



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Divine Purpose

“The History of Covenant Theology - II”

TRANSCRIPT

Let's begin our class this evening with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn again to Thee with thanksgiving for the blessings of life through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. We thank Thee that He is a sponsor for the people of God and has carried out his ministry in their behalf as their mediator and surety. And we thank Thee, Lord, that due to the successful accomplishment of all of his tasks for us, we stand justified in him, possessed of the forgiveness of sins, of eternal life, and all of the other blessings that pertain to the relationship described by the Apostle Paul so often as being “in Christ.” We thank Thee that there is no condemnation to those who are “in Christ” and we rejoice in this. And we thank Thee, Lord, that as Thou doest look upon us, Thou doest see us in Him. And the fact that he is the mediator and the covenantal mediator is of the greatest significance for us. And we pray, Lord, that our understanding and our appreciation may grow as we contemplate all that that means. We ask that Thou will be with us tonight as we continue our study of the theme before us.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Our study is really simply put, very simply, is a study of God’s plan of the ages, but we are looking at it against the background of two primary approaches to systematic theology or the teaching, the doctrinal teaching, of the Bible. And those two approaches are the approaches of covenant theology and of dispensational theology. And then, we will also, at the appropriate time and spot, I hope it’s appropriate, we will discuss some of the attempts to set out mediating forms of theology. We’re dealing primarily with evangelicals, of course, and so we will not be discussing liberal theology per se, but looking at it from the standpoint of, “What do the Scriptures say with reference to the doctrines of the word of God?”

Now, I have said last week, and I repeat this because, I think it’s of the utmost importance that we cannot really understand anything about God’s plan of the ages against the background of these approaches if we do not understand the history of these approaches. And so we’re beginning with a history of Covenant Theology. This will be the conclusion of it tonight, if I’m able to finish in time, the history, and then we will discuss the major features of that. And then, we will discuss the history of Dispensational Theology and its major features. And after we have done that, we will launch into a discussion more specifically of what the Bible reveals concerning its theological structure, and we will proceed all the way through to a completion of what the Scriptures say with reference to God’s plan of the ages.

Now, I don’t know how you began your Christian life, but I began my Christian life by someone putting in my hands a Scofield Reference Bible, which I read through from beginning to end. And then having done that, I, of course, I read all the notes as I went through too. I didn’t look up all of the center column references. I might have still been looking up some of them, but I read all of the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible and it meant a great deal to me at that particular stage in my Christian life. So that’s kind of the way I began. I think, one of the first books ever put in my hand was a book entitled, “God’s Plan of the Ages” in which there really was a summary of what was found

in the Scofield Reference Bible but summarized so that a person could grasp the overall teaching of the word of God. And back, some years back, when every year I used to teach several home Bible classes here in the Dallas area, I would usually give a course in “God’s Plan of the Ages,” and it was a very simple biblical kind of treatment, primarily, from a dispensational viewpoint because that was the viewpoint that had been taught me.

Now, what I’m doing in this series is a little more sophisticated than that. And we are looking at this in what, I think, is a more scientific and more historical background. And also, I think, we will deal with some of the problems and that kind of thing that I never used to deal with in old Bible classes. But I do think that it’s extremely important that we grasp the history of both of these approaches and also of the attempts to mediate these two viewpoints. As a matter of fact, as we will try to point out from time to time, both of these viewpoints are relatively recent attempts to integrate the teaching of the Bible in doctrinal fashion, although, dispensationalism is much more recent than the covenant form.

Now, we turn to the outline. And we last time discussed right at the beginning, the covenant idea and covenant theology, and it’s important for us to keep that distinction in mind. Anyone who reads the Bible has to deal with the covenant idea, because the term “covenant” is used frequently in the Bible; not as frequently in the New Testament as in the Old Testament. But there are different covenants, different kinds of covenants, and so anyone reading Scripture would have to form some idea of what the term “covenant” means theologically. But that’s not covenant theology.

Last night, I was preaching and teaching in Denton and at the conclusion of the study in which I gave an exposition of Romans 11:1 through 5, someone came up to me afterwards and said, “What is covenant theology?” Now, I had not been talking about covenant theology, although the term had been mentioned at one point, I’ve forgotten exactly why, but anyway, I thought that illustrated the fact that there are a lot of people who hear terms bandied about and do not really know what they meant.

When I went through theological seminaries, I think I explained last week, the term “covenant theology” was often bandied about and usually bandied about as very bad, but no one ever, while I was going through theological seminary, while I was in the course of the studies, ever went into any kind of historical detail over covenantal theology. I knew it was bad because they told me it was bad, but that’s as far as my understanding went at that time. I’m sorry that my professors did not deal with the question historically, because I could have avoided a great deal of confusion for a considerable period of time until I made the study for myself. So bear in mind the covenant idea is a biblical thing. Both dispensationalists and covenant theologians would agree the Bible talks about covenants. The covenant idea is there in Scripture. But when we talk about covenant theology, we are talking about a form of theology that uses the covenant idea as its organizing principle. In other words, the doctrinal teaching of the Bible is gathered around the covenant idea as it is unfolded in Scripture according to covenant theologians.

