

## How Does God Deal with Mankind?

**Hebrews 12:18–25**, *For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.*

## Importance of the Covenant

- **Organizational Principle of the Scripture**
- **Historical Significance of Westminster**
- **Covenant Theology and Reformed Theology**

## God Comes Down (7.1)

The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.

## God Comes Down (7.1)

### • **Summary**

- Creature/Creature Distinction
- Creature owes obedience to the Creator, the Creator owes nothing to the Creature
- All blessing from Creator is an act of condescension i.e. *grace* toward the creature

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## God Comes Down (7.1)

### • **Obedience Owed to Creator**

- Intelligent beings obligated to obey
- God alone is Independent
- **Obedience does not entitle reward**
  - Animals do His will
  - God defines the relationship with Creatures

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## God Comes Down (7.1)

- **Covenant:** *not* a strictly biblical concept
  - Biblical word: berith, diatheke
  - God covenants with men as between superior and inferior
  - Generally follows the pattern of Hittite Suzerain-Vassal Treaty (cf. Exod 20, Deut.)

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## God Comes Down (7.1)

- **Covenant:** *not* a strictly biblical concept
- God's covenants are *not* negotiable
- God makes known two covenants by which He will be in relationship with and bless humanity: Covenants of *Works* and *Grace*

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## Suzerain-Vassal Treaty

- **Deuteronomy**
- 4:32 Identification
- 4:32-40 Historical Prologue, Introduction
- 4:44-5:21 Obligations, Duties
- 6:4-25 Blessings and Curses (cf. 8:17-20)

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## The First Covenant (7.2)

The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

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## The First Covenant (7.2)

### • Life Promised Conditionally

- Commonly called *Covenant of Works*
- Required *perfect, perpetual, personal* obedience
- Gracious Covenant: promise of abundant rewards to Adam for merely doing his duty

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## The First Covenant (7.2)

### • Adam a Representative

- Represented all mankind who would descend from him by natural means
- Failure brings death to Adam, posterity
- Spiritual, Physical, Moral death
- Is Federal Theology “fair”?

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## The First Covenant (7.2)

### • Objections to the Covenant of Works

- Not mentioned specifically in the Bible
- Objection to terminology
- Objection to earning blessing by works

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### The Second Covenant 7.3-4

Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.

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### The Second Covenant 7.3-4

This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in Scripture by the name of a Testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the Testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.

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### The Second Covenant 7.3-4

- **Blessing Forfeited**
- **Eternal Covenant**
- **Life Promised (again)**
  - First Covenant: on basis of personal work
  - Second Covenant: life promised to those who put their faith in Christ, His work

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## The Second Covenant 7.3-4

### • Conditions for Christ

- Surety, guarantor, representative
- Essentially Christ fulfills terms of first covenant, including its consequences for disobedience

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## The Second Covenant 7.3-4

### • God Effects the Second Covenant

- Holy Spirit makes folks able to believe
- Faith is *not* a work, but a gift; faith does not replace work in the Covenant of Grace
- CoG is entirely gracious; dependent on faith in the object (Christ) to receive life

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## The Second Covenant Under Law (7.5)

This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come: which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called, the Old Testament.

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## The Second Covenant Under Law (7.5)

### • **Progressively Revealed**

- First introduced in Gen. 3:15 and becomes progressively more clear through various covenants as Christ draws near
- Covenant of Grace essentially the same though with outward changes in operation, yet the principle of salvation by faith remains

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## The Second Covenant Under Law (7.5)

### • **Expanding, Unfolding Promises**

- Promised to Adam and Abraham as the Saviour of the World
- Symbolically portrayed: types prophecies in the ceremonial, sacrificial system of Moses
- Increasingly Specific Blessings

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## The Second Covenant Under Law (7.5)

- **Types and Symbols:** Ordinances of the OC foretold Christ
  - *Circumcision, Sacrifice:* need for cleansing
  - *Purity Code:* Need for Holiness
  - *Hebrew Commonwealth:* Christ's Kingdom
- **Same substance:** apostles interchange ordinances of OC with sacraments of NC

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## Second Covenant Under Gospel (7.6)

Under the gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper: which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory; yet, in them, it is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.

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## Second Covenant Under Gospel (7.6)

- **Simplicity, Clarity, Spirituality**
- Truth of OC ordinance now revealed more clearly and of greater use for teaching
- OC encumbered with ceremonies, very carnal for very carnal people who lack the abundance of the Holy Spirit

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## Second Covenant Under Gospel (7.6)

- **Characterized by Fullness**
- **One Covenant of Grace:**
  - different administrations, same covenant
  - No longer preparatory, but ends with the reign of the Lamb in the New Creation

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