

**COVENANTS
AND
THE ESCHATOLOGICAL KINGDOM OF GOD**

by

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ABSTRACT

While Reformed theology stands for the traditional covenant theology that God revealed himself to humanity in the Covenants of Works and Grace, Covenant theology made noticeable advances in the area of “covenants and the history of salvation.” Recent Reformed theologians have explained more thoroughly the prominence of biblical history by discerning their function in the kingdom of God. Concurrently, Reformed theologians have also noted that the kingdom of God is a physical reality that develops throughout the history of salvation. This kingdom theme involves three essential components: a King, a people, and a place. A framework of understanding these components in redemptive history is investigated and presented in this thesis. Scripture presents this theme as a storyline, an eschatological theme, which will be consummated in Jesus Christ, the King, in the new heaven and earth. The goal of this thesis is to show that God’s plan for his kingdom has unfolded across history in a *unified* and *progressive* way, so that the one God of Scripture designed *all* his covenants as administrations of his *one* immutable kingdom purpose, and that God has granted the reception of salvation promised in every covenant through the *same* process in every covenant administration. This *continuity* allows New Testament believers to benefit from all of God’s covenants in the Old Testament. This is a central theme in the Lord’s redemptive plan – establishing his kingdom in the new heaven and new earth won by Christ where he will dwell with his people forever.

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible acquaints us with Abraham who was wavering in his faith in Genesis 15 and in Genesis 17. With what did God come to rescue him? The sign of covenant. The Bible also tells us that when David was wavering in his faith in 2 Samuel 7, God himself established his covenant with David, thereupon establishing David's line on the throne. From time to time, we as believers struggle with doubt: what is the purpose of God toward us? Whenever we waver in our faith we ask, "What has God given us to be strengthened in assurance?" The signs of covenant have been given to us through the Sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Thus, we are reminded of God's initiative for us as these signs are administered time after time.

Covenant constantly functions to assure us of God's steadfast purpose towards us, by presenting his desire to enter into a relationship with his people. This is reflected in the repeated covenant refrain, "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Exod. 6:6-8).¹ God not only promises this to his people, but he also binds himself by his own oath.

Furthermore, covenant is a theme that links the different books of the Bible to make them *one united story*, blazing through the Old Testament like a firework, before exploding into full color in the coming of Christ.² That is why Jesus said to the Twelve, taking a cup of wine in his hands: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the

¹ Also in Lev. 26:12 etc. All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

² Jonty Rhodes, *Covenants Made Simple: Understanding God's Unfolding Promises to His People*, (P&R Publishing, Kindle Edition 2015), Kindle Locations 98.

forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). This is the word that Jesus uses at the Last Supper, the final picture given to the men who would become the great preachers of the gospel after his resurrection. The death of Christ stands at the heart of the Christian gospel, and Jesus mentions “covenant” to unlock the meaning of that death.³

How then does the Bible connect the unified story to this overarching plan of salvation? Scripture reveals the plan under the theme of *the kingdom of God*. Thus, we can say that the covenants establish the normative constitution of God’s people and the kingdom describes the dynamic movement of history.⁴ The kingdom is dynamic, since it is a world-historic movement, following the fall of Adam, in which God works to defeat Satan and bring human beings to acknowledge Christ as Lord.⁵ Thus, it is preeminently the history of salvation. The Bible also reveals that the kingdom is a physical reality that develops throughout the history of salvation.

Then, the questions that need to be answered are: (1) How should we put the covenants together to understand God’s plan over redemptive history? (2) What is the theme of the kingdom of God that has been presented over history? (3) What is the nature of the kingdom of God in Christ?

The Approach of the Thesis

The first effort is to investigate and summarize God’s unfolding theme of the bible storyline. The theme is God’s plan of redemption over history for a covenant perspective.

³ Ibid., 99.

⁴ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 86.

⁵ Ibid., 86.

The Scriptures themselves also look at that unfolding and give us a structure. That structure is covenant (at least in case of the Old Testament). Thus, the effort is a *biblical* theology.⁶

The next effort, as an organizing principle, is to relate the biblical covenants to the theme of the eschatological kingdom of God. Under this effort, we will discover the proper biblical teachings on the subjects of the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Grace, the kingdom of God, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the church, the doctrines of election, baptism, and grace and law. Therefore, the effort is also a *systematic* theology.⁷

This thesis begins with the theological presupposition that Scripture constitutes with a developing story under one unified theme:⁸ *The Word of God reveals and interprets his own redemptive acts that develop across time, from creation to new creation, and his covenants with his chosen people provide the structure and unfold his eternal plan of salvation centered in Christ.* In other words, God's plan is to redeem his covenant people in Christ, and God himself reveals this plan *progressively*⁹ over history by the means of his covenant word and he does this ultimately for his own glory.¹⁰

⁶ Biblical Theology is the study of the Bible from the perspective of redemptive history. It is looking at the Scriptures in terms of the eras in which God unfolded his plan of redemption and it is asking perhaps about specific themes. What do we learn about this particular theme in this particular era of redemptive history? And then, what do we learn about it in the next era of redemptive history and how does God unfold that particular theme as revelation progresses.