Now, the second thing that it’s important for us to remember is that in the early church there were no partisans of covenant theology. Covenant Theology, as it is known today, is a relatively recent phenomenon theologically. Now, that doesn’t mean it’s wrong, but it’s relatively recent. Covenant Theology emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Now, it’s much older than Dispensational Theology, which did not originate until the nineteenth century. Now, I know, a lot of people would like to say dispensationalism goes back to the beginning, and they’ll think of some idea that dispensational theology espouses and say, “You see, you can find that in Irenaeus or you can find that in Justin Martyr” and, of course, that’s true of almost any kind of theology. All Christian theologies have certain things about them that go back to the apostolic fathers. One can find some documentation for it. But we’re talking about the system as a whole; the theological viewpoint as a whole. And you can read the apostolic fathers and you can read the early church fathers that followed them and you won’t find a

dispensationalist among them, and the same thing is true of covenant theology. You will find certain ideas that are found in covenant theology. Irenaeus we talked about last time and there are others too that make mention of things that are true to the developed covenant theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but there were no covenant theologians in that sense in the early church either. So bear those things in mind.

We said also last time, and I laid stress on this, that this is not surprising because the Lord Jesus told the apostles in the Upper Room that when he went he would send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would indwell the saints permanently and he would guide them in all the truth, and that is what he has been doing now for all of these centuries. He has been teaching the Christian church. And the history of the Christian church, in one sense, is the history of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, as well as of his ministry of guidance down through the centuries. So we should expect the early church was not well instructed in biblical doctrine in the scientific sense that has grown through the years. And it's fair to say, I believe, that the church today, the evangelical church today, understands the doctrine of the word of God as a whole better than any of the earlier ages of the Christian church; better to my mind than the Reformers also because the Reformers, while right in a lot of things, were also wrong in a number of things as evangelicals even among reformed theologians would be happy to admit.

Now, that's the introduction for tonight. And last time we looked at the antecedents of covenant theology in the Holy Scriptures. Irenaeus, one of the greatest of the biblical students of the early days, whose dates are one hundred thirty to approximately 200 AD. We briefly referred to Johann Heinrich Bullinger, who was the Zurich theologian who succeeded Ulrich Zwingli there, very important man because really the idea of covenant in connection with theology is traceable to Bullinger, who wrote a very significant work on the covenant. But covenant theology as developed, covenant theology is not found in Bullinger's work. It had not yet originated as a developed system. We made reference to John Calvin and again in Calvin's work, while there are

references to, of course, the covenant idea, still John Calvin was not a covenant theologian in the sense in which covenant theology is taught today. Certain ideas that Calvin had are true to covenant theology, and his theology is much more harmonious with covenant theology than it is with dispensational theology but, nevertheless, he was not a covenant theologian.

So tonight we want to try, as briefly as we can, to look at the emergence of covenant theology and then deal with the developed form just briefly in the Westminster Confession of Faith; Francis Turretin and Charles Hodge, who was a nineteenth century theologian and represents one of the final stages in the development of covenant theology.

So Roman II in the outline: The Emergence of Covenant Theology, and capital A: Zacharias Ursinus, fifteen thirty-four to fifteen eighty-three. Ursinus was a German reformer and theologian. He studied at Wittenberg, where Luther had been, remember? He's best known for his part in the writing of the Heidelberg Catechism, a magnificent document and also one of the documents of the Dutch Calvinistic Church. Heidelberg Catechism. Ursinus, in his dual authorship of the Heidelberg Catechism, authored a theological work which exudes the spirit of Melancthon, the Lutheran Teformer that followed Luther, and in this sense, the kind of theology found there, while Calvinistic, nevertheless, is not quite of the same sharp and strong Calvinism found in Switzerland in Geneva and Zurich. Ursinus was a professor. He was a very important man in his day. He paid a lengthy visit academically to Geneva in fifteen fifty-seven and then he taught at Heidelberg Dogmatics from fifteen sixty-one to fifteen sixty-eight, and later he became associated at Neustadt, also a city in Germany, with Zanchius, one of the strongest of the Calvinists and whose work on predestination is found often in our book room. I don't know whether it's in there now, but it's something that you would do well to read. It's really an outstanding treatise on predestination authored by Zanchius, who worked with Ursinus at Neustadt.

