will not find in the Bible, “The Covenant of Works”. We will not find “The Covenant of Grace.” We found “The Covenants of Promise” but not “The Covenant of Grace.”

So the theological covenants are terms that have been used to express what one deduces from a study of the Bible. Now, do not be misled. This does not mean that they are necessarily unscriptural. Just as I’ve been trying to say all along about the Trinity. No

where in the Bible do we find the term “Trinity” but it is surely one of the clearest doctrines taught in the Bible. It may be difficult to understand all that is meant by the Trinity, but the fact that there is a Trinity is very plainly taught in the Bible. But the word “Trinity” is not found. So the fact that we do not find a precise term does not mean that the concept referred to by it is not a scriptural concept. So we call them “theological covenants”, rather than “biblical covenants”.

Now, the history of the covenant system. Covenant theology is a relatively recent development perhaps not quite as recent as dispensationalism, but at least, a relatively recent thing, in its systematized form. It is not found in any of the great theological confessions until the time of the Westminster Confession of 1647. That is the first time in which we have this reference made to “covenant theology” in which we can definitely identify. It was a man by the name of Cocceius who really systematized covenant theology. His name is spelled C--O--C--C--E--I--U--S. Cocceius was a German who taught in Holland. Now, he is responsible for the systematizing of the idea of the covenants of God. He taught in the seventeenth century. Covenant theology came to the United States through the Puritans and through the writings of men such as: Francis Turretin -- T--U--R--R--E--T--I--N and Vitsius. I’ve forgotten his first name on the spur of the moment. I better not guess but Vitsius. But the men who really popularized the covenant theology system were both named Hodge, Charles Hodge of Princeton Theological Seminary and A. A. Hodge also of Princeton Theological Seminary. It is to the Hodges that we really owe the spread and development and evangelization of the system which we know today as “covenant theology.” Now, the Hodges were very fine men. They were very, very sound in the faith. They believed most of the doctrines that the average biblical student believes in today with the exception that both of them were not premillennialists. That is, in eschatology, they did not shine. Dr. Chafer used to like to say at the seminary that Charles Hodge introduced his forty pages or so of discussion of eschatology in his “systematic theology” of three volumes with the words that, “He did not

really know too much about eschatology.” And then Dr. Chafer would say, “And then he went on to spend forty pages proving it.” But that, of course, was not the area which Professor Hodge was interested. He was interested in other areas of theology, and all even his enemies who are genuine Christians will acknowledge that he was really one of our great theologians.

Capital B - The Nature of the Covenant System. In its most fully developed form, the covenant theologian sees three covenants as basic to divine revelation. And they are Arabic 1 - The Covenant of Redemption. Let’s begin here and let me try to define it for you so that you will understand what is meant by that term. “The Covenant of Redemption”. It is generally defined something like this. It is the agreement between the Father who gives the Son as the head and redeemer of the elect and the Son. In other words, it is the agreement of the Father who gives the Son as the head and redeemer of the elect, and the Son, who voluntarily takes the place of those whom the Father has given him. In other words, it is an agreement between the Father and the Son, the Father giving the Son as the head and redeemer of the elect, and the Son voluntarily taking the place of those whom the Father has given him.

Now, let’s turn to a passage or two in order to see if this is really a biblical thought. That there was an agreement between the Father and the Son in which the Father agreed that the Son should be the representative head of the elect, and the Son should give himself to die for them. Let’s turn to John chapter 17, and let’s just read a few verses beginning with the first verse. John chapter 17. “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said; Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” Did you notice that? The Father has given certain ones to the Son. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” The Son has had a work to do

that the Father has given him. “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” Now, you can see that there has been an -- an interplay of expression of divine will and response between the Father and the Son. The Father has given certain ones to the Son. The father has given a work for the Son to do. He is now ready to go back to heaven, and he speaks proleptically, of course, because when he dies he says, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” He finishes the work which the Father has given him to do on the cross, and then goes back and is glorified “with the glory that he had with the Father before the world was.”

