

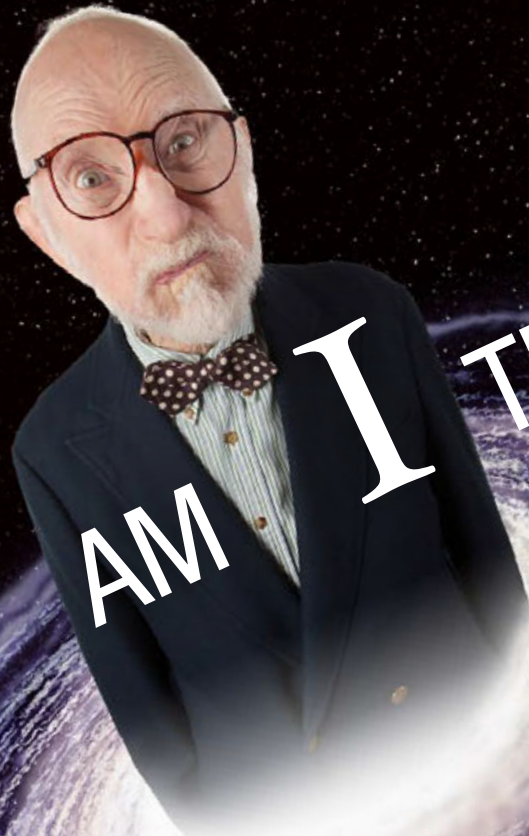
The Great
Divide
Mark Kolchin

Squeaky
Wheels
Elders' Corner

The New Covenant
& Dispensationalism
David Dunlap

UPLOOK

March 2012 Visit online: www.uplook.org



AM I

THE CENTER
OF THE
UNIVERSE?

To God be the glory



Why are we here? Where are we going? What is the purpose of life? People have long struggled to answer these questions.

One of the wonderful things about the Bible is that, in its pages, we have rock-solid answers. Thanks to the Word of God, there are children all around the world who can answer the important questions of life, while Bible-rejecting geniuses stumble about in darkness.

So, we might take a moment and ask ourselves, why *are* we here? What *is* the purpose of life? Romans 1 gives us a hint. In describing the worldview of the godless, Paul says that they have “*exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God*” (v.23). Whatever else this means, it is saying that their error is that they undervalued the glory of God. Fallen man wants to exalt himself and this necessitates that he diminish God in his thinking.

One often hears Christians being blamed for thinking that the earth is the center of the universe. Apart from wrongly equating the Roman Catholic church with Christianity, it is peculiar that Christians are routinely ridiculed for theories that were developed by a pagan Greek astrologer (Ptolemy). But this is especially peculiar when, planetary motion aside, those who falsely accuse Christians of this view have precisely the same philosophical viewpoint that they are ridiculing: they believe that we are the center of the universe. God, if He exists at all, is subservient to us—we are free to ignore His commands as much as we’d like; He is to be satisfied with whatever token service we deign to throw His way (usually on Christmas and Easter); and He is answerable to us if world conditions are not to our liking.

The Bible presents an infinitely loftier view of life and history. It turns out that, as much as it might pain our egos to admit it, the universe doesn’t even philosophically orbit us! The real purpose of life and the universe is to glorify God. The glory of God is the purpose of creation (Ps. 19:1; Isa. 43:7; Ps. 8:5), the Law (Ex. 24:16), the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-35), the temple (1 Kings 8:11), salvation (Heb. 2:10; 2 Pet. 1:2-3; 1 Pet. 5:10), Israel (Isa. 44:23), the church (Eph. 3:21), and the future (Isa. 24:23; 66:18).

It is important for us as believers to realize that salvation, as wonderful as it is, is not the ultimate purpose of history. It is a means to an even greater end: the glory of God. This is clearly stated in Ephesians 1:6, 12, and 14. As Charles Ryrie has put it, “*Salvation, for all its wonder, is but one facet of the diamond of the glory of God.*”

Why does this matter? Because we need to resist the natural tendency of the flesh to exalt man. As Christians, we are not exempt from the temptation to view ourselves as the center of all things. But the Lord wants to lift our eyes higher to enjoy the privilege of transcending our natural thoughts and seeing through His eyes. Secondly, it is essential because the glory of God is to be the goal of our every thought, word, and deed: “*whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Cor. 10:31b). If the glory of God isn’t given the right place in our doctrine, it will be difficult to give it the right place in our practice.

But, primarily, the reason we need to value the glory of God above all else is that the glory of God is a person (Ezek. 43:2), the Lord Jesus, and, in all things, He must have the preeminence (Col. 1:18).

—James Martin editor@uplook.org

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Sam Thorpe describes God's original intent for the human race and the eternal principles that will triumph in spite of man's failure and Satan's schemes.

The Adamic Covenant

What is the first message of God to fallen humanity? Shawn Abigail shows how God, when man had ruined His earth, opened heaven to him.

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Drew Craig ably shows the distinctions that mark out God's covenant with His friend Abraham. It is crucial to grasp the unconditional promises He made.

The Mosaic Covenant

In this very helpful article, Larry Price shows from the Word the striking contrasts between the principles of law and grace, and the triumph of the cross.

22 The Davidic Covenant

Showing the remarkable change in focus between two parallel passages, James Martin describes how the One “greater than Solomon” has such surpassing glory.

The Great Divide

In a fair-handed style, Mark Kolchin lays out both the high objectives and glaring failures of Covenant Theology.

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Romans 9-11

Why, after coming to a climax on the truth of salvation, does Paul include this section on the case of Israel? Colin Anderson gives us some keys to following God's thoughts in this vital section.

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(Gen. 22:17)

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Cross Canada Cruisers



GEAR UP FOR THE 2012 SEASON

Attention young men and local churches interested in evangelism:

Cross Canada Cruisers was blessed with another encouraging season in 2011, and, in the will of the Lord, plans are being set for 2012. C3 runs from June through August, 2012. Locations are being determined, but we need to know if you are interested! Eager to reach out with the gospel in Ontario? Are you a male over age 18 and well reported of in your assembly? We are seeking young, committed, spiritual men, and evangelistically minded assemblies to work alongside each other for the gospel's sake. Visit www.teamc3.info

Contact Randy Hoffman: randyhoffman@sympatico.ca or Fil Capuano: fil@chatsworthproject.ca

CONFERENCES, CAMPS & RETREATS

MEN'S RETREAT IN NORTHEAST PA

Camp Iroquoina will host a retreat on Mar 2-3. Mike Attwood (MO) is the speaker. Fine food, spiritual and physical. Bring a hungry friend! The cost is \$45 for Friday and Saturday or \$35 for just Saturday. The camp is just 3 to 3.5 hours from NJ, Philly, Harrisburg, and Rochester.

Contact: Mark Thomas
email: campiroquoina@epix.net
web: www.iroquoina.org

TENNESSEE SPRING TEEN RETREAT

Teens ages 13-18 are invited to a retreat Mar 2-4 at Horton Haven Christian Camp. It begins Friday at 6:30 PM and concludes Sunday after lunch. The cost is \$55.

Register online: www.hortonhaven.org
Contact: Wendy Phelan
email: wendy@hortonhaven.org

WOMEN'S WEEKEND AWAY IN TN

This annual retreat at Horton Haven Christian Camp will take place Mar 9-10 for ages 13 and up. This year's speaker is

Tammy Hollingsworth (GA). The conference begins with registration at 5:30 PM and concludes Saturday at 4:00 PM. The cost is \$50. Out of town attendees may arrange to stay through Sunday at no additional cost. Please register online at www.hortonhaven.org or email Wendy Phelan at wendy@hortonhaven.org

MIDWEST MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Enjoy in depth Bible study and fellowship Mar 20-23 at Lake Geneva Conference Center, W 2655 South St., Lake Geneva, WI. The sessions will be led by Alan Gamble (Scotland). Elders, teachers, and commended workers as well as young men are encouraged to attend. The event will begin at 2 PM on Tuesday, and finish with lunch on Friday. Room and board: \$188/double occupancy; \$198/single occupancy. Registration deadline is March 6. A few scholarships are available for high school and college students who would not otherwise be able to attend. **Contact:**

Brian Veenstra ph: 616-890-1876
email: godsroofer.veenstra@gmail.com
Will Webber ph: 815-222-8269
email: will.webber@sbcglobal.net

BROOKINGS, SD PRAYER CONFERENCE

The conference will be held over the weekend of Mar 23-25. It will be geared towards believers ages 15-25 (but all ages are welcome). Housing and meals will be provided free of charge. This year one of the topics will be fasting in prayer. Come prepared to spend a day fasting (if you are unable to fast, note that in your registration, and food will be provided).

Register online at:
www.brookingschristianassembly.com
Larry Sax: larrysax@gmail.com
Nathanael Pena: goserveurking@gmail.com

CONFERENCE IN CONNECTICUT

The annual Spring Bible Conference at Wellspring Bible Fellowship, Welles Road, Old Mystic, CT will be held Mar 23-25 with Randy Amos (NY) as the expected speaker. The conference begins Friday at 7:00 PM and continues with four sessions on Saturday. Lunch provided. Brother Randy will also speak at the Sunday morning meeting.

Contact:
John Clifford ph: 860-445-0622
email: clifford.j@att.net

front lines praise around the clock

SPRING TEEN RETREAT IN GEORGIA

Camp Hope will host their Spring Teen Retreat Mar 30-Apr 1 with speaker Glenn Barinowski (SC). The retreat begins Friday with registration at 6 PM and ends Sunday at 11:30 AM (no lunch provided). Cost: \$60/person.

Contact: Ed Myers ph: 706-863-0875 email: myersed@yahoo.com Registration form is available at www.camphopega.org

CONFERENCE IN TEXAS

The 2012 Dallas Area Conference will be held Mar 30-Apr 1 in conjunction with Garland Bible Chapel at Wheatland Bible Chapel, 1303 West Wheatland Rd., Duncanville, TX 75116. In the will of the Lord, speakers will be John Heller (AR) and Scott DeGroff (KS). **Contact:** email: wheatlandbiblechapel@gmail.com web: www.wheatlandbiblechapel.org Accommodations, contact John Daniels ph: 972-424-9889

SPRING CONFERENCE IN BC

Heather Bible Chapel, 277 West 68th Ave., Vancouver and 16th Ave Gospel Chapel, 2756 W. 16th Ave, Vancouver will co-host their annual conference Apr 6-8. The scheduled speakers are Randy Amos (NY) and Nathan Bramsen (NC). Sessions on Friday and Saturday are at Heather Bible Chapel beginning at 3:30 PM with a youth fellowship Saturday after the evening session. The final session will be Sunday at 7:00 PM at 16th Ave. Gospel Chapel. There will be a children's program each day. **Contact:** Norman Chandler ph: 604-271-1093 email: ejeannormr@yahoo.ca

FATHER/SON RETREAT AT CAMP HOPE

Camp Hope will host their Father/Son

Retreat Apr 20-22. The speaker will be Jesse Gentile (FL). The conference begins Friday with registration at 6:00 PM and ends Sunday with lunch. Cost: \$60/family. **Contact:** Steve Roys, 7011 Pony Lake Rd., Dahlonega, GA 30533 ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@arilion.com

Registration form is available on the camp website at www.camphopega.org

YOUNG ADULT RETREAT IN INDIANA

The 10th annual Believers' Challenge Young Adult Retreat will be held at the Country Lake Christian Retreat Center (20 miles North of Louisville) in Underwood, IN Apr 20-22. Lord willing, the speaker will be Tim McNeal (MO). Please register by Apr 6th.