Ursinus paid at least two visits to Zurich and was influenced by the Zurich theologians Zwingli and Bullinger and there, no doubt, he became more acquainted with the covenant ideas that were developing in the Reform Church. In his own writing, he wrote what is called “The Larger Catechism.” And in it there is the first clearly articulated reference to the covenant of works that was called by him “The Covenant of Creation” or “The Covenant of Nature.” You’ll find it in the Schofield Reference Bible called, in some of the editions, “The Edenic Covenant,” “Covenant of Works.” We’ll devote a lecture to the “Covenant of Works” very shortly. In fact, we’ll begin next week, the Lord willing with that, so I won’t say anything about it now, but you will find a reference to that in Ursinus’ work.

Now, the second man is the man who with Ursinus is responsible for the “Heidelberg Catechism.” By the way, I know a lot of people tend to think, when you say “catechism” or when you say “creed,” unfortunately, evangelicals have been misled by a lot of people who really ought to have known better. Most of the time it’s because they never really been to a theological school of any significance, and so they tend to think that it’s bad to read a creed or it’s bad to read a historical theological document with which you cannot fully agree. But I rather like to think that when the church was going through all of these controversies down through the centuries that the Holy Spirit was guiding the evangelical church and, therefore, the way in which he guided the church was very important for the doctrine of the church. After all, the doctrine of Trinity was the result of a great deal of controversy. Some very important men stood for truth. The doctrine of the deity of Christ was a very big controversy. And were it not for men like Athanasius, who stood against others, like Arius who was a bishop but who, nevertheless, did not stand in the sound doctrine of the word of God, we wouldn’t humanly speaking, in other words, I felt that those things that the Church went through were divine providence. Humanly speaking, we wouldn’t have the conception of the Trinitarian God or of the Deity of Christ that most evangelicals today accept as biblical doctrine without a

whole lot of discussion. So it's important to understand the historical background of the teaching of the word of God, and all of those theological discussions are illuminating. Those men were just as intelligent as you and I. As you can see, these men were extremely well educated, and they debated these things in great detail, because it was their whole life. They didn't spend three fourths of their lives running around in Mercedes and Cadillacs and making as much money as they could. They spent their time in the study of the Scriptures, and the preaching of the word of God. Now, they were very sharp in the understanding of theological things.

So I remember a statement made by Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, who lived in the twentieth century that, “The reading of the Creeds of Christendom,” which is a three-volume work, “brings a person into association with more sound theology and provides more of an opportunity for growth in biblical doctrine than in almost any other work outside the word of God.” So do not think for one moment that the study of the history of the Christian Church is not important. It is.

Now, coming to Olevianus, Caspar Olevianus. He was born at Treves or as we know it, Trier. It's in western Germany now. At times in its past history, it has been in France or under the French kings and the French government. Those of you who know the Moselle River region may recognize that Trier is on the Moselle River. It's the heart of the French or of the Moselle, I should say, the Moselle wine industry, and there is a school of viticulture there. I know that means a whole lot to you, since you know that I grow a few little grapevines in my back yard; not in order to make any wine, but just to see if it's possible to grow in Texas.

At any rate, Olevianus is identified with Trier. He was born there. He studied widely, including stints in theology at Geneva, at Zurich, at Luzon, and he became acquainted with William Farel. Now, William Farel was the man who persuaded John Calvin to go to Geneva. Farel labored most of his life in New Chatelle in Switzerland, and if you go to New Chatelle today, you can go to the cathedral in which Farel carried on his

ministry. He was a fiery, preaching Reformer, and a very, very godly man. In fact, Farel is the one who told Olevianus, when Olevianus was thinking about going elsewhere, to carry on his ministry after he'd been taught, “No, you go back to the place where you were born.” Olevianus replied, “Well, I'd like to go to Metz.” He said, “No, go back to where you first were born, and there labor.” So Olevianus went back to Trier, and took up a job teaching Latin in the high school. Well, he was teaching, having his students read “Melanctha” in the high school. Now, what would our high schools be like today if someone in the Latin class brought out some ancient theological work and had his students read it? They read “Caesar's Gallic Wars” and they read “Cicero” and they read things like this. But he had them read theology, because he was preaching at the same time the theology through them. But he finally decided that teaching Latin in the high school was not the best way to evangelize the city of Trier.

Now, you must remember that this city was ruled by an archbishop or a bishop, who was one of the electors of the Holy Roman Empire, and so, therefore, the city was Roman Catholic and under a Roman Catholic bishop. His name, I think, was John. Well, he was out of town and so Olevianus decided that he would try a more direct approach. And so what he did was to put up an announcement on the [French indistinct] which was the high school, that there would be some preaching of the word of God on Saint Lawrence's Day. Now, Saint Lawrence was a Roman Catholic saint that they honored in that part of the country and so that morning from ten to twelve, he preached. Well, the people in Trier had never heard anything like this, because it was fiery preaching of the Reformation, which he had learned when he was in Paris. He was acquainted with Calvin. He had learned from him. He had learned from these other men. And Farel was a kind of person that if you stayed around him very long, you would be preaching fiery Reformation doctrine. So that's what he did and quite a few people came out to hear him and he continued.

