

Finding Your Place in God's Story of Redemption Winter/Spring 2015

Finding your Place in God's Story: The Covenant of Grace and Everyday Life - This class will take you step by step through the covenants of the Bible and help you understand the over-arching plot of scripture through the lens of God's Covenant of Grace. We will explore the aspect of God's covenant through its various administrations throughout the Old and New testaments and answer the question:

What does each sub-plot mean for our lives today?

What role do we play in God's story of redemption?

How does a promise made so many centuries ago to Noah, Abraham and David have an impact on my life?

The objective of this class is: to equip you with the confidence to read and understand scripture and find your place in the continuing story of God's redemptive grace.

Over the last few weeks, we have learned together as the covenants of scripture, following the culturally relevant means of the day, collectively conveyed to us the unfolding story of redemption. We have seen how each covenant, building on the one(s) which preceded it, progressively reveal the will of God and his activity among men. We have witnessed that this redemptive historical work has had one objective: for God to live among us and be our God and for us to be his people. Today we will explore the introduction of the New Covenant – a superior covenant. Superior because it is the fruition, the climactic crest, of all prior covenants. Superior in the same manner that the actual sun is superior to all its rays. In the new covenant, all prior covenants and the whole of scripture is given unification. Abraham's election, Israel's redemption from slavery, the destruction of the physical throne of David – all offer meaning because of their fulfilment under the new covenant, the Covenant of Grace. It is only with the first advent of Christ, his life, death and resurrection that we know the Covenant of Grace to be all of grace from beginning to end.

- 1) *The Birth of Christ and the Abrahamic Covenant* – The covenantal blessing given to Abraham or “mercy” as referenced in Luke 1:55, is a blessing only accessible through regenerative faith. This “re-birthing” faith needs an object. The “object” mentioned in the context of the Abrahamic Covenant was the promised offspring, the true reference of which we are to understand pertains to Christ (Galatians 3:16). So, the birth of Christ introduced the promised seed (of both Genesis 3:15 as well as Genesis 15:5 and 17:3). This blessedness is beautifully described in the *Magnificat*, the song of praise uttered by Mary, of Luke 1:46-55.
- 2) *The Birth of Christ and the Davidic Covenant* – It is not for vain reason, that Matthew begins his gospel with the genealogy of Christ. He was establishing the kingly descent from David to Christ. This is reiterated later in his description of the birth of Christ (Matthew 1:18-23). There are two correlations between the birth of Christ and the Davidic Covenant, which will here be examined. They are as follows:
 - A. Christ is the son of David: Joseph is addressed by the angels as, “the son of David”. This would not have been usual for descendants of the royal household in the time of Christ for two reasons: 1) Joseph would have been called, “son of Jacob” since his father's name was Jacob. 2) Son of David would have caused incitement among the Roman Empire as well as a perceived threat to Herod. This greeting clearly was intended to evoke remembrance of the Davidic Covenant and reference to the eternal

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throne of the King. During the intertestamental period, the writing of the prophets studied by the faithful led to the conclusion that the title “son of David” was a messianic title and would be mentioned in conveyance of descriptions unique to Messianic rule.

- B. **Christ is the Son of God:** Not only is Christ the legitimate son of David, he was also the son of God. Twice in the above passage, reference is made to the fact that Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit – His true father is God. The *mysterion* (mystery) of the incarnation offers a breathtaking understanding of the self-maledictory oath integral to the Abrahamic Covenant. God would indeed see to it that his covenant promises were fulfilled by becoming a man and accomplishing the fulfillment of them himself. This will be discussed in greater detail next week when we explore the life and word of Christ.
- 3) *The Birth of Christ and the New Covenant* – Last week we saw a crucial element in the promise of the New Covenant (and somewhat distinct from those preceding it). This is the element of forgiveness of sins. Although the Mosaic Covenant offered a provision for atonement (the sin offering), the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). In Matthew 1:21 the salvific nature of Christ’s coming is expressed as: “...for he will save his people from their sins.” Implicit in this promise is the foundation for the fundamental theological doctrines of limited atonement and penal substitutionary atonement. This statement answers Genesis 3:15 and Jeremiah 31:34. Salvation, and the reversal of the curse of the fall now becomes the fundamental characteristic of God’s covenant with all of creation. This is not simply salvation from Egyptian bondage (as crucial as that redemptive process was to the Mosaic covenant), but salvation from the bondage of sin and the slavery of death. This salvation is earned by the man Christ and is conveyed by the same to all who believe in him.
- 4) *The Birth of Christ and the Mission of God* – Throughout our study of the covenants of scripture, we have seen how all of the sub-plots of scripture have been missional at their very core. God did not elect a man (Abraham) and create a nation (Israel) just so that he could show preferential treatment. At the core of Abraham’s election and Israel’s dominion was the mission of God, a mission which they far too often forgot and neglected. The mission of God reaches its fountainhead in the coming of Messiah. Luke 2:25-32 offers insight into the salvation rendered by the long awaited Redeemer. This salvation brings the light of revelation and glory. This in a nutshell describes the missional mandate of God’s covenant community.
- 5) *What does this mean for me?* As we see the continuation of the unfolding of God’s redemptive story we should pause and ask the following questions: If Christ is the source of blessing ascribed to the Abrahamic covenant, what does this mean for the physical descendants of Abraham? If Christ is indeed the rightful heir of the throne of David, what does this mean for me when I am stuck in traffic? If the coming of Christ is the climactic crest of the story of redemption, what need/relevance is there in his second advent (glorious return)? How does Christ as the mediator of the New Covenant fulfill/confirm all the preceding covenants? In what way(s) is salvation different for believers today than in the Old Testament church?