Contact: Seth McNeal ph: 636-667-9992 email: stlsinguy@gmail.com

CHICAGO AREA CONFERENCE

The Palos Hills Christian Assembly plans to host its annual conference Apr 27-29. Further information to follow at www.paloshillsassembly.org

SPRING CONFERENCE IN ALABAMA

The Christians meeting at Hope Bible Chapel in Birmingham, AL announce their annual spring conference which will be held Apr 27-29. The invited speaker is Joe Reese (ON). **Contact:** Buddy Hughes ph: 205-467-2601 Alton Sizemore ph: 205-988-9931 web: www.hopebiblechapel.org

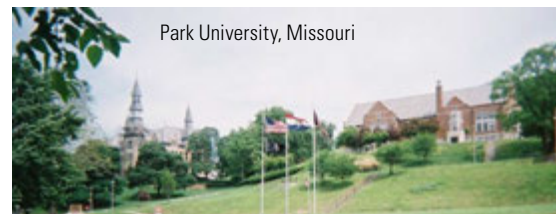
ANNUAL LOUISIANA CONFERENCE

Lake Park Chapel, at 201 Schlieff Drive, Belle Chasse, LA will hold its 68th annual Bible conference May 5-6, beginning Saturday at 3:30 PM. Enjoy a spiritually refreshing weekend in God's Word with

Keith Trevolt (KS) speaking. **Contact:** Ray Cummings, 103 Dickson Dr., Belle Chasse, LA 70037 ph: 504-239-7068 or 504-393-7083 email: lakeparkchapel@cmaaccess.com

CAMP HOPE IN GEORGIA

The camp will have their Home School Camp May 21-26. The speaker for junior campers is Nate Thomas (SC) and Ken Miller (OK) for teen campers. This camp is for ages 7-19. The week begins Monday with registration at 3:00 PM and ends Saturday morning after breakfast. Registration form and a complete summer camp schedule are available on the camp website at www.camphopega.org/ **Contact:** Steve Roys, 7011 Pony Lake Rd., Dahlonega, GA 30533 ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@gmail.com



Park University, Missouri

VESSELS OF HONOR 2012

A young adults conference sponsored by East Tulsa Bible Chapel will be held on the campus of Park University, Parkville, MO May 25-28. The theme will be "Encouraging Local Works for the Lord." The speakers are John Heller (AR) Rex Trogdon (NC) Eric Smith (NY) Warren Henderson (KS) and Brenda Henderson (KS). **Contact:** Jim Lindamood ph: 918-663-1121 email: allmon@intcon.net Dan Moffitt ph: 918-744-6484 email: danmoffitt@sbcglobal.net web: www.vesselsofhonor.org

INDIAN BRETHREN CONF. IN INDIANA

The IBF Family Conference will be held at Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN Jul 4-8. The theme is "Equipping the Saints for Building up the Body - for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" Ephesians 4:12 NASB. John Gordon, Raleigh (NC), Nate Bramsen (West Africa), and John P. Thomas (India) will minister from the Word. Please pray for the conference. For further details, please check. www.ibfus.org

WEEKEND FAMILY CONFERENCE AT CAMP HOPE

Camp Hope will host the Southeast Family Weekend Conference Jul 27-29. Speakers will be John Heller (AR) for the adults and Buddy Hughes (AL) for the children. Registration will begin Friday evening after supper (no supper provided) and will end with a light lunch on Sunday. Please note this is a change from the week long family camp and is now for a weekend only.

Contact: Steve Roys, 7011 Pony Lake Rd., Dahlonega, GA 30533 ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@gmail.com web: www.bit.ly/southeastfamilycamp

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

MANAGING DIRECTOR POSITION IN BC

This is a full-time position to oversee the camp operation and its facility. This is a ministry for a person or couple with a passionate desire to reach children and adults with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Morning Star Bible Camp is located about 30 minutes from Kelowna on the slopes of the Okanagan Valley of BC. This is an



Loan Program
Stewards Foundation has loaned money to assemblies for building purchases, construction and renovation since 1945.

Health Care Assistance Program
Loan proceeds permit Stewards Foundation to assist eligible, full-time commended workers with their healthcare expenses through the annual gift. Contributions can be made directly to HCAP through the 100% Pass-Thru Fund.

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Contact us today: (972) 726-6550

stewardsfoundation.org

ideal position for someone with the energy and a vision to see a camp work grow to a year round ministry. On site housing and utilities are available. Financial remuneration to be discussed. For a more detailed job description, go to the MSBC website: www.morningstarbiblecamp.com

Contact: Ken Spohr
email: kenspohr@hotmail.com
ph: 250-832-2652 or Norm Spohr
email: npspohr@hotmail.com
ph: 250-828-0723

CAMP DIRECTOR NEEDED IN ALASKA

North Star Bible Camp of Willow, AK is looking for the provision of God's choice of a Camp Director. The Lord has provided a beautiful and effective facility with tremendous opportunities to honor Him in reaching out to people of all ages. The need for an infusion of new life and spiritual vigor is evident and pertinent. They seek a couple devoted to the Lord and to serving Him, people oriented, capable in office management and finance, able to provide spiritual direction and encouragement to staff, the ability to

write devotionals for campers and staff, take public speaking opportunities, having better than average computer skills for development of brochures and other publications, etc. For a full disclosure of requirements, expectations, etc., contact Stuart Mitchell, North Star Bible Camp, Box 4, Willow, AK 99688
ph: 907-892-4199 or 907-232-9729
email: nsbcdirector@gmail.com
web: northstarbiblecamp.com

FACILITIES DIRECTOR IN TENNESSEE

Horton Haven Christian Camp in Chapel Hill, TN is looking for an individual to serve as Facilities Director. This is a year round position with responsibility for the care of the grounds, buildings and equipment. Candidates need to have the ability to plan, budget and organize volunteers while being an integral part of our team with the purpose of reaching children with the gospel. **Contact:** Matt Phelan, Horton Haven Christian Camp, Box 276, Chapel Hill, TN 37034 ph: 931-364-7656 email: matt@hortonhaven.org web: www.hortonhaven.org

STEP 2012 IN CALIFORNIA

Summer Team Evangelism Partnership is a ministry opportunity Jun 16-Jul 2 for those eighteen years of age and older that will give a flavor of God's work in Mexico, Central and South America without needing a visa or passport. Benefit from teaching and training in Bible, evangelism and cultural issues, along with practical hands-on experience working among Latino children. **Contact:** John Duckhorn email: justducky@aol.com



The GNOM VI Team at Pinnacle, NC

GOOD NEWS ON THE MOVE

Prayer is requested for the Lord's blessing and guidance on GNOM's field training ministry. Leaders and team members are continuing on a revised vision of this program, spending longer periods in fewer regions to facilitate better follow-up. Emphasizing discipleship, follow-up and soul winning, the team is now in FL. To receive weekly updates from the team, subscribe at www.uplook.org

Contact: Jerry Denny ph: 336-432-3284 email: jerrydenny@bellsouth.net

CWF FUND

The purpose of Christian Workers' Fellowship Fund, Inc. is to "receive gifts and donations of money from the Lord's people and distribute the same to workers sound in doctrine and associated with assemblies of believers and who are devoting their time to the Lord's work." Founded in 1957, it is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation,

so contributions made to it by U.S. residents are tax-deductible. All funds received are distributed every month. Only funds designated for expenses are used for this purpose. The directors serve without remuneration. Funds received in the fourth quarter totaled \$585,876.79, and of this, \$11,158.54 was designated for general expenses, the rest for distribution. A financial report may be requested from: The Treasurer, Christian Workers' Fellowship Fund, Inc., Box 1117, Lawrence, KS 66044

COMMENDATIONS

DUANE AND LORI DELZER

After over 23 years of active service in Bolivia, Duane and Lori are returning to the U.S. for an extended time. Those at Grace Bible Chapel, Fullerton, CA have commended the Delzers to missionary work in Southern California in conjunction with Latino Evangelistic Ministries (www.latinoministries.org).

They will be taking over the Spanish Emmaus Bible course ministry as well as working with the existing Spanish speaking assemblies and new start ups with the focus on strengthening leadership and outreach.

REBECCA MOFFITT

After faithfully serving the Lord in France for the past 30 plus years, Rebecca has moved back to Tulsa, OK. Seeing her desire to continue to serve the Lord as He directs in the United States, those at East Tulsa Bible Chapel redirect Rebecca's commendation from serving full-time in the foreign field to serving full-time as a commended home worker.

TERRY AND SHIRLEY WILSON

The believers gathered at Grace Chapel, Jamestown, NY commend Terry and Shirley to full-time ministry in the Lord's work. Terry and Shirley have been a welcome addition to the assembly since their move from Tracy, CA. Terry regularly ministers the Word and currently serves as Administrator at Camp Li-Lo-Li. He also serves on the board of ECS Ministries (Emmaus Correspondence School).

MISCELLANY

RECORDED SPIRITUAL SONGS

To help saints sing spiritual songs together, MP3 files for more than 140 spiritual songs are available for free download at www.SaintsServing.net The recordings are four-part vocal and/or piano for each song, and some songs also have separate alto/tenor/bass recordings to help to teach harmony when singing parts.



HEAD COVERINGS

A variety of head coverings are available to view and purchase from the web site: www.headcoveringsonline.com
Contact: Susan Crowe ph: 905-640-4218 email: pandscrowe@gmail.com

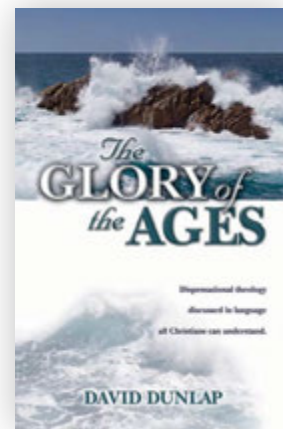
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The news editor reserves the right to determine those items best suited for the magazine. Editorial decisions are final. Photos accepted. News items are also posted online when time allows. Send news items to: frontlines@uplook.org

Helpful Resources

on a challenging subject

The Glory of the Ages
by David Dunlap
published by Gospel Folio Press



Order direct online at
www.gospelfolio.com
or call 1-800-952-2382

The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.” To paraphrase, we need to be diligent in our Bible study so that when we stand before God to give an account, we may not be ashamed due to a careless handling of His precious Word. To this end, may I suggest three books for your study? These are study books. They could be used as a basis for a group study on the very foundation of the way we approach the Scriptures.

God reveals Himself in history. The events of history that are selected by God’s Spirit are selected so we might understand the revelation of God and His purposes for mankind, thus answering the eternal questions: “Why am I here?” and “Where am I going?” There are two systems of interpretation of the Bible’s history that are prevalent today: covenant theology and dispensational theology. These two systems are dramatically different. They differ in the goal of history and the fundamental way in which Scripture is viewed. A very fine book has been written to compare these two systems. Renald Showers gives an overview of covenant theology and shows its strengths and weaknesses. He devotes a larger part of the book to an examination of dispensational theology and demonstrates its superiority over covenant theology. *There Really Is a Difference*, the book’s title, is a good

description of the book’s contents. It does make a difference which of these two systems you follow, for it greatly affects your understanding of God’s ultimate goal in history and the way in which you view its history.

If you are convinced by Renald Showers’ book that dispensational theology is for you, then there is another book you must study: *Dispensationalism* by Charles Ryrie. Initially published as *Dispensationalism Today*, it has been updated and republished. This is an excellent book on the definition, origins, hermeneutics, and distinctive features of dispensationalism. When you get through with this book, you will be able to defend its precepts and understand its principles.

