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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Divine Purpose # 3

“The Mysterious Counsel Chamber, or the Covenant of Redemption”

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege again of considering things that have to do with the teaching of the word of God. We ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit again in illumination and understanding. Enable us to have open minds and keen minds and interested minds with regard to the things of the word of God. Deliver us from those things that prevent us from coming to understand some of the things that have been set out in Holy Scripture for us. Deliver us from the biases and prejudices and the kinds of things that are so characteristic of all of us who are human beings. Help us to think clearly by the Holy Spirit. Help us to remember that it is far more important to be submissive to Thee and to Thy word than to be submissive to that which we have been taught or even to our friends who are our teachers and respected teachers. Give us, Lord, a true and genuine searching for the truth.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Now, last week we finished our study of the development of covenant theology historically. We looked at some of the beginnings. We then looked at some of the important men. We saw that, finally, covenant theology attained its mature form in the theology of Hermann Witsius, a theologian from the Netherlands, a very sound man.

And then we looked at some of the things that have developed from that high point of the development of covenant theology, and we saw briefly how it influenced the theology of the seventeenth and eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We looked, for example, at its relationship to the Westminster Confession of Faith, which enshrines covenant theology in its historic form. We did not have time to look at the Canons of the Synod of Dort, but with reference to soteriology or the doctrine of salvation, those Canons of the Synod of Dort are also in harmony with what we call “developed covenant theology.”

We tried to make the point all along, and I hope I won't have to keep making it, that there is a difference between the covenant idea in the Bible to which all who believe the Bible subscribe. They may have different viewpoints about it, but they subscribe to the fact that there is a covenantal teaching in the Bible and covenant theology, which is a form of looking at Christian theology in which the major points of it are gathered around covenants, both prehistoric and historic or pretemporal covenants and historic covenants. And after looking at the history, now the logical thing for us to do, I think, is to look at the three primary covenants that make up covenantal theology; theology, not the covenant idea, but covenantal theology.

Now, these three covenants are: The Covenant of Redemption, the Covenant of Grace, and the Covenant of Works. And we're going to devote an hour to each one of these topics. And the reason for it is that when we get through, you will understand what covenant theologians teach about covenant theology, which is not always the same thing that others teach about covenant theology. So we're looking at it from the standpoint of a covenant theologian at the moment, to be fair to them, to set forth covenant theology as it is or should be taught. So the Covenant of Redemption is our topic for tonight.

Now, a few words by way of introduction.

Charles Hodge, who was Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary in the nineteenth century, was a covenant theologian. Mr. Hodge is one of the great defenders of the Christian faith in the nineteenth century. We all owe a

great deal to Charles Hodge and the kind of theology that he taught. His son also taught at Princeton Theological Seminary. He was the teacher of Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, one of most outstanding of the twentieth century theologians, early twentieth century; a man whose views on the Bible and concerning the person and work of Christ, particularly, theologians of all persuasions within the evangelical camp, would find the greatest of harmony; a strong man on the Scriptures, a strong man on the person and work of Christ, but a strong Calvinist at the same time; highly appreciated by men of different theological schools.

Now, Charles Hodge contends that the plan of salvation is set forth in scripture in the form of a covenant. First of all, he says, “You can see that this is true, because the term ‘covenant’ is used so often in the Bible. Many kinds of covenants are set forth in the Bible,” he points out. The Hebrew term *baryth* in the Old Testament and the Greek term *diatheke* are used frequently, especially in the Old Testament. They are used of different kinds of compacts, but there is a great deal of use of the term “covenant.” You can think of, for example, covenant by Joshua made with the children of Israel, that David and Jonathan made. There’s a covenant in Genesis chapter 21. These are incidental compacts between individuals or between an individual and a body of people, but the most important use of the term “covenant” in the Scriptures in the Old Testament, particularly, has to do with the great covenantal scheme of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the New Covenant, which are three unconditional, promissory covenants. And then the Mosaic Covenant, which is a conditional covenant, but under which the children of Israel lived from Mount Sinai to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you just think for a moment of the fact that the Lord Jesus when he met with the apostles in the Upper Room prior to his death, took the cup and said, “This is the new covenant in my blood, shed for many for the remission of sins,” you’ll recognize that there is a covenant scheme to Christian theology. Now, Charles Hodge contended, first of all, the constant use of the

term *bariyth* and, particularly, in these critical places, indicates that a plan of salvation is set forth in Scripture in the form of a covenant.