Now, the bishop was gone and so the crowds grew to as many as six hundred people, which was a big crowd in those days, probably, more than that place knew in the preaching of the word of God. Finally, however, the word came to the bishop when he was in Augsburg on some business over there, and foreseeing that what might happen in Trier would be the whole city turning to the Reformation, he hastened back, and characteristically, he gathered about a hundred and sixty or seventy soldiers with him to come back into town. Well, it's a long story. I won't be able to tell it all, but the result was that after some use of the military in the burning of farms and various other things like this, Olevianus was thrown into prison, and was imprisoned for some time, not too many months, but considerable period of time. Fortunately, the elector of the palatinate, Frederick the Third, who had his headquarters in Heidelberg, was a friend of the Reformation, and so he sent a whole lot of money over to the Roman Catholic bishop with the appeal to release Olevianus, because he had appointed him to teach theology in the university in Heidelberg, and so that's how he got out of prison in Trier, went to Heidelberg, and there was one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Now, the interesting thing for us is that Olevianus was a person who had come to recognize the significance of the covenant in theological thinking. The only covenant, however, which we know that he knew specifically from his theological writing was the Covenant of Grace. He wrote an exposition of the Apostle's Creed and against that Apostle's Creed he set out an exposition of the Covenant of Grace. The articles of the Creed are taken to be a short statement of the terms of the Covenant of Grace, and again, we're going to devote a night to the Covenant of Grace. I'll simply say this; that in theological thinking, covenant theology thinking, the Covenant of Grace is the covenant made between the godhead and the elect. It is an unconditional covenant, which has to do with the guarantee of their ultimate salvation. Covenant of Grace. Now, that looms large in all thinking of covenant theology.

Robert Rollock. Robert Rollock is interesting because he was a Scot. He was the principal of the University of Edinburgh from fifteen hundred and eighty-three to fifteen hundred and ninety-eight or ninety-nine. There's a little question about that date, the date of his death. He wrote a treatise on effectual calling and that represents a part of his theological lectures, which he delivered at the university. Attached to this work on effectual calling was a short work on the covenant and in it he says, “God says nothing to man apart from the covenant.” He sets out clearly the covenant works made between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden, and then he goes on to point out that, “In Christ's death, he is our mediator, restoring that which was lost in the breaking of the covenant of works through a new covenant of grace.” So you can see, originating in the thinking of these men who were the beginners or the beginning individuals in the construction of covenant theology is the central significance of the Covenant of Grace; a covenant made between the godhead and the elect.

Now, we must not, because these terms are used “Covenant of Grace” and because you don't find Covenant of Grace in the Bible, we must avoid making statements like this, which are often made again by evangelicals who do not understand much about the history of theological thinking. They'll say, “The Covenant of Grace is a term that doesn't appear in the Bible, so let's abandon the whole idea of such.” We need to remember; have a little more sophistication in our thinking to realize, that the idea of something may be in the Bible, even though the precise term that someone uses may not. The simplest illustration to show the truth of that is to ask you to find the term “Trinity” in the Bible and, of course, you cannot find the term “Trinity” but would you take the viewpoint that since the term “Trinity” is not in the Bible, we should forget all about the Trinity? If we did, we may as well forget about Christianity, because Christianity depends upon the doctrine of the Trinity. If the Lord Jesus is not very God of very God, then we don't have a mediator who stands for God and for man, and through his mediatorial work can bring us into relationship with God. So if we don't have the doctrine of the Trinity,

we don't have Christianity. Now it's true, the Covenant of Grace does not appear in the Bible; that is, that term. But the idea of a divine choice made by the godhead of the people of God, and the guarantee of their salvation is as biblical as you can find a doctrine in the word of God. Call them, if you like, the Messianic Promises. That, essentially, is the meaning of the Covenant of Grace. It is a reference to the Messianic promise and promises as they are developed historically in the unfolding of the teaching of the word of God. I hope I'm getting through to you because that's very important, and if you can grasp a few things like that you'll take another step forward in the understanding of the word of God.

Now, then, let's move on from Robert Rollock, the Scot, one of the earliest of the Scottish thinkers along these lines, to William Perkins. What a magnificent man William Perkins was. William Perkins has been called, “The Puritan Theologian of Tudor Times.” He was “a towering figure in Puritan eyes,” as Perry Miller calls him in his book “Errand Into the Wilderness.” Seventeenth century Catholics and Protestants ranked him with Calvin. His works were published in English, in Latin, in Dutch, in Spanish, Welsh, and Irish. They influenced thousands of Englishmen on both sides of the Atlantic. Among the most notable of those influenced by him in Cambridge were William Ames. Now, listen to these names you Americans, you'll recognize them because they are the fathers of our country in many ways; John Cotton, John Robinson of the Pilgrim fathers, Richard Mather, John Winthrop. Listen, if you had a name like Mather and Winthrop and Robinson and Cotton in New England, you'd be there with the elite. You wouldn't be you'd be above Kennedy too, as they came over from Ireland. So here you see, is really the beginning of theological teaching in the United States of America. Mather and Winthrop were influenced by his writing.