There is an aspect of dispensationalism which concerns the future events of the Bible. As Charles Ryrie says in his book, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, “All dispensationalists are premillennialists, but not all premillennialists are dispensationalists.” To understand this statement and to see the development of prophecy from a dispensational standpoint, this book is a must-read.

Why are any of these books important? Because if I am to properly study the Bible, I must have a consistent interpretive guideline. It is the lack of this which is bringing much error into the church and is causing so much discouragement among God’s people. May we be delivered from error as we “rightly divide the Word of truth.” —Jim McKendrick

The Glory of the Ages is a plea to serious Christians to think more critically about the importance of biblical doctrine, and especially dispensational theology. There is a critical need today for Christians to think more clearly about doctrine. The proper understanding of biblical doctrine is not a mere academic exercise but is essential for every Christian. It is spiritual fuel for the soul and a guardrail for the church.

Much in modern theology confuses more than it clarifies and creates more questions than answers. Good theology provides clarity, answers, and an understanding of biblical truth. However, the best theology is that which exalts Christ and stirs our passion to better understand Scripture while nurturing a deeper love for Christ.

In every age, the flame which ignites spiritual change is biblical doctrine. The great truths of Scripture were the tools God used to transform lives. The reader will find that, during the last two hundred years, no theology has touched more lives, stirred more hearts towards evangelism, and awakened more Christians to greater love for Christ than dispensationalism.

The Glory of the Ages discusses these issues in language that all Christians can understand, quoting freely from the Scriptures and from writings of evangelical writers both past and present. —ed.

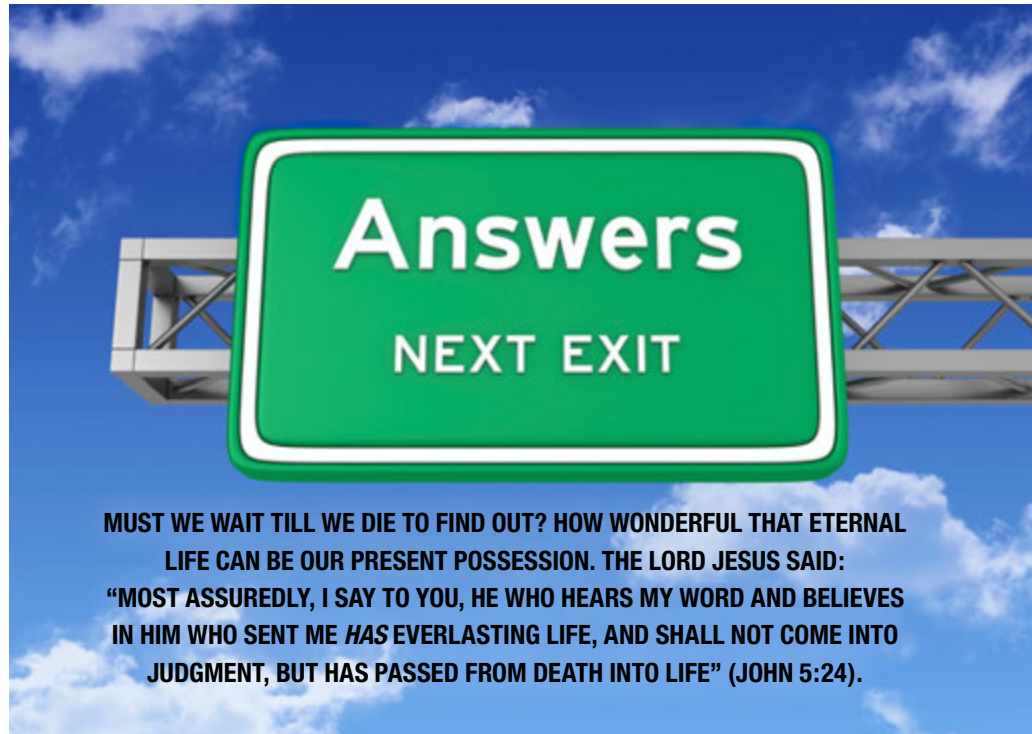
Where do they go?

One of life's big questions

“**M**y name is Temple Grandin. I’m not like other people. I think in pictures and I connect them.” This is how the colorful and autistic professor of animal science at the University of Colorado introduces herself. As a person with high-functioning autism, Dr. Grandin has a unique way of thinking about the world, and especially about cows. Her ability to think in pictures, along with a heightened sensitivity to touch, sight, and sound, allows her to experience some of what cattle in stockyards and beef processing plants saw and felt. Her mind pictured a radical new design for moving cows that kept them more calm. Her insights changed the beef industry in the U.S.

In the 2010 movie about her life, a young Temple is confronted with the death of her science teacher and mentor. After viewing his lifeless body, she asks her mother with characteristic abruptness, “Where do they go?” She had recently visited her former teacher, but clearly now he was no longer there. The thoughts we wonder silently to ourselves, Temple just blurted out.

Where *do* people go who were present at one moment, inside their bodies, and in the next moment are suddenly gone? Could it really be that people like you and me with unique feelings, likes, dislikes, a sense of humor or artistic flair—even faith and hope—are really just the result of very complex chemistry? Does it make rational sense to believe that



“you” are not really here as you read these words? Why would chemistry *need* to generate consciousness and morality, curiosity, or compassion which only give an appearance of a real and unique person? Do these traits make survival and reproduction more likely? These are questions that those devoted to materialistic and reductionist thinking struggle to answer, because bacteria, yeast, and plants have none of these neurological phenomena, yet their chemistry gives them as much, or more, reproductive success as humans.

If one’s philosophy demands that everything be explained in terms of unintelligent interactions of matter and energy, as did that of the late author and journalist Christopher Hitchens, then even personhood becomes an illusion by definition rather than evidence.

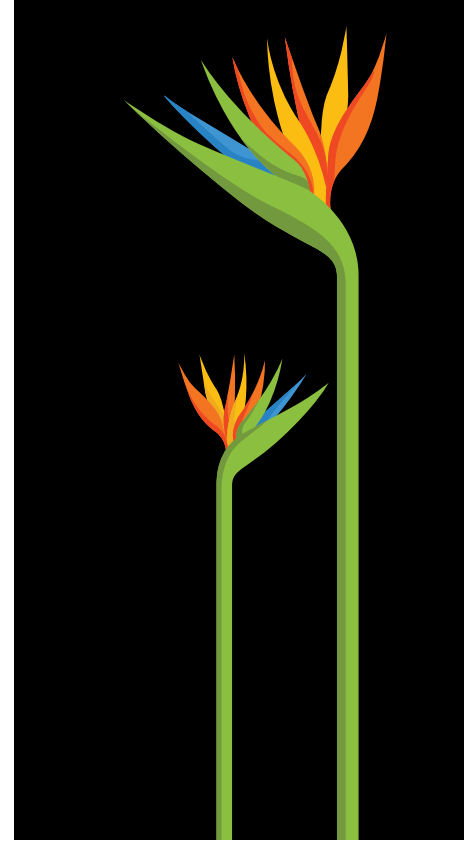
Temple’s question is nonsensical in Hitchens’ world because there is no one to go anywhere, there is only chemistry. And when the chemistry stops, so does the illusion we call a “person.” But if the personhood of Christopher Hitchens was only an illusion of chemistry, why should his (or its) view of the world be accepted as valid at all? It is obvious here that the materialist lives in a world of illusion, contradiction, and the absurd.

Temple Grandin is a unique person who is more than just unique brain chemistry. She is spirit joined to a body in ways we don’t understand. She is a soul, and she is precious to her Creator just as you are. Have no illusions about it, big questions need big answers. Where will you go when you die?

—Michael G. Windheuser, Ph.D.

The Edenic Covenant

by Sam Thorpe



The Edenic covenant, named for its geographical setting, was established by God for man during the first dispensation, the dispensation of innocence. Our approach is twofold: to consider the Edenic covenant in its biblical context and to consider the timeless principles of the covenant applicable today.

A historical contract

A definition and overview of the scriptural covenants between God and man will help us see the biblical context of the Edenic covenant. A covenant is a binding arrangement between two or more parties designed to govern their actions and relationship. The term covenant is derived from Hebrew words meaning “to eat” or “to cut,” referring to ceremonial actions surrounding the ratification of a covenant, such as a meal or sacrifice. The Edenic covenant was unilateral with one conditional element added. It was a command from God issued to Adam, the

royal tenant of the earth. The sovereign Lord established the terms of this contract without man’s consent.

The covenants of Scripture can be grouped as Primeval (Edenic, Adamic, Noahic), Patriarchal (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Levitic, Palestinian, Davidic, Solomonic), and Prophetic (New, Eternal), eleven covenants in all. Each covenant has its unique terms and conditions between God and man. One exception is the eternal (or everlasting) covenant between God the Father and God the Son. (Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:18-21). The elements of the Edenic covenant are seen in man’s responsibility and God’s provision (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:8-17).

Under the Edenic covenant, man had many responsibilities:

1. Populate the earth
2. Subdue the earth for the benefit of human existence
3. Exercise dominion over the rest of creation
4. Sustain human life by eating herbs and fruit
5. Tend the garden of Eden
6. Abstain from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

God provided a garden of material blessings and spiritual fellowship for man. However, the Edenic covenant also contained a provision of judgment for man’s disobedience. The sentence was death (v. 17). The covenant was designed to test man’s obedience. Love and obedience are often coupled in Scripture (Jn. 15:9-10; 1 Jn. 3:18). God desired the expression of man’s love through voluntary obedience to His Word. Nothing short of that could satisfy the heart of God. Man’s disobedience caused this covenant’s provision of judgment and death to be activated upon Adam and all his descendants

Paradise again

(Gen. 5:5; Rom. 5:12; Heb. 9:27).

In this, we see principles that we will see again in other covenants. God created man with a unique design to serve His divine purposes. He gave man the capacity for moral responsibility. He also warned man of the consequences of disobedience. It contains a key principle for all generations: obedience brings divine blessing; disobedience brings divine judgment. There is a parallel charge set forth to the nation of Israel (Deut. 30:15-20).

From a historical perspective, the Edenic covenant was between God and Adam and Eve. Its context was in the garden of Eden within the dispensation of innocence. Its terms were primarily related to the trees of the garden. However, in a more general sense, the principles of the Edenic covenant have a broader application to the subsequent dispensations of world history. William MacDonald, speaking of the forbidden fruit, states; "In different forms, that fruit is still with us today." [Believer's Bible Commentary]

Timeless principles

By way of application, consider some lessons for today that can be gleaned from the Edenic covenant.

1. Man has been given divinely-appointed responsibility for the earth. Man was placed in dominion over and above the rest of creation. He is the pinnacle of God's creative handiwork. The earth was made for man's blessing.

2. God commanded man to "be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the

earth." This directive has never been rescinded. God's command silences the frettings of finite men about over-population (Ps. 127:3-5).

3. After giving man life, God immediately gave him work to do. Idleness is never positive; hard work is held in high regard (Prov. 24:30-34; Eph. 4:28).

4. Privilege entails responsibility. Man was placed in a beautiful garden, but he was commanded to cultivate it and guard its fruitfulness. In Matthew's gospel, the kingdom of heaven is represented by numerous agricultural similes revealing principles of fruitfulness and guarding against adversaries. If we are to be fruitful, our lives must be cultivated and guarded.

