

Chapter 25: The Covenants Between God and Man: What principles determine the way God relates to us?

A covenant is an unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of their relationship.

- Divinely imposed=man agrees but God dictates the terms
- Unchangeable=can be superseded, replaced—not changed.

A. **The Covenant of Works (Adam and Eve in Eden) (p. 516)** (Hos 6:7, Rom 5:12-21)

1. Essential parts of covenant present...
 - a) Clear definition of parties involved
 - b) Legally binding set of provisions that stipulate the conditions of their relationship (Gen 1:28, Gen 2:16-17)
 - c) Promises of blessings for obedience (implied in commandments to A&E; note also Rom 7:10, Lev 18:5)
 - d) The condition for obtaining those blessings: obedience to God's commands
2. Symbol of Covenant: not named, but probably the Tree of Life
3. Importance of speaking of the relationship between God and man in the garden as a *covenant* relationship:
 - a) A relationship did not occur automatically between Creator and creature
 - b) It was an expression of God's fatherly love for the man and woman.
 - c) Helps us see the clear parallels between this and subsequent covenants
4. Covenant of works still in force? Yes, but not in exactly the same way
 - a) Paul implies: perfect obedience --> life (Rom 7:10, Rom 10:5)
 - b) Punishment for covenant is still in effect (Rom 6:23)
 - c) Christ completely obeyed the covenant of works for us (Rom 5:18-19)
 - d) In certain senses, the covenant of works does not remain in force
 - i. Not faced with specific command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil
 - ii. All have sinful nature and not able to fulfill provisions of the covenant of works on our own and receive its benefits
 - iii. For Christians, Christ has fulfilled the provisions of this covenant successfully once for all.
 - iv. For Christians to think of themselves as obligated to try earn God's favor by obedience --> no hope of salvation (Gal 3:10-11)

B. **The Covenant of Redemption**

1. A covenant among the members of the Trinity to become a man, be our representative, obey the demands of the covenant of works on our behalf, and pay the penalty for sin, which we deserved.
 - a) Father: Give the Son a people whom he would redeem, send the Son, accept him as a representative of the redeemed, etc. (Joh 17:2-6, Joh 3:16, Heb 10:5)
 - b) Son: live as a man under the Mosaic Law, be perfectly obedient (even to death), etc. (Gal 4:4, Heb 10:7, Phi 2:8)
 - c) Holy Spirit: Fill and empower Christ to carry out his ministry on earth and apply the benefits of Christ's redemptive work (Mat 3:16, Luk 4:1, Joh 14:16-17)
2. "Covenant" reminds us that it was something voluntarily undertaken by God

C. **The Covenant of Grace (519)**

1. Essential Elements
 - a) Parties: God and the people whom he will redeem, Christ as mediator (Heb 9:15)
 - b) Condition
 - i. Beginning: faith in the work of Christ the redeemer (Rom 5:1)
 - ii. Continuing: obedience to Christ's commands (Jam 2:17)
 - c) Promise: eternal life with God (Rev 21:3)

- d) Signs
 - i. OT: circumcision, ceremonies
 - ii. NT: baptism, Lord's Supper
- 2. Various forms of the covenant (or these can be called different covenants) (essential elements have remained the same, though the specific provisions of the covenant vary)
 - a) Covenant with Abraham (appx. 2000 BC) note: parties, condition, promise, sign. Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 15:5-6; 17:1-13
 - promises: land, great people, blessing.
 - above all: God would be their God, they would be his people
 - b) The Mosaic Covenant (appx. 1440 BC)
 - i. Ex. 24:3-8; 34:28; Deut 4:13; Num 10:33
 - ii. Many detailed laws, sacrifices, festivals
 - iii. But the law could not empower obedience
 - c) Covenant with David (approx. 1000 BC)
 - i. A continuation of the covenant with Abraham
 - ii. Jer. 33:19-22
 - d) God promised that someday there would be a new covenant
 - i. Jer. 31:31-33
 - e) The covenants with Abraham and David are never called "old" in the New Testament, only the covenant under Moses (2Co 3:14)
 - f) The essential elements of the "covenant of grace" are all there beginning with Abraham
 - i. Gal. 3:8, 29
 - g) At Christ's death, a new covenant was established, and we are members of that new covenant (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; Heb. 8:6-13)
 - h) The sacrificial system of the Mosaic covenant foreshadowed the bearing of sin by Christ (Heb 9:14)
 - i) The new covenant in Christ is much more excellent than the old (Heb 8:6)
 - j) In the new covenant, there are far greater blessings
 - i. Jesus the Messiah has come
 - ii. He has lived, died, and risen among us, atoning once for all for our sins (Heb 9:24-28)
 - iii. He has revealed God most fully to us (Joh 1:14)
 - iv. The new covenant has abolished all the detailed laws about sacrifices, circumcision, dietary laws, festivals, that were part of the Mosaic Covenant (Heb. 10:3-4; Gal. 4:10-11; Gal. 5:1-2; Col. 2:16-17)
 - v. He has poured out the Holy Spirit on all his people in new covenant power (Act 1:8)
 - vi. He has written his laws on our hearts (Heb 8:10)
 - vii. This new covenant is the "eternal covenant" in Christ—we shall forever have fellowship with God, and he shall be our God, and we shall be his people (Heb 8:10; 13:20)