Second, he pointed out that the elements of a covenant are included in the plan; that is, there are parties to the salvation of individuals. There is God in heaven. There are men and women on the earth. There are promises that are set forth by the Lord God to them, and there are conditions that are set out as well. Now, Calvinists have had a great deal of intraparty discussion over the use of the term “conditions.” Professor Hodge uses that term. Perhaps a better term to just avoid any debate over whether you can call “faith” a condition would be “responsibilities.” So we’ll use that term, “responsibilities.” There are parties. There is God. There is man. There are stipulations or promises, and there are responsibilities. And that’s the essential nature of a covenant. That’s why Jesus, when he took the wine said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” He was ratifying a covenant, we know described prophetically by Jeremiah in the Old Testament. “Now, since this is the biblical mode of displaying the plan, it should be retained in our theology,” so Professor Hodge claims.

He goes on to say some, I think, some significant words. “Our only security for retaining the truths of the Bible is to adhere to the Scriptures as closely as possible in our mode of presenting the doctrines therein revealed.” Now, what he means by that is simply that when the scriptural language is suitable, we should hold to it, and scriptural language for Professor Hodge is suitable, and we best retain the meaning of Scripture when we use the terms of Scripture. I think many of us would have very little to quarrel with concerning that. We might say there are some things that the Bible teaches in different terms and we might disagree over the kinds of terms and we might try to gather a whole lot of teaching into one term to make it easier to teach but, surely, that’s a biblical idea expressed by him.

In describing the covenant theology, it will be proper, I believe, to begin with the Covenant of Redemption that I’ve mentioned. A belief in this covenant, incidentally, is

not confined to covenantal theologians. Now, this is very important. It's particularly important in the Dallas area because in the Dallas area, naturally, with Dallas Theological Seminary here, a fine institution, we have had an institution committed since its beginning to dispensational theology. And generally speaking, in their commitment to dispensational theology, they have been critical of covenant theology; not of everything about covenant theology, fortunately, but the general impression given has sometimes been by some overzealous students and teachers that everything about covenant theology is bad and everything about dispensational theology is right. Belief in, for example, the Covenant of Redemption was one of Dr. Chafer's beliefs. In other words, this fundamental covenant of covenantal theology was something to which he adhered. He acknowledged that the scriptural revelation was not very great concerning the Covenant of Redemption, and so far as the term itself, covenant theologians acknowledge that precise term, the “Covenant of Redemption” is not referred to in the Bible but the idea of the covenant is. And Dr. Chafer acknowledged that. He said this, “This covenant rests upon but slight revelation. It is rather sustained largely by the fact, that it seems both reasonable and inevitable.” So Dr. Chafer was then a person who believed in the foundational covenant of covenantal theology. That's not altogether surprising because Dr. Chafer was a Presbyterian minister. He was classified as an evangelist in his later years, but he was a Presbyterian minister and outwardly, at least, he was supposed to adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the system of doctrine taught in it, which is thoroughly covenantal.

Now, he didn't hold to everything in it, and he finally was declared, that is, his theology was declared to be heretical by the Presbyterian Church in the early nineteen forties, as a result of a committee which studied the matter for a year or so, and declared that the dispensational theology was contrary to the standards of the Presbyterian Church. That was done by the PCUS, which is the Presbyterian Church in the United States, which now has just the past year united with the Northern Presbyterian, United Presbyterian

Church. There have been a number of these divisions. If you start describing where they came from that would take us a long time. But anyway, until that point, Dallas Seminary itself had a number of faculty members who were Presbyterians, and a large group in the student body were Presbyterians, but they quickly began to drop out at that point because it became very difficult for them to be ordained by the presbyteries if they came from Dallas Seminary since they had been pronounced by the committee to have a theology that was out of harmony with the standards of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Well now, that's our introduction. Let's turn to the Covenant of Redemption, and we'll discuss first the description of the Covenant of Redemption, and 'Capital A' in the outline which is before you, its distinction from the Covenant of Grace. Some theologians had considered the Covenant of Redemption as subsumed under the Covenant of Grace between the triune God and man. Now, I'm not going to go into details here just to simply say this; that if you were to pick up theologians' volumes of the covenantal persuasion, you will find them arguing for slightly different presentations of the relationships between the theological covenants. Some have seen the Covenant of Grace as between God the Father and Christ, as representing the elect. Some have seen the Covenant of Grace as being between the godhead and the elect. The Covenant of Redemption is sometimes seen as under the Covenant of Grace, but generally speaking, the most popular way has been to see the Covenant of Redemption as the fundamental covenant, and that covenant, a covenant between the persons of the Trinity, and then flowing out of that, the Covenant of Grace, made by the triune God with man, or with Christ as sponsor for man, but usually with man. So we will take it along that line, because that's the most popular way of doing it.