Verse 6, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” Where do we read of this that the Father gave certain ones to the Son. Well, we don’t read of it anywhere, except here. In other words, it is a transaction that happens in the “Counsels of Eternity”. The details of it are not set forth in the word. We know the fact of it now. “Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them. I pray not for the world.” Isn’t that a striking thing? “I pray not for the world”, Jesus said. “But for them that thou hast given me, for they are thine.” The Son does not pray for the world. He prays for those whom the Father has given him for they belong to the Father. “And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. And now, I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name. Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

Now if you’ll remember also, the passage that we looked in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 1, there it is stated that there is a purpose of the ages. Now, will you turn to Luke chapter 22 in verse 29. Luke chapter 22 in verse 29. Verse 28 says, “Ye are they.” Jesus is speaking. “Ye are they which have continued with me in thy temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me.” Now, you know that little word “appoint” is a very interesting word. I’m going to turn to my Greek testament, although I already knows what it says. But I want you to note in the margin of your Bible or at least in your notes that the word here in the 29th verse, which is translated “appoint”. “I appoint unto you” is the word form which we get the word “covenant.” So it is, in effect, a statement by our Lord that he has covenanted with you “diatithêmi” And the word for covenant is the noun “diatheke.” As you can see, one is the verb, one is the noun, covenant. “I have covenanted with you as the Father hath covenanted for me a Kingdom.” In other words, he has covenanted with them, and he is guaranteeing to confer upon them a kingdom as the Father has covenanted with him. So there is a statement then to the effect, that there is a covenantal relationship between the Father and the Son.

Now, we don’t have time to look at other passages. In such passages as, for example, 1 Corinthians chapter 15 in verse 22, Romans chapter 5 verse 12 through verse 21 in which the representative character of the Son’s relationship to men is set forth. But I think you can see that while the term “the covenant of redemption” is not found in Scripture per se, the idea of an arrangement, of an agreement, of a relationship between the Father and Son in eternity that concerns you and me, is a scriptural idea.

Dr. Chafer in his theology and he was not a covenant theologian at all said, “This covenant rests upon but slight revelation. It is rather sustained largely by the fact that it seems both reasonable and inevitable.” You remember that Paul speaks about the promise of life in one of his pastoral epistles. So the covenant of redemption then, that is one of the cornerstones of the covenant system.

Arabic 2 - The Covenant of Works. “The Covenant of Works” is a theological covenant again, and it is the agreement between the Father and Adam, the representative man. The Father promises to confer life upon the basis of Adam’s obedience. Further, there is a promise that if Adam disobeys, there is death. So it is a covenant between the Father and Adam, the representative man, in which there is a promise of life, and a warning of the penalty of death. Now again, you will not find the expression, “the covenant of works” in Genesis 1, 2, or anywhere in the Book of Genesis. But this is probably a fair expression of what we do find in passages such as Genesis chapter 2, verses 16 and 17. The elements of a covenant, that is promises, contingencies set forth, are found in those statements of Genesis chapter 2. And so perhaps it’s a fair thing to say that that is a covenant, though it is not expressly stated to be a covenant.

Now, I want you to turn with me to a couple of passages which express, at least, the idea and one of which may be a reference to this covenant. And I know that you’re going to feel that I’m unfair but, nevertheless, I want you to turn to one of the minor prophets. So will you turn with me to the 6th chapter of the Book of Hosea, and we’ll declare a slight intermission while you find this book. Look it up in the index. Hosea chapter 6 in verse 7.

Now, while you’re trying to find this fine little prophecy, let me remind you that the prophet is speaking here of the disobedience of the nation Israel, their backsliding. And then in the 6th verse he says, “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings,” one of the great passages of the Book of Hosea. But now, notice the 7th verse, “But they like men have transgressed the covenant. There have they dealt treacherously against me.” “They like men have transgressed the covenant.” Now, that little word translated “men” is the word *adham*. Do you do what *adham* is? *Adham* is Adam, and consequently, we could render this, I don’t think that we want to rest the whole theological system on this, but “They like Adam have transgressed

the covenant.” And if that is the rendering then, of course, we do have a specific statement that Adam broke a covenant with God, a covenant of works.

Now, Romans chapter 5 verse 12 through verse 21, I think we ought to read that passage again. We have looked at that before, but this is one of the great theological passages of the Bible and everybody who ever studies theology ought to know Romans 5:12 through 21 because so many doctrines are related to this great passage that Paul wrote. Now, the primary thought in Romans 5:12 through 21 is this, that Adam was a representative man. He stood for men, and when he sinned, men sinned. The race fell when Adam fell. As I said yesterday, Joseph Parker said that, “A lot of people wrangle about the serpent and the fall. But one thing is certain the woman ate something that has disagreed with the stomach of men, the spiritual stomach of men, ever since. Men have fallen.” Now on the other hand, just as Adam is a representative man and when he falls, all fall, so Jesus Christ is God’s great gift to us as the representative man. And when he succeeds, all who are in him are reckoned to have succeeded.