5. The title of this garden is more accurately "the garden of the Lord" (Gen. 13:10). We are servants in His fields. The garden of the Lord was the first place of God's presence on earth. It was there, in the midst of this garden, that man learned how to walk with God, listen to God, speak to God, serve God, worship God, and offer sacrifices of praise to His name. Today, we gather to Him who is in our midst (Mt. 18:20; 2 Cor. 6:16-18) to learn the same lessons.

6. The name Lord or Jehovah is first found within the Edenic covenant. In Genesis 1, it is God or Elohim, but in Genesis 2 it is Jehovah Elohim who forms human beings for divine fellowship (Gen. 2:7). This is the heart of God: He is seeking for a personal relationship with man whom He designed for that unique role. And when man broke that relationship by sinning, it was God the Son who

died to restore it (Jn. 17:20-26).

7. God's test of man's obedience involved two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Both trees were found in the midst of the garden. The fruit of the tree of life offered immortality. The forbidden fruit of the latter tree led to death. Note that the tree of life was not forbidden; its fruit could be freely eaten (Gen. 2:16). Thus, we see that it was God's desire for man was to enjoy immortality without ever having any exposure to that which is evil. This is still God's desire for His children (Php. 4:8; 1 Cor. 15:51-54).

8. Once man fell into sin, God graciously acted quickly, denying further access to the tree of life in order to prevent man from becoming an immortal, immoral being (Gen. 3:22-24). Thankfully, in the fullness of time, God's work of redemption through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ brings us immortality and eternal morality. Thanks to the last Adam, we are invited to partake of the tree of life (Rev. 22:1-2).

In summary, a bird's-eye view of Scripture focuses our attention on three trees: the tree of death from the Edenic covenant (Gen. 2:17), the tree of healing at Calvary (1 Pet. 2:24), and the tree of life (Rev. 2:7) in eternity. The Edenic covenant sets the stage for the eternal purposes of God from creation to the glories of eternity. It will be there, in that heavenly garden, that we will know the joy of listening to His voice and walking by His side, forever in the light of His glory. ■

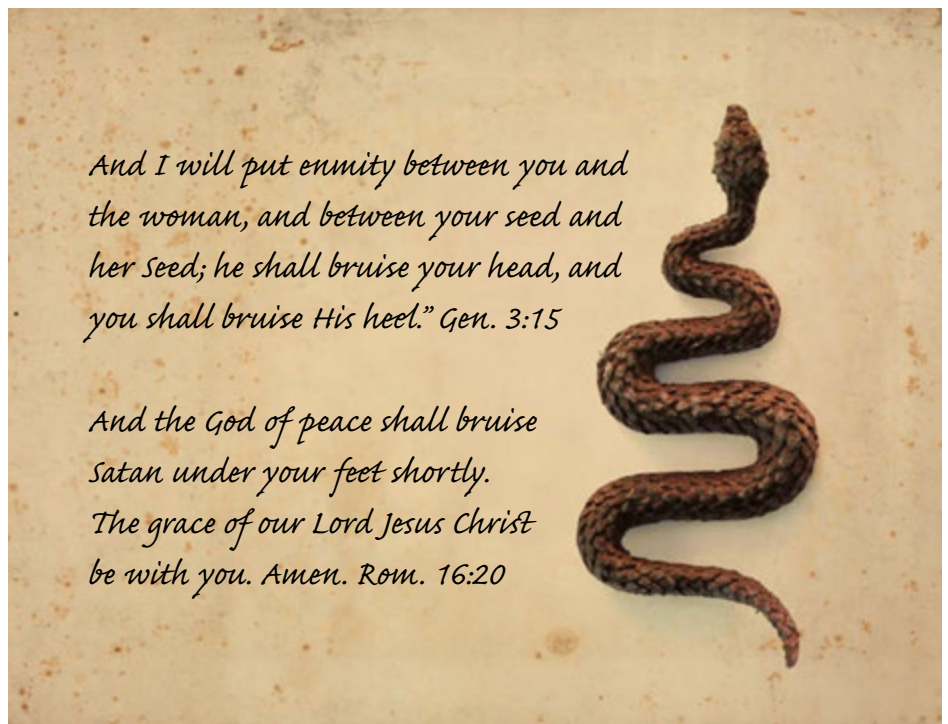
The Adamic Covenant

BY SHAWN ABIGAIL

Covenant

We live in a world of pain and suffering. There is inequity and injustice all around us. The strong oppress the weak, sickness afflicts children, and good people get hurt. It is little surprise that the question is often asked, “If there is a loving God, why does He allow suffering?” It’s a good question and one that is deserving of a good answer. Indeed, some philosophers of religion suggest that this is the strongest argument that can be raised against Christianity. But it is also a question that Christianity is able to answer. Looking in the opening chapters of Genesis, it is clear that the Fall in the Garden of Eden explains much of what we think of as normal in our experience. In short, the Fall explains it all.

In Genesis 3:14-24, we have a very concentrated portion of instruction in the Bible. This is the main section of the Bible which details the Fall. But while the consequences of sin are prominent in this passage, we also see a covenant which God makes with man. While most of the verses detail the curse that came on mankind for Adam’s sin, God also makes an unconditional covenant, promising to send a redeemer. Amazingly, before pronouncing the curse, God describes the means by which forgiveness will come! Because of this promise, this passage is considered a covenant, and is usually referred to as the Adamic Covenant.



JUDGMENT ON SATAN

In Genesis 3:11-13, God asks Adam if he has disobeyed, giving Adam a chance to confess his sin. But instead of confessing, Adam blames Eve. Then God asks Eve, also giving her a chance to confess, but she blames the serpent. So in pronouncing a curse, God goes in the order in which humanity ascribed blame, starting with the serpent and working His way up to mankind’s federal head.

From Genesis 3:14, it would seem that the serpent originally walked, but his curse was to be the lowest of created beings. The ability to walk was taken away from him, and he was condemned to slither in the dust of the ground. We also see in verse 15 that there is enmity between humanity and the serpent. This is a fear and loathing which continues to this day.

Hope right at the door

The enmity is not only between the serpent and the woman (representing humanity) but also between the serpent and the Seed of the woman—the Lord Jesus Christ. The One who is always the delight of the Father and who always delights to do the will of the Father is shown here to be completely opposed to the usurper. It is also interesting to note that the Lord Jesus Christ is declared to be the Seed of the woman. Though under the headship of Adam, the woman bears her own responsibility for sinning in the Garden, yet the hope is put before her that her seed would be the means of defeating Satan.

At the end of verse 15, we see the promise which defines this covenant. We read, “*He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.*” In other words, the serpent would strike the Messiah with a small blow, but the Messiah would strike the serpent with a debilitating blow. It is heart-rending for a Christian to read about what the Lord Jesus suffered on the cross on our behalf. While it was the will of the Father, it seemed to be Satan’s moment of triumph over Christ.

Yet this blow pales in comparison to what the Lord Jesus has done to Satan in crushing his head. This passage in Genesis 3 not only gives us the first hint that a Redeemer would be provided, but also tells us of the ultimate triumph over evil. This is God’s unconditional promise to mankind and a reminder that the Lord Jesus Christ is at the center of all of the Father’s plans.

JUDGMENT OF EVE

Nonetheless, sin has inevitable consequences for individuals and for humanity as a whole, and starting in verse 16, we see how the Fall has affected humanity ever since. We don’t know what God’s original plan was for childbearing, but the first consequence of sin for humanity was great pain in childbirth. Anyone who has experienced or observed children being born can attest to the seriousness of this curse.

There is much controversy over the curse given at the end of verse 16: “*Yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.*” Some will say that this refers to a woman having physical desire for her husband, an unlikely interpretation for it seems likely that God purposed both sexes to enjoy the physical act of marriage.

Others will say that this verse refers to Adam’s headship, so that concepts of headship do not apply to Christians as a redeemed people. This, too, is an untenable interpretation, for headship is in part based on creation order before the Fall (see 1 Cor. 11:8). But attempts to precisely identify this curse miss the greater point: this verse shows that there would be discord in the marriage relationship. The first man and the first woman lived in initial harmony; but after the Fall, differences in personality, opinion, and priority manifested themselves; and in particular this is displayed in regards to the overall concept and practical exercise of headship.

JUDGMENT OF ADAM

Having dealt with the serpent and the woman, God now pronounces a curse on the man. As the federal head of humanity, the curse laid upon Adam is imputed to all Adam’s descendants. In Genesis 3: 17-18, we see a curse on the soil. No longer would it yield rich crops with little effort; it would now be filled with weeds. It would require toilsome effort to put bread on the table, a fact that every bread-winner can now attest to! While employment is a blessing, the fact that work is now toilsome is included in the curse. We also see in verse 19 the entry of death into the world. From today’s vantage point, we can scarcely imagine a world without death, yet this was the original design of God. So we have the entry of sin and corruption into the world, and an answer to the question of why God allows suffering: it was not His original intention, but it is a consequence of sin. The world was created perfect, and now it is broken. Pain, suffering, and death are the result of man’s sin, not God’s plan.

If this were the end of the story, it would be grim indeed; but in verse 20, we see the first sacrifice of an animal. Blood was shed to deal with the consequences of sin, prefiguring the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus. So we must not lose sight of the fact that this passage is not just dealing with the fact and the consequences of the Fall. It is also a wonderful, unconditional covenant by which God promises to provide a Redeemer who would deal with sin once and for all. ■

THE Abrahamic Covenant

by Drew Craig

The everlasting covenant that God made with Abram and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob concerned a people and a land. To Abram He said, “I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and make your name great...to your descendents I will give this land” (Gen. 12:2-7). To his son Isaac, He said, “For to you and your descendents I will give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swear to Abraham your father” (Gen. 26:3). And to his grandson Jacob, later renamed Israel, He said, “the land on which you lie will I give to you and to your descendents...and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 28:13-14).

It has often been said that Genesis is the seed plot of Scripture. What is found there in germ form is amplified in later history. In this case, the covenant made with the patriarchs will continue until it is ultimately fulfilled in the New Covenant to be enacted in a future day with a regenerated Israel (Heb. 8:8-13).

The people

It is important, however, to see the variation in language used in the Genesis account. In Genesis 22:17, God says that

Abraham’s seed will be “as the stars of the heavens and as the sand of the sea shore”—both a heavenly and an earthly people. In Genesis 26:4, the promise to Isaac is that his seed will be “as the stars in the heavens”—there is no reference to the earthly element. In contrast, God tells Jacob in Genesis 28:14 that his seed will be “as the dust of the ground”—exclusively earthly. The apostle Paul helps us to understand these distinctions in Galatians 4:22-31. In reference to the covenant made with Isaac, he contrasts the earthly Jerusalem associated with Hagar with the heavenly Jerusalem connected with Isaac: “the Jerusalem that is above is free...we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise” (Gal. 4:26-28). From this we surely can deduce that the reference to Jacob’s seed being as the dust of the ground relates to the abiding nature of Israel as an earthly nation.