There are two covenants; a Covenant of Redemption between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, and based on this, a Covenant of Grace between the triune God and the elect sinner. Now, I'm not sure I can do this on the spur of the moment, but I'll try to visually represent this. The fundamental covenant we will call the “Covenant of

Redemption” made between the persons of the Trinity, then out of that the next covenant, the “Covenant of Grace”. Now, frequently in covenant theology, this will be the covenant that is commonly mentioned, because this is a covenant made between the triune God and the people of God or the elect. Now, the Covenant of Grace is followed by the Covenant of Works. The Covenant of Works is the covenant between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden, so you can see that here we have, up here we have that which is pretemporal, and now below we’re going to have that which is temporal or historical. I’ll abbreviate that.

Now, the Covenant of Works made between Adam and the Lord God. These are the three fundamental covenants of covenant theology. These are the theological covenants. Now, strictly speaking, this is not simply as theological covenant, but a historical covenant as well.

But at any rate, there follows shortly after in Genesis chapter 12, as you well know, the Covenant of Abraham, a covenant made with Abraham. Now, strictly speaking, this covenant made with Abraham doesn’t have any relationship to this, so we will eliminate that. It is rather related to this covenant, since it represents the beginning of the outworking in history of the divine promises made between the triune God and the elect, Abram and his seed. Now, after the Abrahamic Covenant, then we will have further, there are differences, of course. The Covenant of Works was a conditional covenant. This is an unconditional covenant. We have the covenant made with David, a further expansion of the covenant with Abraham, also an unconditional covenant, and then we have in the Old Testament, the New Covenant. This covenant also, a further expansion of the Abrahamic, just as that is. Now, we’re going to deal with this later, but just remember that when God gave promises to Abram he said, “Kings shall come out of you.” So this is the broad, evangelical covenant in history, and these are developments of this giving the redemptive basis.

But we are talking now about the Covenant of Redemption. Maybe that will give you some, I don't, I've just done this is the first time, I've ever done this. This just lies in my head as theology, and I may discover tomorrow, “Well, I shouldn't have drawn that diagram quite like that,” but that's what came out of my mind then anyway, and I think it's generally true. At least it will give you a chance to think about it.

The Westminster Standards, incidentally, are not altogether clear on the distinction between the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Redemption. Sometimes, the Westminster Standards adopt one representation and then sometimes another representation. In other words, sometimes, well, to put it specifically in the Confession in chapter 7, and in the shorter catechism question 20, “The Covenant of Grace is made between God and elect sinners,” while in the larger catechism question 31, “The Covenant is made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect.” So just for those of you who've studied dispensational theology, you will know that as they differ among themselves on more minor points, so covenantal theologians differ within themselves.

One of the greatest of the covenant theologians was Francis Turretin. We referred to him as being one who really systematized covenant theology, even after Witsius, in a very strict way. Both Turretin and Witsius see the two covenants; Covenant of Redemption, Covenant of Grace. And the later covenant, the Covenant of Redemption is seen by Turretin as the foundation of the Covenant of Grace. In other words, the agreement between the persons of the Trinity antedates logically the agreement between the persons of the Trinity and the elect. Witsius, the man who we have suggested is the one who finally put the capstone on the development of covenant theology, covenant theology historically says this, “In order to more thoroughly, to understand the nature of the Covenant of Grace, two things are above all to be distinctly considered. First, the covenant which intervenes between God the Father and Christ the Mediator; that's the Covenant of Redemption. Secondly, that testamentary disposition by which God bestows by an immutable covenant, eternal salvation, and everything relative thereto upon the

elect. The former agreement, the Covenant of Redemption, is between God and the Mediator; the later between God and the elect. This last presupposes the first.” In other words, there has to be some agreement between the persons of the Trinity before there is an agreement between the persons of the Trinity and the elect, and while the last presupposes the first, it’s also founded upon it. So that would give you some idea then, of the covenant, and specifically here, what was I saying, of its distinction from the Covenant of Grace.