Perkins was, particularly, known for his preaching at Great Saint Andrews Church in Cambridge where he was heard by the larger university community. He received his degree from Christ College, notoriously, Puritan in its sympathies. In fifteen eighty, and

after being elected a fellow in fifteen eighty-two received another degree in fifteen eighty-four an MA degree. After preaching to prisoners for a time, isn't that interesting? Here's a man, a very learned man, but he preached to prisoners. He was appointed lecturer at Great Saint Andrews in fifteen eighty-four and he held that post until his death. William Ames, who we'll refer to in just a moment, was one of the influential pupils of Mr. Perkins. And he said of him, and these are the words of Ames, “When being young, I heard worthy Master Perkins so preach in a great assembly of students that he instructed them soundly in the truth, stirred them up effectually to seek after godliness, made them fit for the kingdom of God. And by his example showed them what things they should chiefly intend that they might promote true religion in the power of it unto God's glory and others' salvation.” When Thomas Goodwin came to Cambridge, and incidentally, we have some books by Thomas Goodwin in our book room here. When Goodwin came to Cambridge in sixteen thirteen, he said, these are his words, “The town was then filled with the discourse of the power of Mr. Perkins' ministry still fresh in most men's memories.”

Perkins had a large literary output. Principle three-volume edition of his works contain some thirty-nine separate treatises, expositions, and commentaries. At least fifty editions of his works were printed in Switzerland; the same in Germany, almost ninety in the Netherlands, where Calvinistic theology was particularly strong, and elsewhere. Thomas Fuller remarks that, “His books spoke more tongues than the maker ever understood.” What a statement with regard to the universal way in which Perkins' works were translated and spread. He was a man of tremendous influence, and the things that he has written, some of them have been reprinted in recent years, and if you have a little bit of money, because usually they cost a little bit, you can get some of Perkins' works and read them. Men in our theological colleges are still writing dissertations on William Perkins. He was a man who through William Ames influenced the United States of America in its early years.

Well, that brings us to William Ames, fifteen seventy-six to sixteen thirty-three. In the history of theology, the importance of William Ames is widely recognized both by the liberals and the orthodox. He's been regarded as influential upon men as different as Jonathan Edwards and Friedrich Schleiermacher. In fact, the latest works on Ames have largely been written by liberal men, in which they have sought historically to show the importance of William Ames for the early history of New England. In addition, his influence in ministry has touched more than one continent. He was one of the fathers of English Puritanism; regarded as one of the outstanding men at the discussions that went on at the Synod of Dort. In fact, he had a behind the scenes influence at Dort that touched what, ultimately, was their product, the Canons of the Synod of Dort, that finally were decided upon by the Dutch Church as being sound theology, as over against the Arminian teaching. William Ames was one who had a behind the scenes influence in the settling of some of those questions. One of the modern authors has said about Ames, “Ames had his greatest influence without question in America, where his Covenant Theology, church polity, raumust thought, understanding of the Scriptures, and conception of faith and religious experience were accepted as canonical.” That's startling, isn't it?

In fact, Ames, what happened to Ames was simply this; he too was educated at Cambridge. He was a man of independent thinking. He got into trouble with the crown because his views were reformed and Calvinistic and the authorities did not like what he was doing. And, finally, in order to preserve his life, he had to flee the country. He fled to the Netherlands. Those who knew him, it was recognized that he was a man of outstanding ability, and so behind the scenes at the Canon, at the Synod of Dort, he was extremely active, though he couldn't because he was an Englishman and had not been appointed as one of the delegates, he acted as theological advisor so much so that it was said that he was something of a giant killer in debate. One of his biographers wrote of him, “Ames plainly deserved our saying in his honor, what the mothers of Israel once said

in honor of David, ‘Other theologians have slain their thousands, but Ames is tens of thousands.’” Well, after he’d been there awhile and people had recognized that Ames was an outstanding theologian, he was appointed Professor of Systematic Theology at Franeker in the Netherlands; a theological school where Dutch students were studying the word of God.