Now, notice verse 12, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.” That is in Adam. “For until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure, the illustration, of him that was to come.” So how can you explain men dying between the time of the Garden and the time of the giving of the law, for men did not transgress a specific law? Adam did in the garden because he was given a specific command of God, but what about the rest of men? They didn’t violate any Ten Commandments. They weren’t given yet. They did not have any specific law, but they died. And death is the penalty for sin. So how can you explain the death of men? The only explanation Paul says, is that they died because they “sinned in Adam.” That’s why. Don’t like that, do you? The old nature does not usually

like God’s arrangements. We’re perfectly willing for someone to act for us, providing it’s good, but we’re not too happy when it’s bad.

But this principle of representation is implicit in all of human life. A prince whose father abdicates the throne may lose his own right to the throne. A man who is wealthy may waste all of his funds, but his son has no legal right to get them back. We recognize that principle that a man’s actions affect those that follow. Now Paul continues, “But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift, for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” I don’t think we need read the rest, and we don’t have time. You’ll just notice that the principle of representation is very specifically and plainly set forth. Adam acted for his descendants, and Jesus Christ acts for many who are in him. So the idea of the “covenant of works” is, it seems to me, an idea that is set forth in Scripture, although the precise term, “the covenant of works” is not found.

Third, Arabic 3 - The Covenant of Grace. The “Covenant of Grace” is the gracious agreement between God and elect sinners in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ. Now, I think that the idea that God should promise salvation to men who believe in Christ should be so obviously a scriptural idea that we should not have any question about this. What we really have here is a theological expression of all of the significance of the great messianic promises from the time of Genesis 3:15 on down to the full New Testament revelation. But if you want to put some Scriptures down, put down Isaiah chapter 53 verses 10 and 11 in which in the Old Testament it is stated that the servant should come and through his death he would justify many. Isaiah chapter 42 verse 6 in which God says that he would give Jesus Christ as a covenant for the peoples

and the Gentiles too would be included and the work of the redeemer. And John chapter 17 verse 4, verse 6, and verse 12 which expresses the fact that there is in the mind of God a purpose to save elect men.

Now let me Capital C - give a brief critique of the system of covenant theology. I think there are several things that we could say and should say. And first of all, I think that we should not forget that there is not great scriptural revelation on the subject of these covenants of the covenant system. After all, I’ve picked out the evidence that is probably most appropriate. The evidence that would be used by men who were dedicated covenant theologians. They would pick out these very Scriptures that I’ve given you. At the same time, we should remember that there are not many of them, and we should remember that the term “the covenant of redemption”, “the covenant of works”, “the covenant of grace” these terms are not really found in the Bible. Someone has said, “The covenants were made in Holland, not in heaven. It is an attempt on the part of men who were diligent students of the Bible to set forth systematically what they found in the study of Scripture. So let’s not forget that the precise terms, and actually the revelation on these topics is not great in the Bible.

Furthermore, I think we should remember that covenant theologians in their attempt to gather together under the covenants practically all of the teaching of the Bible and occasionally fallen into the error of equating the church with Israel. One of the characteristic features of this system seems to be that if we lay a great deal of stress upon the eternal character of our salvation there is sometimes a tendency to overlook the historical development of it. And consequently, you will find men who follow this system of theology reading the Old Testament as if it were the New Testament. That is, they do not seem to see any difference in revelation, and they like to read Christ back into the Old Testament in such a way as if it were almost the New Testament itself. The result is that you will find covenant theologians frequently equating the church and Israel. There is no

difference between them. In fact, I would say probably the majority of covenant theologians believe that the church is really Israel, its spiritual Israel.

And many other errors grow out of this such as for example, the promises of the Old Testament are applied to the church. Of course, the curses of the Old Testament on Israel are not applied to the church but the blessings are. Now, this is not a necessary thing however with this system. It just seems to be a tendency on the part of some of them because of the great stress upon the eternal character of the covenants of God.

I think also there is another error that is associated with this system and that is, a tendency to spiritualize concepts such as the kingdom. In other words, most covenant theologians, not all, most do not believe that there is going to be a future earthly kingdom in which Jesus shall rule and reign upon the earth. They’d rather believe that the kingdom is spiritual, and that the kingdom, some of them, the kingdom is now. That, of course, is unscriptural. But in spite of this, I think the basic ideas of the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, are scriptural ideas. We should not, I say, go overboard.