Now, let’s take a look at capital B: The Son in the Covenant. Now, we can look at this under three headings, and first “His Position in the Covenant.” Now, the Lord Jesus is the surety of the New Covenant, and since the New Covenant is a development of the Covenant of Grace, it’s fair then to take a look at his position in light of what the Scriptures say about him. Now, I’m going to ask you if you will to turn to Hebrews chapter 7, in your Bible. I know some of you since you may not be used to theological study and to studies in a theological classroom, you may say, “When is he going to get to the Bible, because after all, the Bible is the important thing, isn’t it?” Well, of course, it is, and so we want to get to the Bible, and we will get to the Bible, but we’ll understand the Bible a whole lot better if we understand some of the questions that we need to keep in our mind as we read the Bible.

Now, verse 22 of Hebrews chapter 7, says, after the writer has made a comparison between the priests of the Old Covenant, that is, the Mosaic Covenant, and our Lord as the priest after the order of Melchizedek, he says, “By so much also he has come to be surety of a better covenant.” Now, I left the word “Jesus” for the end, because in the Greek text, that term “Jesus” is reserved for the end of the sentence, which is one of the points of emphasis in the Greek language. So it’s if he were saying, “And he has in as much as he has come to be surety of a better covenant, I mean Jesus.” So he’s stressing the fact, that the Lord Jesus is the surety of a better covenant. This better covenant he defines in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as the New Covenant of the Old Testament, an

expansion out of the Abrahamic, which in turn is the unfolding in history of the Covenant of Grace, made between the Trinity and the people of God. And, remember, that in turn flows out of the Covenant of Redemption. So it's fair to refer to these things as being involved hand in glove with one another.

I'd like to say just a word about “surety.” We all know the Lord Jesus is mediator. I hope you won't mind my taking off my coat. I'm getting a little warm, and anyway, I wanted you to see this lavender shirt. And so we're all familiar with the term “mediator.” “Surety” is a rather unusual term. In fact, this is the only time it's found in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus is called “surety of a better covenant.” What is the distinction between a mediator and a surety? Some people think that a mediator and a surety are the same thing. Now, we can say this; both do mediate. That's true. But a surety does more than just mediate. For example, Moses was a mediator of the Mosaic Covenant, but he was no surety; that is, he did not take upon himself the responsibility of seeing that Israel obeyed. He couldn't do that. In fact, there was no human “surety” of the Mosaic Covenant. The children of Israel broke that covenant.

Now, we have in insurance language “surety bonds.” They are guarantees that certain obligations will be fulfilled. If you carry on some kinds of work, you have to have surety bonds. Now, I wasn't in the casualty insurance business, but for eight years I was in the fire insurance business with companies that in their departments did write surety bonds. So I don't know much about surety bonds now. This was back in the dark ages, but even when I was in the insurance business, surety bonds were things that you heard about constantly. And construction companies had to have surety bonds, and other peoples had to have surety bonds to guarantee, that if things didn't go right, money would be available to make up for the failure.

Now, here we read, “The Lord Jesus is surety of a better covenant.” That means he has taken upon himself the responsibility for the fulfillment of that covenant. That's a magnificent truth. That's one of the greatest truths of the Bible; that he is not only a

mediator, but surety as well, and, therefore, because he is surety, he will see that these obligations are met for those for whom he stands surety. And he stands surety for the people of God. He doesn't stand surety for everybody. I know that's a difficult truth for some people to get into their minds because it seems to suggest that God discriminates. God does exercise distinguishing grace. If that offends you, I'm sorry. I hope you will think it through, and when we come to the Adamic Covenant or the Covenant of Works, I'll try to show you that the way in which God arranged the probation was the fairest way and the most gracious way and the most merciful way in which he could have carried out his plan and purpose. But we have to recognize that that is a sovereign disposition of the Lord God, and the Lord Jesus is surety for the people of God. He prays for his own. He said he does not pray for the world. He prays for his own, and he prays for those who shall believe on him, and he is surety for them, in the sense that everyone of those for whom he dies, for whom he prays shall enter into his presence.