The land

Examining the covenant promise to Jacob, the additional details given exclusively to him are significant:

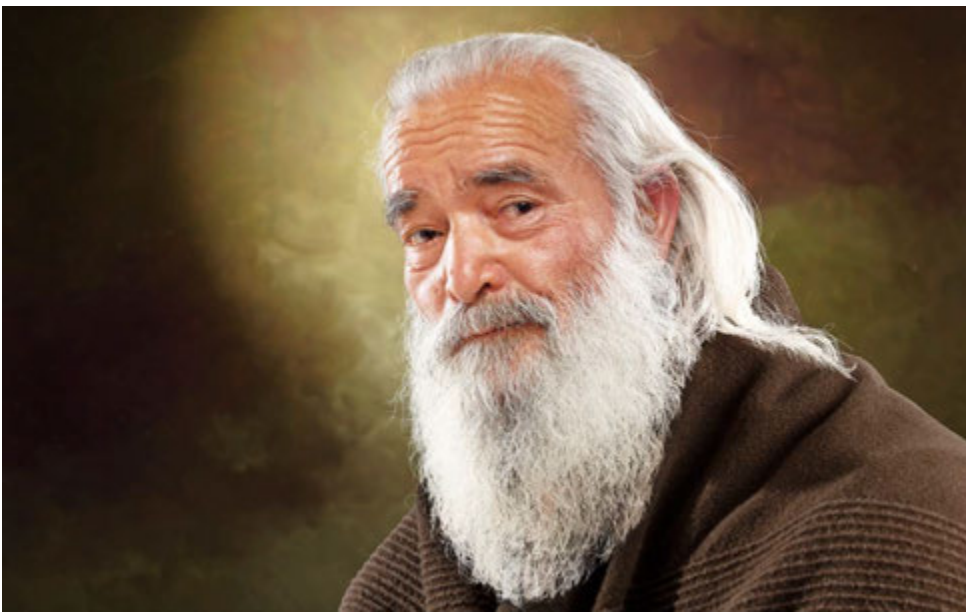
“I am the Lord the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie will I give to you

and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed...Behold, I am with you and will keep you and wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you” (Gen. 28:13-15).

In this, and many other passages, God promises Abraham and his seed the land of Israel.

“But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deut. 4:29)

The covenant made with Moses will be dealt with in a later article, but it is necessary in the context of the controversy that surrounds present-day



In spite of periods of disobedience along the way, in the end, Israel will enter into all the blessings of God's unconditional covenant with Abraham.

Israel and her future to make a brief reference to it. In the Mosaic covenant, Israel is warned that if they disobey God, they will be scattered (Deut. 4:23-31). On numerous occasions, Israel rebelled and suffered the consequences.

But this did not invalidate the Abrahamic covenant. We must always distinguish between ownership and occupation when we refer to the people and the land of Israel. The prophet Joel refers to the Lord's pleading, "for My people and My heritage, Israel" (Joel 3:2); in Isaiah 8:8, the land is called Immanuel's land; and Ezekiel 20:6 refers to "a land that I have searched out for them...the glory of all lands." The ownership is in perpetuity, whether they are currently occupying the land or not.

Unconditional

The detail that is afforded to us as to how God established the covenant with Abram is recorded in Genesis 15:7-21. It may seem an odd ritual to us, but, in those times, it was the custom for two people making a covenant to sacrifice animals, cut them in two, and walk between the pieces (see Jer. 34:18-20). In so doing, they contracted to keep the covenant. It is interesting then, that in contrast to the accepted custom, the Lord did not

permit Abram to join Him in the walk. He put him to sleep, thus preventing him from participating in the making of the covenant. Why did the Lord do this? Because He wanted to emphasize that the covenant was entirely of His own doing. It didn't depend on Abraham's obedience. It was unconditional. Abraham was a fallen man. Had he participated in its making, the covenant would not, and could not, have been irrevocable and everlasting.

Readers will be familiar with the apostle Paul's treatise on this subject in Romans 9-11. He summarizes in chapter 11:11-15:

"I say then, have they [Israel] stumbled that they should fall? But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!...for if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

In spite of periods of disobedience along the way, in the end, Israel will enter into all the blessings of God's unconditional covenant with Abraham.

The Lord Himself

We have already referred to Genesis 22:15-18. Although the word covenant is not used, it is clear that this is a confirmation of all that the Lord had indicated to Abraham from the time He called him out of Ur. The language used is very powerful: "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed..." The use of the word *Myself* reinforces the fact that this was a one-party covenant.

This has warm overtones of the conversation Abraham had just had with Isaac on their way to the place of sacrifice. Isaac had noted the fire and the wood but asked where the lamb was for the burnt offering. And Abraham said, "God will provide Himself a lamb." But no lamb was provided that day. Isaac's life was spared and a ram took his place. But the lamb for the burnt offering came two thousand years later as John the Baptist saw the Lord Jesus and proclaimed, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). ■

The Covenants

COVENANTS	REFERENCES	REPRESENTATIVES	DATE GIVEN
Edenic	Gen. 1:28-30; 2:15-17	Adam	≈ 4000 BC
Adamic	Gen. 3:14-24	Adam	?
Noahic	Gen. 8:21-9:17	Noah	2522 BC
Abrahamic	Gen. 12:1-3,7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14; 22:15-18	Abraham	2095 BC
Mosaic	Ex. 19-24	Moses	1450 BC
Palestinian	Dt. 29-30	Joshua	1410 BC
Davidic	2 Sam. 7:1-17; 1 Chr. 17:3-15	David	1006 BC
Solomonic	2 Sam. 7:12-15; 1 Kings 8; 2 Chron. 7:11-22	Solomon	963 BC
New	Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:8	Christ	AD 30

¹The covenants generally stay in force (with minor changes) throughout subsequent covenants. Therefore elements of the Edenic covenant extend through all dispensations,

of the Bible

TERMS OF THE COVENANT

DISPENSATIONS¹

- Be fruitful and fill the earth
- Authority over the earth
- Tend the garden of Eden
- Refrain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; doing so would result in death

Innocence

- Judgment on the serpent: live in the dust, enmity with the woman and her seed, the seed of the woman would eventually destroy the serpent
- Judgment on the woman: pain in childbirth, discord in marriage
- Judgment on the man: the ground is cursed and the man could only tend it with wearisome toil until he eventually returns to it
- Note that in the judgment on the serpent we have the first messianic prophecy

Conscience

- God promised to never again destroy the earth with a flood and provided the rainbow as an ongoing reminder
- Be fruitful and multiply
- Animals would fear man
- Man may eat animals
- Capital punishment for murder

Human Government

- Abraham will become a great nation, blessed by the Lord
- His name would be great and he will be a blessing
- Blessing to those who bless Abraham; cursing on those who curse Abraham
- Eternal possession of the land
- Abraham to be the father of many nations
- Unconditional—depends only on God, not on Abraham's obedience

Promise

- The Law—613 commandments and regulations governing the life of Israel
- Israel to enjoy physical blessings and be a kingdom of priests
- Conditional—blessings for obedience and judgments for disobedience

Law

- Looks forward to Israel turning to the Lord in captivity
- He will restore Israel to the land, give her a heart to love the Lord, bless her abundantly, and punish her enemies
- Partially fulfilled in the return from Babylon but its complete fulfillment will be in the Millennium

Law

- David will be given a great name, a great house, throne established forever, victory over his enemies
- Israel will have permanent possession of the land
- David's son will build the temple, be loved by God, and have his kingdom established forever; this was partially fulfilled in Solomon but its complete fulfillment is in Christ
- Unconditional

Law

- Unconditional promise of an everlasting kingdom
- Conditional promise of blessing and rule for Solomon's descendents

Law

- Promises to Israel: the Law written on their hearts, cleansing, a new spirit, forgiveness of sin, indwelling of the Holy Spirit, regathered, restored and blessed in the land, special place as God's people
- Partial fulfillment (of the spiritual promises) in believers today but its complete fulfillment (of the spiritual and physical promises) will be in Israel in the Millennium
- Unconditional

Grace, Millennium

elements of the Adamic covenant extend from the dispensation of conscience through the Millennium, etc. This is one of the distinctions between covenants and dispensations.



THE

MOSAIC

COVENANT

by LARRY PRICE

In Exodus 19, Israel is gathered in the wilderness. Delivered from Egypt and from Pharaoh's armies, the people are at the base of Mount Sinai. Here, the Lord solemnly sets before them the terms of the covenant which would govern the nation's relationship with Him: "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people..." (Ex. 19:5).

The covenant referred to is the Mosaic Covenant, and it was delivered to Israel by the hand of Moses (Ex. 34:27f). Although some question the sincerity of Israel's response, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8), it is clear that the covenant was conditional in nature: I will if you will.

Details of the covenant

The Bible says that this covenant was made with only one nation, Israel: "the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Dt. 14:2). Scripture is abundantly clear on this point. Romans 9:4 states that the covenants were for Israel. Again, Paul says in Romans, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law..." (Rom. 2:14).

Gentiles were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:12).

The Mosaic Covenant had various commandments, judgments, statutes, and ordinances that governed the moral, civil, social, and religious conduct of the nation of Israel. It was a complete, indivisible whole. You couldn't pick and choose which parts to keep and which to ignore (Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10). Israel's national blessings could only be enjoyed as the nation adhered to all of the Law.

Duration of the covenant

This covenant was in force until fulfilled by the death of Christ on the cross. The New Testament makes this clear in several ways:

1. The Saviour's declaration: The night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took the cup and declared, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (Lk. 22:20). Since then, Christians have sought to obey the Lord's command by observing the Lord's Supper. In taking the cup, symbolic of His blood shed to ratify the New Covenant, we proclaim that the Old Covenant has been fulfilled and the New Covenant has been inaugurated.

2. Confirmation in the epistles: In 1 Corinthians 11:25, Paul quotes the above declaration of the Lord Jesus regarding the New Covenant. Hebrews 10:9, referring to the Law, emphatically declares that it has been taken away! The Jewish audience that first heard these words needed bluntness and clarity if they were to realize and accept that the covenant of the Law, their very constitution which was woven into the fabric of their lives, had been done away. See also Hebrews 12:22-24. Also, the whole third chapter of 2 Corinthians is crucial lest anyone think that it was only the ceremonial aspects of the Law that were done away with. The chapter speaks of that which was "written and engraven in stones" (2 Cor. 3:7), clearly referring to the two tables of the Law inscribed by the very finger of God. Finally, Galatians 3:24f presents a powerful argument because it describes the termination of the Law. The schoolmaster ceases to have any authority over a boy once he is no longer a minor. The verses might be expressed this way: "The Law was our school teacher to train us until Christ came. Once Christ came, we no longer required the school teacher's services."

Not just a good idea it's the law

3. Contrasted elements:

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
Israel	The church
Animal sacrifices	Christ's death
Passover	The Lord's Supper
Male priest's head covered	Man's head uncovered
Literal Mt. Sinai	Heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12)
Restricted access: temple veil	Unrestricted access: temple veil torn open

4. Distinction in Terminology (Rom. 7; 2 Cor. 3; Gal. 3-4; Heb. 8:13):

OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
Law	Grace
Oldness of the letter	Newness of the Spirit
Tables of stone	Fleshy tables of the heart
Ministration of Death	Ministration of Spirit
Condemnation	Righteousness
Done away	Remains
Law	Faith
Weak and beggarly elements	Promise of Spirit through faith
Curse	Promise
The first covenant	The second covenant
The old covenant	The new covenant

5. Denunciation of justification by Law.

The sharpest condemnations in the New Testament are aimed at those who pervert the gospel. Someone might err in many other areas, but getting the gospel wrong has eternal, damning consequences (Gal. 1:8). Justification is not by keeping the Law: *"Therefore by deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in His sight"* (Rom. 3:20). Furthermore, the argument of much of Galatians is that neither is the Law the means of sanctification: *"Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"* (Gal. 3:3). To attempt to be sanctified by Law is to turn to that which is weak and enslaving (Gal. 4:9).

Newness of the Spirit

The New Covenant is distinct in character from the old one. The Old Covenant commanded obedience and demanded a penalty for disobedience. The New Covenant declares the penalty already paid by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross. *"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us for cursed is everyone who hangeth on a tree"* (Gal. 3:13). The believer is now free to continue on in life, responding to this higher motivation.