Ames was a covenant theologian and in his theology you find something of the developed kind of theology that we know of as covenant theology but not totally so. I want to just say a word about his views on the Covenant of Grace. He believed that the idea of covenant best describes the nature of the relation between God and saved man. He spoke of the Covenant of Grace as a firm promise. Those are his words, “a firm promise”; that is, it was an unconditional covenant. He pointed out how the Covenant of Grace differed from the Old Covenant in a number of important ways, and he discusses how the Covenant of Grace has application to our Christian life. Now, he says that the Covenant of Grace has two forms of administration; the Old Testament form and the New Testament form. But he points out that the nature and substance of the Covenant is the same in both Testaments. The differences are in administration and application. So one can see as this develops that there has become more and more of an emphasis on the term “the Covenant of Grace” and the relationship to the fundamental promises made by God to his elect people.

Now, the next man that we want to discuss before we have a time for a few questions is Johannes Cocceius. It’s probably correct to say that a German by the name of Kloppenburg was the originator of the federal or covenantal system. He taught at Franeker and he died there in fifteen sixty-two. But the person who had the genius and boldness to give definiteness and completeness to the system of covenant theology was John Coch. Now, Cocceius is his Latin term. That’s why so many theologians’ names, incidentally, end in “-s”. That was their Latin name. Arminius. His name was really Hermansau, but Arminius was his Latin name. And so Cocceius was the Latin name of

John Coch or Coch, and he was born in Bremen in Germany. Cocceius had as his teachers, men like Martinius in Hebrew, Ludwig Kraulkiss and William Ames in theology. He was a Professor of Theology at Bremen, in Germany, at Franeker, and then he was a professor at Leiden in the Netherlands where he died. He wrote a book called, “The Structure of Doctrine Concerning the Covenant and the Testament of God” and, still further and later, he wrote in his more enlarged summary of theology, a large work on Christian doctrine. He put Christian doctrine under the two categories of the covenants of nature and grace. His method gained for him the title, “The Father of Biblical Theology.” The reason for that is that Cocceius was particularly interested in the study of the administrations of the Covenant of Grace. Now, you can see that there would be some relationship to dispensational theology in Cocceius’ emphasis on the different administrations of the Covenant of Grace. So in certain points these two theologies come close to merging. In other points, of course, they diverge.

The novelty of his work is not so much in his special ideas as in the details with which Cocceius carried out what was developing covenantal theology. He was a very strong biblical exegete and that was one thing that distinguished him from others. And being a strong biblical exegete, he got into a number of controversies with individuals who had traditional views. His views concerning the Sabbath were different. His views concerning the nature of forgiveness in the Old Testament and in the New Testament were different.

What is interesting to me about this is that when I was studying at Dallas Seminary and Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer was there, Dr. Chafer had difficulty understanding how people were saved in the Old Testament times. He was a very strong dispensationalist and so, consequently, he had difficulty because he drew far too sharp a distinction between the age of the present and the Old Testament age. Now, he spoke, of course, of the distinction between law and grace, and that’s a legitimate thing, but his distinctions were so sharp that he caused a lot of people to lose confidence in some of his thinking.

Now, I can remember as a theological student that he never really quite even professed to understand certainly how people were saved in the Old Testament. And in fact, he said some things that were so, shall I say, they were so questionable that many people accused him of teaching different methods of salvation. But I can distinctly remember him saying that, “So far as salvation in the Old Testament is concerned that’s a very difficult question.” And he also would say things like this, “Not too long ago, a student came to me and said he would write a thesis on salvation in the Old Testament.” And he said, “I just held my breath because I knew it wouldn’t be long before he would come back and say, ‘That subject is a little difficult. I think I better take another topic.’”

Well, Cocceius was a man who dealt with this question of salvation in the Old Testament and salvation in the New. And while he made plain the fact that men were converted in the Old Testament times and were converted in the New Testament times that, nevertheless, until our Lord actually came and shed his blood, the work of redemption was not yet complete. Now, that caused quite a controversy in the Calvinistic and Reform Church of his time, so he was involved in a number of controversies and I cannot go into them. One of these days maybe, if I live long enough, and you can stand it, I’ll give you a course in Dutch theology, which I taught in theological seminaries, both in Dallas and in Chicago and these questions arise then in more detail. He was a man of God and a remarkable student of the word of God. It was said of Cocceius, “He looked for Christ on every page of Holy Scripture, and found him there.” Now, that’s a marvelous kind of christological approach to the word of God, and it’s in thorough harmony with what the Lord Jesus said, when he said, “Moses and the prophets, they wrote of him.” Or like Mr. Spurgeon who said, “Wherever I open up the Bible in the New Testament or in the Old Testament, I head straight across country to Jesus Christ.” So Cocceius was a man like that. Now, the significant thing about him is that one finds in Cocceius for the first time the elements of a full covenant theology.

But the last man that we'll look at just briefly, Hermann Witsius is the one who really systematized, for the first time, covenant theology. In Witsius, a Dutch theologian, covenant theology reaches its final development. His treatise on the “Economy of the Covenants” dealing with the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Redemption, and the Covenant of Grace is one of the best sources for the knowledge of covenant theology in its later form. His work was called “Concerning the Economy of the Covenants of God with Men.” By the way, that term *moi kana mia* is the term that dispensationalists refer to as dispensation, so you could translate this “Concerning the Dispensation of the Covenants of God with Men” one of the best sources, I say, for the knowledge of covenant theology.