Now, I get the greatest kind of warm feeling down in my heart when I think about that and I rejoice in that. I think that when the Lord Jesus said, “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven,” he meant precisely that; that the children of God should so rejoice in the fact that they are part of this people for whom the Lord Jesus is surety that they have the greatest of all blessings and, therefore, should be the most active in the carrying out of his will, which includes evangelism. So he's surety of the New Covenant.

Now, there are other things, of course, that the Lord Jesus is but has taken the place of the delinquent. He's their representative, their head, their sponsor. He's the last Adam. That's why the Bible calls him “the last Adam” because if he had failed, there was no other Adam. He's not called the “second Adam.” Theologians sometimes call him that. Preachers call him that, but the Bible calls him the “last Adam.” He's called the “second man,” because there are other men, but he's the “last Adam” not the “second Adam” as if there might be a third. But he's the last, and he did not, of course, fail.

So as far as his position in the covenant is concerned, he's the surety. As far as the work assigned to him, well what is the Lord Jesus to do according to the Covenant of Redemption made between the persons of the Trinity? Well, we were never in that counsel chamber, I entitled this “Mysterious Counsel Chamber.” I was not there. I know some people think I'm arrogant enough to think that I was there but I want to go on record, “I was not there.” And I'm fully aware of the fact that I do not know the way in which these agreements were made between the persons of the Trinity, but I do know something about what was said, and the way that I know something about what was said, is simply by observing what our Lord did. And obviously, what he did was in harmony with what he was told, or what he agreed to do.

Now, I use the term “was told” because he uses the term “a commandment from his Father.” So the persons of the Trinity did agree upon certain acts that would be performed. Now, they included these: the incarnation; he assumed human nature. He was engaged in his earthly ministry in a “self-emptying,” so Paul says in Philippians 2. He was engaged in humiliation. He was touched with our infirmities. He rubbed shoulders with us sinners. All of these things were part of his work. He lived under the Law. He carried out the Law. Think of that; the eternal Son being anxious to fulfill every genuine jot and tittle of the Mosaic Law. And when he carried out the observance of the Last Supper, if the angels of heaven had been looking upon it as no doubt they were and marveling over the work of the Son of God, they would have observed that he broke not one single simple statement and commandment of the Mosaic Law. Everything was done perfectly. The Lord Jesus lived under Law. He was circumcised. His parents lived under Law as well. He told others to carry out the injunctions of the Mosaic Law. When the leper was healed he said, “Go to the priests. Do what Moses said should be done.” And of course, they would know what was done, because it's set out in the chapters in the Pentateuch in Leviticus chapter 13 and chapter 14, the specific things that a leper had to do when he was cleansed. Priests were startled by all of this.

In fact, that's probably the reason that the Scriptures say, “A great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” because the Lord Jesus healed lepers, and the apostles healed lepers, evidently, because that was part of their command, and you'll remember, I can just imagine some of those priests. There hadn't been anybody healed of leprosy since Naaman, so far as the Old Testament is concerned, and I can imagine one of them coming up to one of the priests and saying, “Jesus has healed me of my leprosy, and now I'm supposed to do what Moses told us to do.” And a priest said, “To tell you the honest truth, I've forgotten what Moses said. I didn't study that at theological seminary very closely. Let's go and read the scroll and find out.” And so they would go and read the scroll, and find out how he was to take the birds, and put one in the blood and let it fly off, and slay the other, and all of those figures of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that kind of thing. So he did that and then, of course, finally, he offered the penal sacrifice. That too was involved in the arrangements between the persons of the Trinity.

It's a striking fact, I think, that the Covenant of Redemption, the eternal basis of the Covenant of Grace to elect sinners was for the surety, the Lord Jesus, the head of the people of God, a Covenant of Works. Have you ever thought about that? Well, maybe some of you are saying, “I haven't even thought about the Covenant of Redemption until tonight, so, of course, I haven't thought about that.” But the Lord Jesus carried out his covenantal work as a Covenant of Works, an agreement between him and the Father to do certain things which he perfectly did, being the Son of God.