In itself, the Law was holy and just and good (Rom. 7:12). But, because it

was conditional and dependent upon man's response and duty (Gal. 3:12), it was *"weak through the flesh"* (Rom. 8:3). The Law could not bring salvation; it could only expose sin (Rom. 3:19; Heb. 10:3). And, because it was external, it could only reveal what to do, not confer any power to do it. The believer in Christ has a new life and a new principle for living: the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1ff). This is internal and brings with it the power to obey.

Much confusion has resulted from failure to distinguish things that differ. One's view of the Mosaic Covenant will affect one's interpretation of the Bible. Most of our Bible—roughly from Exodus 19 through the Gospels—deals with Israel under the Old Covenant. Misapplication of Scripture and misappropriation of certain promises often stem from not recognizing or understanding that the old has been done away with.

The Church in the first century was plagued with those seeking to bring believers under bondage to the Law, either for justification or for sanctification. This still exists today! But the Christian is not under the Law (Rom. 6:14f). We have a higher, holier calling. *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage"* (Gal. 5:1).

*Free from the law—oh, happy condition!
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the Law and bruised by the fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.*

—Philip P. Bliss



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<Web Evangelism: Dos and Don'ts>

Last magazine, we saw the power of a website in leading someone to Christ. With that in mind, we turn our attention to dos and don'ts in web evangelism. An effective website has some key components. **Here is a list of dos:**

1. Update the site regularly. This really is one of the most important things. Keep changing the site content. People will ignore a stagnant website. Add new pages or articles on a regular basis. Set a reasonable schedule that you can manage. It doesn't have to be every day, but it does have to be consistent. Digital Sojourner (www.digitalsojourner.com) does a great job of this. Several contributors submit content on a specific schedule. This takes the burden off one person and gives the site regular updates.

2. Have a variety of content. People learn in different ways. I'm a visual learner; others learn through words. Create interest by providing content that reaches a wide audience. Consider posting audio podcasts, videos, blog posts, images, and engaging text. If you need help with any of these, a number of good resources can get you started. Contact us at mySonlight.com for a free consultation on any plans or questions you have.

3. Make your topics relevant. There is an abundance of relevant, interesting topics to discuss. From fighting in the Middle East to Tim Tebow, it doesn't take much effort to write about topics that people care about. Remember to consider how

the Lord reached people. His method was simple: He used objects and stories that were relevant to His listeners. Look around and see what matters to people and then write about it in a way that leads them back to Christ and the gospel.

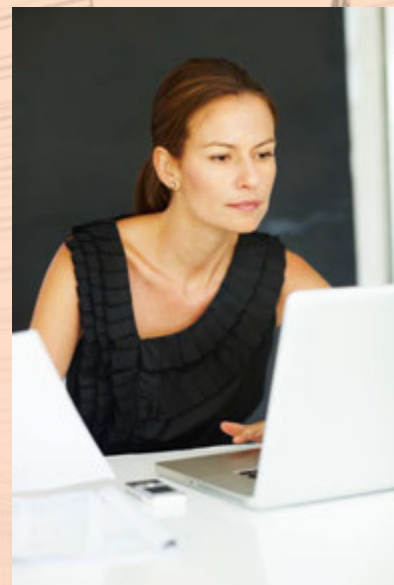
4. Give your site a unique, attractive design. This point really can't be stressed enough. While content is still king when it comes to getting visitors, design is a very close second. You have less than four seconds to grab the viewers' attention before they move on to the next website. The standards of what people expect in the way of presentation are at an all time high. So don't turn viewers away because your website is unappealing. There are many options available for a great-looking web design.

Now let's consider a few don'ts:

1. Don't give unbiblical views. An inconsistent mix of church and state will turn readers away. Leave your political views off the website. Don't get into a war over issues that have nothing to do with the gospel.

2. Don't condemn. Take another look at the Lord. He never put down sinners; in fact, He ate with them. Do we love the lost or do we long for them to "get what they deserve"? Stay away from taking shots at others and their ideas. Focus instead on the power of Christ to save lives from ruin.

3. Don't assume your readers know the Bible. Most seekers will have little or no



background in Christianity. Don't assume people know who Adam and Eve or other Bible characters are. And when we say things like, "Jesus can wash your sins away because He shed His blood for you as God's perfect lamb," it has zero impact on most readers because they don't understand the significance of the Lamb of God and think that "shed" is a place to store the lawnmower. Be sensitive to your potential audience.

Following these dos and don'ts will help your gospel website to be interesting, relevant, and attractive to seekers who want to know more about God's power to save. ■

These suggestions for getting started online have been compiled by our friends at mySonlight. If you need additional assistance, please contact them about their services.

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THE Davidic COVENANT



The setting of the Davidic covenant is the Lord's response to David's desire to build a house for Him (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 17). David, the man after God's own heart, felt it inappropriate that he should be living in luxury while the ark of the Lord dwelt in a tent. Although it was not yet the Lord's time for the temple to be built, clearly the Lord was pleased by the intention of David's heart. Thus, He takes this occasion to introduce his covenant with David. As we will see, it builds on the Abrahamic Covenant and leads to the New Covenant. They are all steps in God's program. As touching as David's idea was, the Lord's idea is so much grander; it stretches back to Genesis and reaches forward to eternity.

THE TERMS OF THE COVENANT

We can't read the terms of the Davidic Covenant without being reminded of God's covenant with Abraham because both covenants are largely focused on the coming Messiah. In Genesis, the messianic prophecies are gradually narrowed down from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and then finally to the line of Judah (49:10). Now we see the focus narrowed further to the line of David.

The covenant was established with David (Ps. 89:3, 34f; 2 Sam. 23:5; 2 Chr. 21:7; Jer. 33:21) and his sons (2 Chr. 13:5).

In it, the Lord made a variety of promises to David and his descendants. We have a list of these in 2 Samuel 7.

A name (v. 9). In spite of how David's enemies might seek to sully his name, the Lord would see to it that, in the end, David's fame and reputation would be great. In this, we can't help but think of the Lord Jesus. Although the enemy has tried his best to ridicule the name of Christ (with some temporary success), in the end, that very name will be universally acknowledged to the glory of God (Php. 2:10f).

A place (v. 10). Israel will be permanently settled in the land, never to be displaced again.

Peace (vv. 10f). Not only will Israel be planted in her land, but she will enjoy it without disturbance.

A house (v.11). This account began with David's offering to make a house for the Lord. Instead, the Lord assures him that He will make a house for David, referring to the fact that the reign of David would be passed on to his son.

The temple (v. 13). Although David was disqualified from building the temple,

Solomon was given the honor of doing so, and David would have the privilege of providing for its construction.

A throne (v. 16). The throne and kingdom of the house of David are promised to last forever. The covenant does not say that their reign will never be interrupted. Indeed, sin led to an interruption in the reign of the Davidic line. The curse on Jeconiah (Jer. 22:24-30) seemed to make this interruption permanent since "*no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah.*" But Luke reveals the Lord's answer to this seeming dilemma for the very passage that reveals the eternal continuation of David's throne in Christ (Lk. 1:32f) explains that He was born of a virgin (vv.34f) and thus not of the seed of Jeconiah.

THE NATURE OF THE COVENANT

Literal. Each term was or will be fulfilled literally. David's name really was made great; David's son really did assume the throne and built an actual temple for the Lord; and the kingdom was a literal kingdom.

Eternal. In his last words, David declared this covenant to be eternal:

a priest-king on the throne

“Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me” (2 Sam. 23:5) and this is later confirmed through Jeremiah (Jer. 33:20f).

Unconditional. Perhaps the most contested element of the Davidic covenant is that it is absolutely unconditional. There are those who claim that all of God’s national promises to Israel have been taken away because she was disobedient and rebellious. But Psalm 89 anticipates this exact objection. In speaking of His covenant with David (see esp. vv. 28f), the Lord tells us exactly what would happen in the case of sin (vv. 30-37):

If his sons forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments, if they violate My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His descendants shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful. Selah.

It is difficult to imagine how the Scriptures could be clearer without specifically using the term *amillennialism*. Disobedience would result in chastisement but never in abrogation of the covenant.

Guaranteed. The covenant is absolutely secure because it does not depend on the faithfulness of David, Solomon, or Israel. As we read above, this covenant was based entirely on that which

2 Samuel 7 – Solomon in view

“who will come forth from you” (v. 12), one of David’s actual sons

“I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (v. 13); Solomon’s kingdom established

“I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me” (v. 14)

“when he commits iniquity” (v. 14)

“your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever” (v. 16); Solomon has no right to serve in the house of God

1 Chronicles 17 – Christ in view

“who shall be of your sons” (v. 11), a descendent of David

“I will establish his throne forever” (v. 12); Christ Himself will reign forever

“I will be his father, and he shall be My son” (v. 13); Christ’s unique sonship

no mention of sin

“I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever” (v. 14); Christ will be a priest upon the throne (Zech. 6:13)

is immutable: the Lord’s lovingkindness, faithfulness, integrity, word, oath, holiness, and truthfulness. Only if all of those were to fail would God’s covenant with David be broken.

THE COVENANT’S DOUBLE FULFILLMENT

There is one other element of the covenant that deserves special consideration. The covenant is recorded in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17. But, although the two accounts are largely identical, a careful comparison of the two will reveal some striking contrasts because, as with many prophecies, this one has a double fulfillment. The Davidic covenant would first of all be partially fulfilled in David’s son Solomon (focused on in 2 Samuel 7) but then finally fulfilled in David’s greater Son, the Lord Jesus (focused on in 1 Chronicles 17).

It’s worthwhile to consider all of the contrasts in more detail (as in the chart

above), but let us highlight two. First, we note that when Solomon is in view, the covenant has provisions for the iniquity of David’s son (2 Sam. 7:14). But when Christ is in view, the references to sin are completely removed.

Secondly, when Solomon is in view, the covenant speaks of “*your house and your kingdom*” (2 Sam. 7:16). But when Christ is in view, it changes to “*My house and My kingdom*” (1 Chr. 17:14). This is because Solomon had no right to serve in the temple. But Christ will be “*a priest on His throne*” (Zech. 6:13).

THE COVENANT’S IMPLICATIONS

We see that God’s purposes depend on His unassailable character, Word, and oath, not on the tenuous faithfulness of His people. How thankful we should be for this, for it is the reason why we too have a certain hope rather than no hope at all. —James Martin

THE GREAT

Covenant Theology

For the typical believer, the terms *covenant theology* and *dispensationalism* can be very confusing. Combined with other theological terms such as *premillennialism*, *amillennialism*, *preterism*, *Christian reconstructionism*, and *progressive dispensationalism*, the average believer in any congregation can be easily intimidated by the polysyllabic terminology. However, the serious student of the Word will want to investigate these concepts in the light of Scripture because they affect how we interpret the Bible. Because of today's growing interest in covenant theology, it is important to understand what it is and how it contrasts with dispensationalism.

What is covenant theology?

Covenant theology or covenantism is a means of interpreting the Bible through the lens of two or three covenants. Those who subscribe to this perspective refer to two of these covenants as the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Many in this camp see a third covenant which they call a covenant of redemption. Based on Hebrews 13:20, they claim that this was established between the Father and the Son in eternity past.