These three elements make up covenant theology in its developed form: the Covenant of Works, let me go back. I should really begin with the Covenant of Redemption. The Covenant of Redemption, which I haven't said much about now, but we will, it's next week we'll deal with the Covenant of Redemption. I forgot for a moment our schedule, the Covenant of Redemption; a covenant made between the persons of the Trinity concerning their particular duties in the carrying out of the redemptive program; then the Covenant of Works made between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden. The first covenant, the Covenant of Redemption, an unconditional covenant; the members of the godhead carrying out their work. The next, a conditional covenant, depending upon Adamic obedience, which as you know, Adam broke for men. And then the Covenant of Grace made between the godhead and the elect people of God. Those three covenants, the Covenant of Redemption between the persons of the godhead. In one sense you could call that a conditional covenant, but one made between individuals who have no sin nature, of course, and are thoroughly able to carry out all of the requirements and responsibilities of it. The Covenant of Works between God and Adam, and the Covenant of Grace between the godhead and the elect people of God.

Now, in our outline, just briefly, because we don't have to say much about this; the posterity or the later developments. Capital A: The Westminster Confession of Faith. This, of course, is the great doctrinal standard, the great doctrinal symbol. That's a term for “standard” in theological thought, is the great symbol, the great doctrinal standard of the Reform Churches, particularly, the Presbyterian ones. Now, we only have time for just mentioning the particular Confession of Faith. In the senate of Westminster and the resultant Westminster Confession of Faith, we have the stronghold of the federal system; that is, the covenantal theological system.

Francis Turretin, capital B in the outline, was a Genevan; an ardent foe of four point Calvinism, of the historical character. You know, most people who say I am a four point Calvinist are using a code term. All they mean is I'm against definite atonement, but if you'll wait a few moments and come up again and say, “By the way, do you believe in the freedom of the will?” Well then they will say, “Yes, I believe in the freedom of the will,” and so you know that they're not a four point Calvinist. They're not any Calvinist at all, except perhaps, they may inconsistently hold to the security of the believer because obviously if it's true we have freedom of the will, you cannot harmonize that with eternal security. Because if we are free then we should be free to depart from the Lord after we've been saved to be thoroughly consistent.

Turretin was a particular for this because that kind of Calvinism that inconsistent brand arose in Switzerland, and he and others were the author of a doctrinal statement dealing with four point Calvinism called “The Formula Consensus Helvetica.” Incidentally, Turretin's work is a big three volume theological set written in Latin. Now, it was in the twentieth century this work was still studied as a textbook in schools like Princeton Theological Seminary of the Northern Presbyterian Church and in Richmond in Union Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church U. S., the old Southern Presbyterian church. When Robert L. Dabney, whose books we have in our book room, was teaching at Union, the way he taught his systematic theology class was to have them read ten

pages of Turretin’s Latin *Institutes of Theology* for one of the days, so that every week they had to continue to read ten pages of Latin. There were giants in the theological land in those days. Now, there’s hardly a student in theological classroom that can read Latin at all, but they all were expected to read it, and they read Turretin and used him as a text. It’s not surprising their theology was a whole lot sounder and more thoughtful in that which you find today.

And the final one is Charles Hodge, and as you know, Charles Hodge’s systematic theology is still published. You can find in Hodge, the gathering point for a large number of men who have the same spirit of Calvinistic federal theology; men such as his son A. A. Hodge, B. B. Warfield, who was taught by Hodge, Herman Bavinck of the Netherlands, Lewis Burkhof, whose theology is sold here, John Murray. All of them are adherents of covenant theology, and Hodge’s systematic theology has a comprehensive treatment of the covenantal system, as understood by Presbyterian theologians.

Now, there are just a few minutes. I’d like to stop here, and maybe there’s a question or two that some of you might have and something I’ve omitted or something that I’ve forgotten to say anything about.

Yes sir, Maynard. Incidentally, speak loud enough so that some of those Presbyterians sitting in the back row back there can hear you.

[Question] I did not understand if you said that covenant grace was conditional or unconditional?

Unconditional. Unconditional. Covenant of Grace is the unconditional covenant made between the godhead and the elect people of God. Now, you haven’t seen the schedule of the next lectures, but the next one will be on the Covenant of Redemption, then the Covenant of Works, and then on the Covenant of Grace. And when we finish that we will have treated covenant theology, so you’ll have an understanding of what covenant theology is in some detail. Other questions? Now, come on. I know, I know I didn’t teach that all that plainly and clearly.

