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# COVENANT THEOLOGY: THE COVENANT OF GRACE

# WCF 7.3

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





# ONE COVENANT, PROGRESSIVELY REVEALED

God's redemptive plan has always been unified and consistent, though it was administered differently in the Old and New Testaments.

It was progressively revealed throughout sacred history. In the Old Testament it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the Passover lamb, all types of the promised Messiah.

In the New Testament it is administered by the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's supper), given by the Christ who has now come.



# AS REVEALED TO ADAM

- **Context:** After Adam and Eve's fall into sin, humanity was under the curse of sin and death.
- **Covenantal Elements:**
  - A promised Redeemer (the seed of the woman).
  - The conflict between the seed of the woman (God's people) and the seed of the serpent (Satan's followers).
  - The victory of the seed over the serpent, ultimately fulfilled in Christ (Rom 16:20).





# FURTHER REVEALED TO ADAM

- **Promise of Grace:** God gave the first gospel promise (Protoevangelium) in Genesis 3:15, saying that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.
- **Administration:** The covenant of grace was administered through this promise, though it was not yet fully revealed.
- **Pointing to Christ:** God made garments of skin to clothe Adam and Eve, which required the shedding of blood. (Gen 3:21) This prefigures Christ's atoning sacrifice, where His blood would ultimately cover the sins of His people (Heb 9:22).



# AS REVEALED TO NOAH

- **Context:** Humanity had become so wicked that God sent a global flood, but He preserved Noah and his family.
- **Covenantal Elements:**
  - Common grace: The promise not to destroy the earth by flood again (Gen 9:11).
  - Covenantal sign: The rainbow (Gen 9:13).
  - Continuity: This covenant allowed history to continue so that Christ could eventually come.





# FURTHER REVEALED TO NOAH

- **Promise of Grace:** God made a covenant with Noah to preserve the world and ensure the continued unfolding of His redemptive plan.
- **Administration:** Though this was not redemptive in itself, it served as a foundation for the further revelation of the covenant of grace by preserving humanity.

- **Pointing to Christ:** The ark provided physical salvation from God's judgment through the flood, just as Christ provides ultimate salvation from God's wrath against sin. Entering the ark parallels believers being "in Christ" for salvation (Rom 8:1; 1Pe 3:20-21).



# AS REVEALED TO ABRAHAM

- **Context:** God chose Abraham to be the father of a special nation through whom the Redeemer would come.
- **Covenantal Elements:**
  - Faith as the means of righteousness (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3).
  - Circumcision as the covenant sign (Gen 17:10-11), foreshadowing baptism in the New Testament (Col 2:11-12).





# FURTHER REVEALED TO ABRAHAM

- **Promise of Grace:**
  - Land: A physical inheritance for Abraham's descendants (Canaan, later pointing to the new creation).
  - Seed: A great nation (Israel), ultimately fulfilled in Christ, the true Seed (Gal 3:16).
  - Blessing to the nations: The promise that through Abraham's seed, all nations would be blessed (Gen 12:3).
- **Administration:** The covenant of grace was now more visibly structured, with Israel as a distinct covenant people through whom the Messiah would come.
- **Pointing to Christ:** Paul connects circumcision to Christ's work, saying believers have received a spiritual circumcision "made without hands" through faith in Jesus. (Col 2:11-12) which is replaced by Baptism



# AS REVEALED TO MOSES

- **Context:** After redeeming Israel from Egypt, God gave them the Law at Mount Sinai.
- **Promise of Grace:** The Mosaic covenant pointed to Christ by establishing Israel as a priestly nation and foreshadowing salvation.
- **Covenantal Elements:**
  - **Moral Law:** The Ten Commandments (Exo 20) reflecting God's righteousness.
  - **Ceremonial Law:** Sacrifices, temple worship, and priesthood, all pointing to Christ (Heb 10:1).
  - **Civil Law:** The legal system governing Israel as a theocratic nation.





# FURTHER REVEALED TO MOSES

- **Promise of Grace:** The Mosaic covenant pointed to Christ by establishing Israel as a priestly nation and foreshadowing salvation.
- **Administration:** Though the Mosaic covenant (in keeping with the whole Bible, (Psm 1; Eph 6:3; 1 Pet 3:10, etc.), promised blessings for obedience, it was not a separate way of salvation. The sacrificial system showed that salvation was by grace through a mediator (foreshadowing Christ).

- **Pointing to Christ:** The crossing of the Red Sea symbolizes baptism (1Co 10:1-2) and the believer's salvation in Christ. Also, the animal sacrifices could not take away sin (Heb 10:4) but pointed to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice (Heb 10:10-14)



# AS REVEALED TO DAVID

- **Context:** God established David's dynasty, promising that his Seed would rule forever.
- **Covenantal Elements:**
  - David's line as God's chosen dynasty.
  - The Messianic expectation that a perfect king would one day reign.





# FURTHER REVEALED TO DAVID

- **Promise of Grace:**
  - A kingdom that would last forever (2 Sa 7:16).
  - A son of David who would rule righteously (Psm 89:3-4).
  - This was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of David (Luke 1:32-33).
- **Administration:** This administration prepared Israel for the coming of Christ as the true King.
- **Pointing to Christ:** As David was a representative and king for the people, Christ is our representative for righteousness with God the Father (Acts 13:22-23)





# NEW COVENANT ADMINISTRATION

- **Fulfillment of All Administrations:**
  - The promises given in previous covenants were not abolished but fulfilled in Christ.
  - The substance (salvation by grace through faith in Christ) remains the same.
  - The administration changes: circumcision is replaced by baptism, sacrifices are replaced by Christ's finished work.
- **Key Features:**
  - The law written on the heart (Jer 31:33).
  - Direct access to God without an earthly priesthood (Heb 10:19-22).
  - The inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God (Eph 2:13-14).





# CONCLUSION

Each Old Testament administration was a progressive unfolding of the same Covenant of Grace:

1. Adam - The first gospel promise
2. Noah - The preservation of the human race for redemption
3. Abraham - The promise of a Redeemer through Abraham's Seed
4. Moses - The law and sacrifices pointing to Christ
5. David - The promise of a righteous king
6. New Covenant - Fulfillment in Christ

Covenant Theology maintains that God's plan of salvation has always been the same, though administered in different ways. Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of all the Old Testament administrations of the covenant of grace!

(Mat 5:17-20)