Now, let’s take a look, briefly, at the biblical or historical covenants, and we’re not going to attempt tonight to give you an exposition of each one of them because that would be impossible. The biblical or historical covenants are the covenants that are referred to in historical contexts. The first that is mentioned in the Bible is the covenant that God made with Noah. It is found in Genesis chapter 9 verses 8 through 17. This covenant, remember, is an unconditional guarantee to mankind that we should not again be judged by a flood. It is the first of the biblical covenants. In fact, the term “covenant” is not found in the Bible until Genesis chapter 6 in verse 18 in a reference to this Noachic covenant. It is an arrangement with God and mankind whereby he promises he will never again destroy us by a flood.

The second covenant is the Abrahamic Covenant. Now that covenant, which is set forth for us in such passages as Genesis chapter 12 and Genesis chapter 13 is the basic

historical covenant made with Abraham and his seed. And remember, in this covenant God promised that Abraham and his seed would be given a land, they would be given a kingdom, and they would be given what we might say, if we said kingdom, and we meant by that a realm in which they should rule, they would also be given subjects or individuals who would be in that kingdom. So Abraham was given promises that touched the land, that touched the sea, that touched the royal land. Now this covenant that God made with Abraham is perhaps the greatest of the historical covenants and almost all of the covenants that are given later, are outgrowths of the Abrahamic Covenant. It is on the basis of this Abrahamic Covenant that we know that God is yet going to give the land to Israel. It is on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant that we know that there is coming a king who will rule in that land. It is on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant that we know that there will be people who will be ruled, and they are the seed of Abraham. Now think both Jews and Gentiles, Israel and the church, both being related to the kingdom that is to come.

The third covenant is the Mosaic Covenant. In spite of what some theologians say, I regard this covenant as conditional. It is possible to treat it as unconditional and the result is a little different emphasis in exposition. But I think that the Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant in which Israel promised to keep the covenant which God gave them. Of course, they broke that covenant. That covenant, Paul tells us, was designed to prepare Israel for the coming of Jesus Christ. It was designed to reveal to them their sin. And so God gave them, who possessed the Abrahamic promises, the Mosaic Covenant in order that they might be shown that they were sinners, and thus, be morally prepared for the coming of the King. That’s why the Ten Commandments were given. They were not given to save us. They were not given to be a means of salvation. They were given to bring us to the conviction of sin. “Thou shalt not ... Thou shalt not ... Thou shalt not.” And that was designed to show us that we could not keep them.

The fourth covenant - the Palestinian or Semiotic Covenant which is Capital D in our outline. This covenant was a covenant in which Israel was given title to the land, but was told that their obedience to God conditioned their possession of the land. So the Palestinian Covenant was a covenant in which title to the land was guaranteed, but possession of the land was conditional. I’ve often used a simple illustration to set this forth of a father, an overly indulgent father perhaps, who decides that he’s going to give his son, I started to say a Lincoln Continental but after my last remarks I’d better not say that, a Lincoln Continental or a Cadillac. And as he gives this car to this young son he says, “Now son, I’m giving you this because you’ve been able to graduate from high school. You’re now twenty years of age, but I want you to know that I’m not going to let you use this car unless you keep the law. Now, if you go out and run up a series of tickets for speeding, and I discover, the second ticket you get, I’m going to repossess this car. It’s in your name. You have title to it. I’m giving you to it, but as long as you’re in my house, and until you reach twenty-one, I’ve authority over you, and I’m going to ground you if you disobey the law.” So he has his car, but the possession of his car is conditioned by obedience. And so Israel was given the land in the Palestinian Covenant, but they were told that their possession of it was conditioned by their obedience. And of course, Israel was disobedient, and they have now been scattered to the four corners of the earth. And that, of course, is the living exposition of the fact that somewhere in Israel’s past, they have committed a great sin. Now when they sinned in the matter of the idols, and backsliding in apostasy in the days before the exile, God sent them into Babylon for idolatry for seventy years. Now he has sent them to the four corners of the earth for centuries. Idolatry is a great sin. What great sin must it be that is responsible for a worldwide dispersion for nineteen hundred years approximately?

The fifth covenant is the Davidic Covenant, and the Davidic Covenant is an unconditional covenant in which Israel is promised a coming king. They are given a land. They are given a king and they are told that their king shall come from the line of David.

The only man today, by the way, who possesses an incontrovertible genealogy from David is Jesus Christ. And his genealogies are found in Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3.