Yes sir. [Question inaudible] Explain that? Say that again. I thought you said, “Explain briefly how salvation occurred in the Old Testament.” That really is a very simple question because salvation as the Apostle Paul makes very plain in the New Testament and others as well, Romans and Galatians are probably the two best sources, Romans 3 and 4, Galatians 3 and 4, make it very plain that salvation occurred in the Old Testament according to the same principles by which it takes place in the New Testament. It is by faith in the coming redeemer, as over against faith in a redeemer that has come. It is on the basis of grace, the principle of grace, and Paul derives all of this, as you know, from the Old Testament Scriptures, and it is grounded in the merits of the work that the redeemer would accomplish when he came. The only difference of significance is that until the redeemer has come and has accomplished that work then the Old Testament salvation rests upon an incompleting basis, uncompleted basis, and that is why the Lord Jesus said, “It is finished.”

In other words, there has to come, ultimately, the work of the redeemer who sheds the blood of atonement. In that sense, in the Old Testament, there was not yet a full accomplishment of redemption. One of the illustrations of this also is the fact that in addition to Hebrews chapter 10, and Hebrews chapter 9, and other passages that make this, I think, quite plain, one of the features of this is the fact that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given because that Jesus was not yet glorified. So the work of atonement must actually be accomplished, but the Old Testament believers believed and they counted on the faithfulness of God to his word to accomplish what he said.

Dr. Ironside used to like to say, “The Old Testament saints were saved on credit, whereas the New Testament saints are saved by virtue of that which is pledged to their account when they believe in Christ.” There’s a sense in which that is true. There’s no doubt about it because, of course, God has decreed. He was promised beforehand that he would come. He was a Lamb of God slain, and the foundation of the world, that he

would come and accomplish his work, but until that takes place, there's an element of uncertainty from the human standpoint but not from the divine. Does that help?

[Question] Okay then, so what you are saying is under covenant theology there is only three covenants?

Now, I'll try to make plain, there are differences of opinion among covenant theologians, but the standard approach is the three covenants; Covenant of Redemption, Covenant of Works, Covenant of Grace. Those three. Did you say two or three? Three

Yes sir, Rich.

[Question] What were the reasons for Cocceius being called the father of biblical theology?

The question is, “What were the reasons why Cocceius was called the Father of Biblical Theology?” Because Cocceius spent a lot of his time in analyzing the flow of divine revelation through the ages of the Old Testament period and then into the New. Now, we will see when we discuss these covenants like the Covenant of Grace that those men divided up the period of time into ages. For example, it was frequently done in this way: Those were regarded as administrative ages of the Covenant of Grace from Adam to Abraham, one age; from Abraham to the Mosaic Law, another age; from the Mosaic Law to Christ; a third age. And then sometimes but, generally, the New Testament was regarded as one administrative period of time, until the new heavens and the new earth. So that's why he was, because he spent his time studying, spent a lot of his time studying the effect of the Abrahamic Promises on the flow of divine revelation, the Mosaic Law on the flow. He did not believe that men in the New Testament times were under the Sabbath Law still; that rose out of his study of biblical theology. It was for that reason.

[Question] Cannot the English language convey as much theology as Latin?

Say that again Edward. I'm sorry. I didn't hear you.

[Question] Cannot the English language convey as much theology as Latin?

You see, the reason Latin was so important was because these men were just like, just as you and I. You come from India. I come from the United States. Somebody else may come from Germany. Somebody else from Paris, France, or whatever. Somebody's from the Netherlands. Who speaks Dutch? Well, Kay Howard does, and Dan Duncan's wife does, but theologians, as a general rule, don't learn Dutch. So in order for people who come from all of these different language groups to converse with one another, they all learned Latin, and so they spoke Latin with one another for purposes of communication. And so they wrote their books in Latin so that more people would read them. That's why Latin became so important. It was the language of scholarship. Does that touch what you?

[Question] I was thinking of present day.

The problem is when we're talking about historical theology, in historical theology in any discussion, you should be able to go back to the sources. That's one of the things you learn when you go to a college or university. Go back to the sources. If you read secondary works all the time then you read interpretations by individuals who have various reasons to seek to set forth a particular viewpoint. To give you an example, Knudson in his work on William Ames has certain ideas concerning William Ames' theology, which, I think, are dead wrong. But you can understand why he wanted to do it because Knudson was influenced by Barthian theology and what he would like to see is the same attitude toward certain important theological truths that Professor Barth had. And so at times when language is somewhat indefinite, there's a tendency for a scholar to want to push it a bit to agree with what his presuppositions would seem to demand. There are certain political reasons for it; sometimes certain religious reasons for it. So it's always best to be able to go back to the sources. That's why in scholarly work you should be able to read, if you're doing systematic theology you should be able to read Latin, as well as German, French, and English, as a minimum, in addition to the biblical languages, which of course. [End of Tape.]