Now third, the promises to him included these from the Father and the Spirit. This is again obvious from the unfolding of the word of God; that he would have a prepared body without blemish. That was stated in the Old Testament in Psalm 40; cited in the Epistle of the Hebrews in chapter 10. “A body hast Thou prepared me.” That he would be given the Spirit without measure for his messianic work. In the Old Testament we read that, “The Holy Spirit would fall upon the Messiah,” in Isaiah chapter 61. These are promises made to him in the eternity past. That he would always be at the Son's right

hand for his support and guidance; that is, that the Father would be with him through the Spirit. That he would be delivered from death's power. That he would be given the Spirit to give to believers. That all the given ones would come to him and be kept. You'll remember the Lord Jesus in John 17, talks about “that company of people that have been given to him by the Father,” so he was told that he would have people given to him; that a vast innumerable multitude would be his forever. So many people redeemed and coming from every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation, that no one can number them.

Arminians like to talk about Calvinists as if Calvinists believe there are just going to be a few people in heaven. No. No, that's not the teaching of Scripture, and if Arminians ever say anything like that, it's because they've never heard a genuine Calvinist, because the word of God says very plainly that, “A vast multitude which no man can number, cleansed in the blood of Christ, shall be in heaven.” This is good, sound Calvinistic doctrine; that there's a vast number of people saved by the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then also that through him and his redeemed, the divine glory would be manifested to all intelligences in supreme abundance because of him and through him and under him are all things to whom be glory forever and ever. Now, those are the promises given to the Son.

Now roman II: The Scriptural Data for the Covenant of Redemption. Capital A: The Logical Evidence. One might point to things like this; one could say, “Logically there is a parallel between Adam and Christ. Both were heads of a people. Since God entered into covenant with Adam in the Garden of Eden, it is to be expected that he would enter into covenant with the last Adam.” “And the Scriptures bear it out,” one would say. If you want to see the parallel between the two, look at Romans 5:12 through 21. And the very fact that he's called “the last Adam” indicates that since the first Adam entered into a covenant with the Lord in the Garden of Eden, we should expect the last Adam to have the same kind of relationship to the Father; a covenantal relationship.

Now, we could also point out that Scripture indicates that the plan of redemption was included in the eternal decree or Counsel of God. Take a look at Ephesians 3, verse 11. In Ephesians 3, verse 11, the Apostle Paul, after having talked about an election that is from ages past in verse 4 of chapter 1, “chosen in him before the foundation of the world.” In chapter 3 in verse 11 says, “According to the purpose of the ages which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” So that itself would indicate, that the plan of redemption was included in the eternal decree, or the Counsel of God.

In the economy of redemption, there is a division of labor; the Father, the originator; the Son, the executive; the Spirit, the applier. Now, if you think about that for a moment. The Father, the originator of the purpose of the ages, the Son, the executor of it in the carrying out of it in his redemptive work, and the Spirit, the applier of it through the ministry of conviction of sin, regeneration and faith, in thorough harmony with the nature of the relationship between the persons of the Trinity revealed in Scripture then you can see that this must be the result of voluntary agreement among the persons of the godhead. The very fact that they work in this way and are the persons of the one God would indicate that it is a voluntary agreement among those persons to carry out those purposes. So their internal relations are assumed the form of a covenantal relationship; each having obligations to one another and carrying them out. In fact, I think, it's fair to say that the God of heaven is a covenantal God in this respect.

Now, Capital B: The Textural Evidence. It's not easy to distinguish what I've just said from what follows. There are many texts that indicate that Christ came to do a work given him by the Father, and they have to do with the promise of reward. We have contracting parties; the Father and the Son. We have promises made to the Son by the Father. We have conditions in the sense of responsibilities that the Lord must carry out. They are the essential elements of a covenant. Many texts bear upon these things. Just for the sake of time, because honestly we could look at the evidence for this for the next hour and get through at nine thirty instead of eight and that would be bad for some of

you. But let me just list some passages for you to go home and study Psalm 2:7 through 9, Psalm 40, verse 7 through verse 9.