The New Covenant, the sixth covenant. Now the New Covenant is important, not because it’s the last of the series of biblical covenants, but because it is the covenant that explains how Israel shall come into the blessings signified by all of these other covenants from Abrahamic on. For you see, a true Israelite with real spiritual discernment might say, “Yes, we have promise of a land, of a seed, of a king. We’ve been given a land, and we are promised that our king is going to come from the line of David, but we are sinners. We could never inherit anything from a Holy God.” And so they needed to be told a means whereby their sin might be done away with. And so the New Covenant is the covenant that explains to us what is going to happen with Israel’s sin. And I think we ought to read a few verses of the New Covenant. So turn to Jeremiah chapter 31 and let’s begin reading with verse 31. Jeremiah 31. Now notice, this is an historical covenant. It is one that is given in history by the prophet, and it is a covenant that is fulfilled of course, when Jesus dies upon the cross at Calvary. Verse 31. Jeremiah chapter 31, “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.” Which covenant was that, by the way? Mosaic Covenant. Right. “Which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother saying; Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.” And here is the basis of the covenant. “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Now, will you turn with me to the New Testament, and let’s turn to Luke chapter 22 for one of the places. Luke chapter 22 in verse 19 and 20. And we read in Luke chapter 22 verse 19 and verse 20, “And he took bread, and gave thanks, and break it, and gave unto them saying; This is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me. Likewise also, the cup after supper saying; This cup is the new covenant,” it’s the same word, “new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you.”

Maybe you ought to turn back to Matthew chapter 26 also. Matthew chapter 26 verse 26. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and break it, and gave it to the disciples and said; Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying; Drink ye all of it.” He did not, by the way, mean “Drink all of it.” He meant, “Drink, all of you, of it.”

Now, I can still remember when I grew up in my church back in Birmingham, Alabama. When we had the Lord’s Supper, the minister frequently would quote this text, “Drink ye all of it.” And I felt it would be a great sin if I left any drop in that little cup, and so I used to hold it up like this to be sure that I got all of it. And then I read it in the Greek text many years later, and it’s “Drink, ye all, of it.” If those translators had just been southerners, we would have understand, “Drink y’all of it.” That would have made it very clear. “For this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Notice, “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

So the New Covenant in the New Testament is confirmed by our Lord Jesus Christ’s work, and we sit down at the Lord’s Table to observe the Lord’s Supper in commemoration of the fact that, the New Covenant has now been inaugurated in the shedding of the blood of the Savior. The foundation for the remission of sins has been laid, and by virtue of the gracious election of God, we belong to the company of those whose sins are covered by that blood of the New Covenant. Now I understand why Paul called them the “covenants of promise” for they contain great promises.

Now, one final word about the relationship between the theological and biblical covenants. Now, while I would not wish to be too dogmatic because even my best friends fight over this. It would seem reasonable to think that the Biblical Covenants are the historical development of the covenant of redemption. In other words, the arrangement in to which the Father and the Son have entered, as it respects the redeemed, is spelled out in history by the Biblical Covenants. Set forth at specific times in the history of men, reaching their climax in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary and finally completed in the kingdom to come, and stretching on into the eternal state, so that the Biblical Covenants are the historical development of the covenant of redemption, and give the details of the purpose of the ages. So the purpose of the ages, arranged by the godhead in the past ages, is worked out in time through covenants that God gives to men, reaches its fulfillment in the kingdom and ultimately in the eternal state.

Now then, next week, oh, by the way, next week. Next week we are not meeting on Monday night, but we’re going to meet on Tuesday night, and our subject is “The Offices of Christ, or Prophet, Priest and King”. We’re going to meet on Tuesday night. Now, last time I mentioned, those of you that were in Believers Chapel, but I mentioned that there was a ground swell of public opinion that demanded that we change the hour of meeting from Monday night until Tuesday night. I understand something’s happening on Monday night. But anyway, the vote was unanimous, and as you see, there are about a hundred, a little over a hundred people here, and the vote was completely unanimous. Four people came forward and said they preferred to meet on Tuesday night and nobody came and said, “We want to keep it on Monday.” And I want to speak for the four, and I want to say, and I didn’t count myself, that was four. Four to nothing. Two things I want to say. Number one Thank you. [Laughter] And number two, we’re going to have to work on registering people to vote in Believers Chapel, so that the next vote, we can have a better turnout. So if this conflict ever comes up again, we want to have at least six or

eight people voting on it, and of course, voting my way naturally. So anyway, we’re going to meet next Monday night, next Tuesday night at seven o’clock. That would be terrible wouldn’t it, if I took it all away after being given it. Next Tuesday night at seven o’clock. So those of you who have to be out of town, there are a few, then the tapes are always available for you and you can listen to the tapes.

Let’s close with a word of prayer, and we’ll have a few moments of intermission

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word, and we pray that as we consider these great theological topics, that we may be guided by the Holy Spirit into the truth. For Christ’s sake. Amen.