As a system of thought, covenant theology first appeared during the mid-1500s at the time of the Reformation. According to Louis Berkoff, a prominent covenant theologian named Kaspar

Olevaanus was the first to develop this line of thought. Later, in the mid-1600s, Johannes Cocceius further systematized this approach to the interpretation of Scripture, and it quickly became established in many of the churches in Germany, the Netherlands, Scotland, and England. The Puritans were primarily responsible for bringing this teaching to America. Currently, it is the predominant theological persuasion in Protestantism and finds its center in churches following Reformed traditions. Thus it is closely linked with Calvinism.

Simply put, covenant theology purports that the whole of Scripture revolves around those two or three main covenants. It says that before time began, a covenant was established among the Godhead that the Son would be the head and redeemer of the elect, a select group of individuals predetermined to receive eternal life. The Son would come to Earth to die to procure salvation for the elect. This is called the covenant of redemption. After Adam was created, the triune God established a covenant with Adam in which he was promised eternal life in return for perfect obedience and warned of physical and spiritual death if he sinned. This all occurred under the covenant of works. Because of Adam's failure, a covenant of grace was then established to provide forgiveness for the offending, elect descendants of

Adam, whom he represented. This forgiveness was made possible by the covenant of redemption, made in eternity past. Consequently, the elect sinner through faith in Christ is forgiven and promises to live a life well-pleasing to God.

Problems with covenant theology

Adherents to covenant theology seek to emphasize the great doctrines of the faith, such as the centrality of Christ and justification by grace through faith alone. But many things are lacking in this school of thought. For one, covenant theology focuses on a limited line of truth. It emphasizes God's work in the salvation of the elect to the exclusion of a number of other important truths in the Bible. That God has a plan to save His people and the importance of that salvation are not in doubt. But God has other things that He will accomplish that will also ultimately redound to His glory.

Covenant theology also fails to recognize that God has a distinct plan for Israel and for the nations. Scripture records a series of judgments yet to come: the judgment seat of Christ, the judgment of the sheep and the goats (Mt. 25), the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, and the judgment of Satan and the unsaved dead at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15).

DIVIDE

BY MARK KOLCHIN

and Dispensationalism

All are clearly differentiated in Scripture and could hardly be grouped into the general judgment which covenant theology maintains.

Neglecting the difference between Israel and the church is one of the most significant failings of covenant theology. To a covenantalist, the church and Israel are essentially the same, the one simply a continuation of the other. They see Stephen's reference to the "*church in the wilderness*" (Acts 7:38) as positive proof that the church existed in the Old Testament, despite the fact that the Lord referred to the church in the future tense in Matthew 16:18, when He said, "*I will build My church.*" To them, the church was present in the Old Testament, not inaugurated at Pentecost (Acts 2).

These failures in recognizing biblical distinctions come from covenant theology's necessary attempt to merge everything from Genesis 3 on into one economy. In contrast, dispensationalism presents Scripture as the unfolding, progressive revelation of God. Through a series of dispensations, God worked with man. Man's failure in each of these stewardships resulted in God's judgment and then further revelation of the truth, which then set the stage for the next dispensation. Dispensationalism properly recognizes the distinctions in Scripture.

Another difficulty is that because covenant theology neglects key scrip-

tural distinctions, it leads to a convoluted interpretation of the Bible, especially with regards to prophecy. In the case of prophecy, covenant theology requires its adherents to adopt two ways of interpreting Scripture. In matters dealing with the past fulfillment of Scripture, a literal method of interpretation is utilized. But when it comes to unfulfilled prophecy, instead of maintaining consistency in Bible interpretation, a symbolic hermeneutic is employed. The promises made to Israel are spiritualized and erroneously applied to the church. The result makes for some very interesting prophetic predictions, evidenced recently when a well-known radio Bible teacher schooled in covenant theology foolishly declared May 21, 2011 to be the end of the world. This was the sad result of failing to observe biblical distinctions.

Finally, because of the emphasis of God's redemptive work of the elect, some view covenant theology as having a deadening effect on evangelistic fervor. "Why evangelize if God is going to save the elect anyway?" is the conclusion many come to when analyzing the ramifications of this theological approach.

What makes covenant theology popular?

The question naturally arises: "Why is covenant theology so popular?" There are a number of reasons. One is that it is historically tied to the Reformation.

That has an appeal to some people because of the place it had in both church and world history and because of the tremendous contribution made by the Reformers. For some reason, something in the past always seems better. "Distance lends enchantment to the view." Another reason is the academic nature of this topic. Detailed, intricate reasoning can appeal to the intellect, and that is attractive to some people. Others prefer covenant theology because they feel it predates dispensationalism. Although dispensationalism as a formal school of thought was developed in the 1800s, the key tenets of dispensationalism (God's chief purpose in history and maintaining proper biblical distinctions, in particular, Israel and the church) have always been present. In any event, timing in itself does not legitimize any school of thought. Should we embrace Gnosticism simply because it can be traced back to the first century?

Yes, there are many differences between covenant theology and dispensationalism, differences that can easily divide. But despite these differences, covenant theologians and dispensationalists are not enemies. "*He that is not against us is for us*" (Lk. 9:50). Our attitude should be as Paul stated to the Philippians: "*...if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you*" (Php. 3:15). ■

The **NEW** COVENANT & Dispensationalism

by David Dunlap

The institution of the new covenant unfolds the depth of God's faithfulness to Israel. This unconditional agreement is made with Israel because they had broken the terms of the earlier Mosaic covenant. The new covenant is rooted in God's faithfulness rather than Israel's obedience. It points to a future day when God gathers Israel out of the nations and bring them into their own land, giving them a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek. 36:28). They will be His covenant people, "a nation born in a day."

The authority of the new covenant is anchored in the blood of Christ. Because of this fact, Christ is called the mediator of a new covenant by the writer of the book of Hebrews (Heb. 12:24). The Lord's Supper demonstrates this: "This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you" (Lk. 22:19). As Christians, we are identified with the glorious mediator and enjoy the spiritual privileges and blessings of the new covenant; but it is essentially a covenant with Israel. Its final consummation awaits the time when "the Deliverer will come out of Zion, and...turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26). Afterwards, this covenant will be fully realized by Israel in the millennial age.

Reformed Theology and Dispensationalism

However, this understanding of the new covenant is seen by Reformed teachers as a weak link in dispensational theology. A leading Reformed theologian, Professor Keith Mathison, writes, "The new covenant is perhaps the clearest example of a promise made to national Israel that is now being fulfilled in and by the church."¹

Current Reformed theology teaches that the church now fulfills the provisions of the new covenant. The Reformed view has been adopted by a growing number of charismatic leaders to buttress their view for miracles and healing during this age. They teach that since Christ is presently reigning as the covenantal king, the supernatural blessings of the new covenant should be experienced by the church today.

Critics of dispensationalism are quick to point to Hebrews 8 as support for their view that the new covenant is fulfilled in the church. There we read, "By how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6). Calvinistic writers emphasize the statement "He is the mediator of a better covenant." They argue that since Christ

is currently the mediator of the new covenant, then the covenant is now fulfilled by the church.

The twofold structure of the new covenant

How have dispensational writers answered this argument? Yes, Christ is the mediator of the covenant; but there is an important theological distinction between inauguration and institution. Inauguration indicates the fulfilling of the provisions of the covenant, whereas institution refers to the setting forth of the terms of the covenant. The new covenant has been instituted but not yet fully inaugurated. Many dispensational writers point to the two-level structure of the four major biblical covenants. In all these covenants, the covenant was first instituted; and then many years later, some or all of the covenant's provisions were fulfilled. In the Abrahamic covenant, God unconditionally promised a seed (son) to Abraham and Sarah; however, it was not until twenty-five years later that that provision of the covenant was fulfilled. God's pattern for His covenants is that a covenant is first introduced; and then many years later, the provisions of the covenant are fulfilled.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

JEREMIAH 31:33



Magen David, the Shield (or Star) of David, is the symbol of modern Israel.

This is also the pattern of the new covenant. The new covenant was introduced by the mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. It was sealed by our Lord when His blood was shed on the cross of Calvary. The provisions of the covenant were offered to the nation of Israel after the resurrection of Christ, but they were rejected. Nevertheless, the terms of the covenant will be fulfilled in the nation of Israel during the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. Elliot Johnson, a professor at Dallas Seminary, explains:

The distinction between the institution and the fulfillment of a covenant must be clarified. To institute a covenant is to introduce provisions of the agreement which are now available to be received. To inaugurate fulfillment is to keep all of the provisions of the agreement. The new covenant was instituted only after the death of Christ, the mediator of the covenant; then He and the provisions of the covenant were offered to the nation, following His resurrection and ascension. The new covenant will be inaugurated in fulfillment when Israel as a nation will accomplish her national destiny.²

The new covenant and Israel

The New and Old Testaments provide support for the idea that national Israel will still inherit the spiritual and the material provisions of the new covenant. If this is true, then it is a powerful argument against the view that the church replaces Israel. There are two main categories into which the biblical evidence can be arranged:

I. The integrity of God's promises to Israel

The Scriptures teach that God must be absolutely faithful to His Word. In the new covenant, He has unconditionally bound Himself to be faithful to its provisions and its terms. In Jeremiah 31 and in Hebrews 8, no fewer than five times does God use the phrase *"I will"* to express His loyalty to the new covenant. The psalmist comforts himself in God's faithfulness when he writes, *"My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips"* (Ps. 89:34). Sixty years after the death of Christ, the apostle Paul in the book of Romans tells us that Israel still possesses the provisions contained in the covenants: *"Who are Israelites; to whom pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants"* (Rom. 9:4). The use of the present tense *"to whom pertain...the covenants"* indicates that God has never wavered in His promises made to Israel.

II. National and material promises

Closely associated with the fact that God must be faithful to His promises is the uniqueness of the covenant provisions. God has made both spiritual and material promises to Israel. Today, the church enjoys some of the spiritual blessings of the new covenant. However, in a careful study of the new covenant, it soon becomes obvious that many of its spiritual and material provisions can be fulfilled only by national Israel in the Millennium. The prophet Ezekiel in chapter 34, begins to unfold of some of the blessings of the new covenant:

- Wild animals will be removed from the land so that the inhabitants may sleep in safety in the fields and the woods (v. 25).
- There will be a supernaturally abundant harvest of farm crops and other agriculture from the land (v. 27).
- Israel will not receive any threats or insults from other nations (Ezek. 34:28-29). All of these provisions have not taken place today in the church nor in the land of Israel; they are provisions of the new covenant that will be fulfilled in the future.

Conclusion

The new covenant is expressly promised to Israel. It is a better covenant than the one God made with Israel at Mount Sinai, as it provides for the future salvation of the nation and endows the people with the ability to walk in God's laws and statutes (Heb. 8:10). We can have confidence that the Lord will faithfully fulfill every term of the new covenant with His chosen people, Israel, for, as the Bible says with specific reference to God's faithfulness to Israel, *"the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable"* (Rom 11:29). ■

1. Keith Mathison, *Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Phillipsburg, PA: P & R Publishing, 1995), p. 28.

2. Elliot Johnson, *Contemporary Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), p. 146.

Romans 9-11 by Colin Anderson

Fulfilling strategic roles

To many, chapters 9-11 of Romans seem out of place after eight chapters of explaining the gospel. Why did Paul include this block of teaching? To answer this question, it's helpful to consider the thought-flow.

QUESTIONS RAISED

In chapters 1 through 8, Paul shows that his gospel is entirely in keeping with God's character, as many of his readers (who were Jewish) should have already understood from their knowledge of the Old Testament. He also explains that it offers to mankind a righteousness which, coming from God, is infinitely superior to anything that humans could produce.