Now, those are some Old Testament passages, but now I'm going to ask you to turn to Hebrews chapter 2, I'm sorry, John chapter 6. John chapter 6. What a magnificent chapter this is. John chapter 6, and we'll just look at three verses. John 6:38, 39 and 40. I'll read them slowly. I'm reading them out of the Greek text, so this is the inspired translation, you understand. Just want to see if you're awake. “For I have come down from heaven, not that I might do my will, but the will of the one who has sent me. Now, this is the will of the one who has sent me, that everything which he has given to me, of it I should not lose any, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father that everyone who beholds the Son, and believes in him has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Now, let's just take a look, you take a look carefully at those verses. I want to just try to point out the things that are said here. The argument is very simple and, I think, also so important that I'll use my glasses. The argument's this and see if this is not true to the text before you, “Everyone given to me by the Father shall come to me.” That's verse 37. “And I will not cast him out, because,” verse 38. Notice the “because” that begins. When you're studying the Bible, always note the particles, particularly the conjunctive particles. They let you know the flow of the argument. They let you know how the author follows one thought with another. You will come to know his inferences, the things that indicate purpose, the things that indicate result, the things that are simple continuation. These things are the ways by which you come to understand the Bible. Very simple, but it's just the way you have to do it. “Because I have come down from heaven, not that I might do my will, but the will of the one who sent me.” So he says, “Because I came from heaven to do the will of my Father. Now, his will is, that I shall lose none given me by the Father, but rather raise them up at the last day,” verse 39. Looking at it from the human side, his will is, I'm paraphrasing our Lord's remarks, his

will is that everyone believing in the Son shall have eternal life, and to repeat, I shall raise him up at the last day. Now, it's clear from this that the Son's purpose in his coming is to fulfill his Father's commands. Is not that plain? To fulfill his Father's commands. The twice repeated promise of resurrection, repeated again in verse 44 and 54, four times in this chapter is a magnificent refrain of assurance and security. “I will raise them up at the last day. Every one of them. Every one of them.”

Bengel, the old German commentator says, *Hic finis est untra quem periculum nulum*, or “Here is the end beyond which there is no danger.” That is when our Lord raises up every one of the saints, or as another well-known commentator said, “He will bring us from the starting point to the finishing post. He will raise us up at the last day. Everyone given by the Father to the Son will be raised up at the last day.” But now, the point I wanted you to particularly notice, is that the Lord Jesus is carrying out his work according to the commands of the Father. They have an agreement over what shall be done, because the second person of the Trinity has taken to himself an additional nature; become the Godman to carry out his redemptive activity. He was not disobedient. He voluntarily took that upon him.

Turn over to chapter 10, verse 18; same book, John 10. Here the author says recording our Lord's words verse 17, “For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No one takes it from me, but I take it or, lay it down I should say, I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority again to take it up.” Anybody could perhaps say the first part of that statement, but the later part is more difficult. In fact, only one person has ever been able to do it; our Lord. Now notice the final words, “This commandment I have received from my Father.” So he is carrying out the things that the Father has told him to do.

Other passages we could refer to John chapter 17, verse 5, verse 6, verse 9. Verse 24 expresses the rewards that will come from faithful carrying out of the duties. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 10, the doing of the will of the Father. All of these indicate that there

was an agreement between the Father and the Son. That’s the fundamental basis of the Covenant of Redemption. There is an agreement between the persons of the Trinity to carry out the plan of the ages. I think sufficient indication is given to support the idea of such a covenant. As Chafer, no covenant theologian has admitted. There are a number of other passages I could refer to. I’m sorry. If you want some of them, I’ll give you some of them, but our time is at the end.

Roman III: The Relation of the Covenant of Redemption to the Covenant of Grace, and a Definition. I can do this in just a moment, and I want to read you something, which has always been a great blessing to me, as a conclusion. Capital A: The Relation. Lewis Burkhof, one of the finest of the twentieth century theologians, has suggested a few things in the treatment of the relation of the Covenant of Redemption to the Covenant of Grace. He said, “First, the Counsel of Redemption,” that’s another term for the Covenant of Redemption, “The Counsel of Redemption is the eternal prototype of the historical Covenant of Grace. In other words, the agreement between the persons of the Trinity is the beginning of everything, and the Covenant of Grace in covenant theology, between the godhead and the elect, is a covenant that naturally flows out of that.”

Second, he says, “The Covenant of Redemption is the firm and eternal foundation of the Covenant of Grace, making the latter possible.” You couldn’t have any Covenant of Grace, God giving promises to the elect to save them if the godhead were not in harmony behind that in agreement; have entered into relationship regarding that.

And thirdly, Professor Burkhof says, “The Counsel of Redemption gives efficacy then to the Covenant of Grace, providing the means for the establishment and execution of the Covenant of Grace. In other words, the way of faith and salvation is opened by the Covenant of Redemption between the persons of the Trinity.”

So let me define the Covenant of Redemption, and then we’ll read something for you as a conclusion. The Covenant of Redemption is the arrangement between the persons of the Trinity, by which the Father gives the Son as head and redeemer of the

elect. The Son voluntarily takes the place of those given by the Father, and the Spirit applies gladly, the merits of the redeemer to the elect. I'll say it again. The Covenant of Redemption is the arrangement between the persons of the Trinity, by which the Father gives the Son as the representative head and redeemer of the elect. The Son voluntarily takes the place of those given by the Father, of course, he dies for them; does the redemptive work for them and the Spirit applies gladly, the merits of the redeemer to the elect, gathering them to the Son of God and to the Father.

Now, I'd like to close the lecture with Mr. Spurgeon's visit to the “Mysterious Counsel Chamber”. He has a marvelous sermon on “The Blood of the Everlasting Covenant.” And in this sermon Mr. Spurgeon, in his own inimitable way, speaks of this Covenant, and I close with this. He says as he's talking about the stipulations of the Covenant, he suggests that this is the way the Covenant runs. Now, he goes on to point out that “He is feign to bring it down to the speech which suiteth the ear of the flesh, and to the heart of a mortal.” He recognizes that no one really knows what went on, but we know that this was involved, so he puts it this way, “This is the way the Covenant runs.” He's going to put it in the words of the Trinity themselves.

“I, the most high Jehovah do hereby give unto my only begotten and well beloved Son a people, countless beyond the number of the stars, who shall be by him washed from sin by him preserved and kept and led, and by him at least, presented before my throne without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. I covenant by oath, and swear by myself, because I can swear by no greater.”

You'll recognize these are Scriptural expressions.

“I can swear by no greater, that those or these whom I now give to Christ shall be forever the objects of my eternal love. Them will I forgive through the merit of the blood.

To these will I give a perfect righteousness. These will I adopt and make my sons and daughters, and these shall reign with me through Christ eternally. Thus runs that glorious side of the Covenant. The Holy Spirit also, as one of the high contracting parties on this side of the Covenant, gave his declaration. I hereby covenant, saith he, that all whom the Father giveth to the Son, I will in due time quicken. I will show them their need of redemption. I will cut off from them all groundless hope, and destroy their refuge of lies. I will bring them to the blood of sprinkling. I will give them faith whereby this blood is to be applied to them. I will work in them every grace. I will keep their faith alive. I will cleanse them, and drive out all depravity from them, and they shall be presented at last, spotless and faultless.”

“This was the one side of the Covenant which is at this very day being fulfilled and scrupulously kept,” Mr. Spurgeon says.

“As for the other side of the Covenant, this was the part of it engaged and covenanted by Christ. He said, ‘My Father, on my part I covenant, that in the fullness of time, I will become Man. I will take upon myself the form and nature of the fallen race. I will live in their wretched world, and for my people will I keep the Law perfectly. I will work out a spotless righteousness, which shall be acceptable to the demands of thy just and holy Law. In due time, I will bear the sins of all my people. Thou shalt exact their debts on me; the chastisement of their peace I will endure, and by my stripes they shall be healed. My Father, I covenant and promise that I will be obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. I will magnify Thy Law and make it honorable. I will suffer all they ought to have suffered. I will endure the curse of Thy Law and all the vials of Thy wrath shall be emptied and spit upon my head. I will then rise again. I will ascend into heaven. I will intercede for them at Thy right hand, and I will make myself responsible for every one of them’ surety ‘that not one of those whom Thou hast given me shall ever

“The Mysterious Counsel Chamber” by S. Lewis Johnson
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be lost; that I will bring all my sheep of whom by Thy blood Thou hast constituted me the shepherd. I will bring everyone safe to Thee at last.”

Well I say, we don't know what was said in that mysterious Counsel chamber, but we know that these things were included, and the Lord Jesus has carried it out, and hallelujah. We belong to the people of God. What a magnificent outpouring of divine grace, through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Let's bow together in prayer

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for these magnificent truths so often overlooked by us. Forgive us for indifference. Forgive us, Lord, for putting other things before these most important things of this entire universe. We are grateful, Lord. We desire to please Thee. We recognize our sin. [End of Tape]