Furthermore, the gospel is good news for everyone who believes it, regardless of their race. So some critics would be asking, "Does not such a universally-offered message ignore privileges that were bestowed on Jews only?" Was Paul no longer grateful that he was born a son of Abraham? Had he "crossed the floor," so to speak? The messenger's credibility was at stake.

PAUL'S RESPONSE

So, in the ninth chapter, Paul begins by assuring his readers that their fears were unfounded. The promises made to Israel which had not yet been fulfilled would

still be realized. But people needed to understand that those promises would not be enjoyed by those who, though they were Abraham's physical seed, did not share his faith. God's choice of Jacob over the older Esau showed that He would do as He pleased in such matters. Such privileges did not result from birth order or human merit but were granted on the basis of divine election.

Having said that, it is essential that we do not think of this election as if it referred to God's choice of individuals for personal salvation. It refers to His raising up of some of them to fulfill strategic roles in human history. Like a potter, God has power over men so that they end up doing His will. This means that He showed mercy to some who did not deserve it and hardened the hearts of others who sought to resist His will. This calling of God to carry out His plan involved not only the destiny of these individuals, but also the families from which they sprang and the nations they came to represent. But salvation from personal sins is open to anyone from any nation who calls upon the name of the Lord (10:12f).

Now to hear of this salvation demands that it be proclaimed (10:14f). That requires messengers, and Paul may well be justifying his own calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles—an idea previ-

ously unacceptable to persons who thought that God's favor was limited to their own nation, Israel.

Characteristically, Israel had shown ignorance of God's righteousness, being distracted by an insistence on maintaining her own, thus showing herself disobedient and contrary. But God had not, and would not, cast her away because His gifts and calling were irrevocable (11:1f, 29). The elect among them might be relatively few in number, but they refused to yield to the general apostasy, resembling the 7,000 in Elijah's day (11:2ff). The rest were given over to being nationally alive but spiritually insensible.

But this was not Israel's death-knell. The salvation that had been brought to the Gentiles was, in part, to make her jealous (11:11). Regarding the gospel, they might be enemies, but when God has completed His gracious work among the Gentiles, Israel will experience revival and cleansing (11:26f). Thus, instead of the gospel annulling God's promises to Israel, it is seen to be the means by which God will bring those very promises to fulfillment. This revelation of God's superintendence of history should bring all to worship Him whose ways are otherwise beyond human knowledge (11:33ff). ■

Squeaky Wheels

We've all heard the adage, "The squeaky wheel gets the grease." It refers to the fact that, often, the person who complains or protests the loudest gets attention and service. In the world, it can be the case that a person who complains forcefully, frequently, and loudly is given priority over those who are quieter or gentler. But does this ever happen in the church? Sadly, sometimes it does.

There are two sides to this problem. On the one hand, we might have bleating sheep. Sometimes a man has learned that whining is effective in the world and automatically brings that behavior into the church. He might not even consider that there's a more Christ-honoring way to deal with his concerns. We would all do well to remember that the Lord takes a dim view of complaining: *"Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer"* (1 Cor. 10:10). It is healthy for the assembly to be reminded of this from time to time, and also to have it pointed out that it is selfish for any of us to think that we have the right to voice our every concern. The saints need to be shown that, in most cases, the godly way to deal with that which bothers us is to commit it to the Lord and leave it with Him (1 Pet. 2:23).

On the other hand, elders need to consider whether or not they themselves have fallen into the trap of greasing squeaky wheels. This can happen inadvertently

with the best of motives. But there is a difference between being sensitive and being reactionary. It requires no discernment to simply react to complaints.

Think of the long-term effects. If a believer discovers that being pushy gets the results he wants, guess whether he's likely to be more or less pushy in the future. Such behavior cannot be rewarded because it only emboldens a person to press the elders about the next 99 items on his gripe list. The reward for appeasing a complainer is more complaining.

Think, too, of the effect that this has on the saints who have adopted a more godly approach to dealing with their concerns. How disheartening for them to see ungodly behavior rewarded while their quiet concerns go unaddressed. Elders need to lead; they need to protect the flock; and part of protecting the flock is standing up for those who are too gracious to stand up for themselves.

Also consider the long-term direction of the assembly. If the saints see that grumbling is rewarded, surely that will lead to more and more grumblers over time. But even more seriously, who is more likely to be in tune with the Lord and His plans for the assembly: complainers or gracious saints? An assembly that keeps listening to the former is going to move away from the Lord and His purposes step by step.

This isn't to say that elders should automatically reject every concern that isn't voiced perfectly. But it is saying that elders have a role to teach the saints to behave graciously. And elders should always be careful to avoid the temptation of capitulating to complainers. Thoughtful elders will give priority to the most serious needs, not the loudest. This is the example of the Good Shepherd: He always knew just which needs were the right ones to address, and all the clamor in the world could not distract Him. ■



Heaven has opened

Two more at Home

“Whose faith follow...” –Hebrews 13:7

Dr. David Reid

On January 31, Dr. David R. Reid was called home to glory, age 74. Reports of his death will show that he died as a result of a skiing accident in Utah, but it should be noted that he died on a trip while in service to the King. The previous week, he taught a course at Jackson Hole Bible College. The week he lost his life, he was on a “Ski and Study” trip, doing what he loved, teaching the Book of Nehemiah.

I first met Doctor Dave when I went to Emmaus Bible College in 1986. He taught incoming freshmen Old Testament Survey and Christian Evidences. Students referred to him as “Doctor Grace.” He had as much of an impact on the student body as any professor ever did. Whether it was at the school or in a home Bible study, or through his *Devotion for Growing Christians* ministry, he loved God’s Word and trained his protégés to shun bad hermeneutics, engage in practical application of the Scriptures, and rightly divide the

Word of Truth.

When I graduated, I asked each of my professors to sign the Study Bible I had used during my time there. Doc included Ezra 10:7, *“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”*

This summed up his life well: to pursue God’s Word, to practice it’s truth, and to teach it to others. He was a mentor and example that the Lord Jesus used in so many lives, includ-

ing mine. Please pray for his wife Margie and their children, Catherine, David, and Ron and their families. —*Rob Sullivan*



April 2, 1937 – Jan. 31, 2012

Dr. Boushra Mikhael

After a courageous battle with cancer, Boushra Riad Mikhael, age 75, passed peacefully into the Lord’s presence on January 26, 2012, with his family at his side.

Boushra was born in Assyout, Egypt, the tenth of eleven siblings. He attended medical school in Cairo. He and Nadia (nee Tadros) were married on July 25, 1964. After further training in England specializing in urology, he moved with his family to Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

There he served as an elder at Rideauview Bible Chapel for over 25 years, and was an itinerant Bible teacher, as well as holding many home Bible studies. A widely-travelled conference speaker, he had a special interest in Egyptian studies, especially as they related to the Bible.

Boushra was commended to full-time work for the Lord after his retirement from medicine and he traveled the world serving the Lord. He also served at Galilee Bible Camp and with *Counsel Magazine*, the Ontario Workers & Elders Conference and the Rise Up Conferences. He also contributed to several Christian magazines. He very recently wrote a book entitled, “The Desire of All Nations,” completed in the final weeks of his life.

Please remember his wife Nadia, his sons Sam and Joe, and their families in your prayers.



June 2, 1936 – Jan. 26, 2012

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. They...rest from their labors, and their works follow them” Rev. 14:13

The perfect candidate



God believes in government. It was His idea: *"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God"* (Rom. 13:1). In addition, we are not only to *obey*, but to *pay* our taxes (vv. 6-7), and to *pray* for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-4), especially that they be saved. Christians, of all people, should be model citizens.

But with politics filling the news these days, I can't help but consider who would be the perfect candidate, someone who would not only govern best in the affairs of men, but whom God would consider ideal.

Background experience

It's a major talking point these days in the U.S. primaries: who has the background that qualifies (or disqualifies) one from the highest office in the land? I would think the ideal candidate—if it's not too much to ask—would have experience in governing something large, say, like the universe. Then governing the U.S. would be a snap.

The problem is, as Gov. Romney is discovering, if you have been very successful in big business, many people don't think you can sympathize with the common man. So, what if our candidate not only could govern at the highest levels but had actually lived in poverty and regularly rubbed shoulders with the neediest among us? What if He had endorsements from former beggars, blind men and broken-hearted outcasts—people whose hopeless

lives He had completely transformed?

Imagine, too, if this candidate had experience in engineering and infrastructure, having hung the world on nothing and flung the stars around it to *"rule the night."*

The Man in mind has an unconventional health care plan, holding patents on the design of the human body, and, as the Great Physician, made arrangements so that *"by His stripes we are healed"* (Isa. 53:5).

His energy policy? Here is His own statement: *"All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth"* (Mt. 28:18). No shortages there. He deposited all natural resources in the planet, which are in fact His (Hag. 2:8).

Education? Would it seem hyperbole if I said this candidate actually knows *everything*? It isn't. He is the consummate teacher's Teacher. In fact, it was a renowned king who requested him to *"Show me Your ways...Teach me Your paths"* (Ps. 25:4).

What about defense? I'm happy to tell you that merely the use of His name *"is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe"* (Prov. 18:10). And get this: to defeat the strongest enemy to ever engage us in war, He requires only one finger (Lk. 11:20)! Lesser foes—say, the accumulated firepower of all the armies of earth—take just a breath from His nostrils (2 Thess. 2:8).

The character question

Flip-flops? Hardly. He is *"the same yesterday, today, and forever"* (Heb. 13:8). And I know it's hard to believe when you're thinking about politicians, but absolutely everything He promises will come true, even if it takes

until heaven and earth have disappeared (Mt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33, recorded three times so we can't miss it).

Faithful to His marriage vows? I can't help but think of the words of a man who at one time hated our candidate with a venom unmatched in history. But, due to an interrupted business trip, he came out shortly after to endorse the One he formerly hated. He wrote a long list of every imaginable influence that might, with any other person, interfere with once-loyal love. But not with our ideal candidate! Nothing would ever divert His love (Rom. 8:35-39).

Management style

Can you imagine a Commander-in-chief who would willingly lay down his life, not for his men, but for his enemies, to woo them over to the winning side? Can you imagine a Chief Executive who would wash the feet of ordinary citizens and invite them not only to share meals with Him, but their hearts and lives as well? It's common for the First Lady to redecorate the White House to her own tastes, but can you imagine a Leader who would prepare a place for *us* in His own home?

Would such a ruler share with His undeserving subjects all His wealth? Welcome us into His family as brothers, heirs, co-rulers? Invite us to *"appear with Him in glory"* (Col. 3:4)? Forgive me if I can't get too excited about the other candidates. Oh, did I mention that our Man has already won, and that His seat is uncontested?
—Jabe Nicholson

The Covenant Keeper

Men make, then break, their promises,
Sometimes by craft, impotence, or neglect;
Sometimes the willing spirit fails
Through failing flesh, our good intentions checked;
Some will not do, or cannot do,
What they have promised, but not so with God:
He cannot lie, He cannot fail,
His Son the Amen to each promise in His Word.

When God made covenants with men,
His word should have sufficed to seal the claim,
But to remove all doubt, an oath
Was sworn and sealed with Yaweh's Name;
A refuge strong, an anchor fast,
Secured within the very heart of heaven,
Immutable! Impossible!
Our names, like nails, upon His palms engraven.

I rest, O God, upon the One
Who by His word the universe expressed;
That spoke again, with human lips:
"Finished!" and now I rest where Thou dost rest.
Partakers of His nature by these words,
Heaven and earth will one day pass away,
Banished by that same Voice that called them forth,
But Jesus' promises are here to stay.

—J. B. N.