⁷ Systematic Theology takes the fruits that Exegetical Theology attempts to draw out of the text the intent of the divine and human authors in combination. It attempts to draw out of the text the emphasis and the teaching which they are attempting to convey in that text, so it takes the fruits of Exegetical Theology, it takes the fruits of Biblical Theology.

⁸ Recent studies in biblical theology have tried to argue that no one center of theme exhaustively captures the message of Scripture, but many Reformed scholars, i.e., Richard Links (*The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), argue that the assumption of an evangelical framework ought to be the unity-in-diversity of the Testaments – the unity being prior to the diversity since it is the one God who manifests himself in the diversity of historical epochs. Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament*, (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 27.

⁹ The term “progressive” does not imply the “Progressive Covenantalism” in this thesis. The Progressive Covenantalism insists on discontinuity from the Old to new covenants. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenants: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 24.

¹⁰ Therefore, this thesis is based on the Reformed tradition with the doctrines of *Sola Scriptura*, *Solus Christus*, *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, *Soli Deo Gloria*, Providence, Predestination, Radical Depravity, Unconditional

CHAPTER 2.

BIBLICAL STORYLINE OF GOD'S REDEPTIVE PLAN

How can we characterize the history of the Old Testament so that we can see the real unity within? Graeme Goldsworthy suggests that we look at it as a *history of redemption*.¹¹ In other words, the key to the Old Testament is not the part Israel plays but the part God plays in redeeming a people from slavery and making them his own. Scripture then provides the goal of this redemption – establishing the kingdom of God. This characterization is only possible with the following understandings: (1) this redemptive history is progressive; (2) it is incomplete without the New Testament; (3) it is to be interpreted with the New Testament teachings in Christ.¹²

Why then does God reveal them progressively? Scott Swain explains this with two possible reasons: (1) the infinite riches of God's triune life and purpose can only be communicated to finite creatures in a finite manner; (2) God's mysterious plan to sum up all things in Christ itself requires a long, historical process in order to be realized.¹³ Furthermore,

Election, Efficacious Grace, Persevering Grace, and Particular Redemption. The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* implies that the Bible alone is the Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. The doctrine of *Solus Christus* means Jesus Christ is the only savior of sinners and his atoning sacrifice is sufficient to save them. The doctrine of *Sola Gratia* means that our salvation is not earned in any part; it is the free gift of God from start to finish. The doctrine of *Sola Fide* implies that we are forgiven our sins and counted righteous in God's sight solely by trusting in Christ. The doctrine of *Soli Deo Gloria* means the ultimate end of all God's works in creation and redemption is his own glory alone. The doctrine of Providence means God's sovereign control and direction of events in the world. The doctrine of Predestination means that God's sovereignty over all things entails his sovereignty over salvation. The doctrine of Radical Depravity implies that humans are enslaved to sin and by nature bent toward evil in every part, since the fall. The doctrine of Unconditional Election means that God's decision to save someone does not ultimately depend on anything in that person.

¹¹ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, Graeme, (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2000), 46.

¹² Ibid., 47-49.

¹³ Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation*, (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 23.

this progressive revelation is a continuous, organic process: Each new dimension of God's self-revelation grows out of the former dimensions of God's self-revelation.¹⁴ The Bible presents this progressive revelation as one unified¹⁵ 'meta-story'¹⁶ under the theme of the kingdom of God.¹⁷

2.1 Overview: The Beginning and the End

The kingdom of God is an eschatological concept, linking creation with the new creation.¹⁸ It is eschatological, since it has been inaugurated with the creation and will culminate united "in all things in him (Christ), things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10). The Scripture presents this as a developing story with a clear progress from the beginning to the end:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen 1:1)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." (Rev 21:1-3)

"In the beginning" means inauguration, but it also anticipates the end.¹⁹ Scripture presents with the beginning, the end, and the connecting meta-story.²⁰ The story is that God, the

¹⁴ Ibid., 23.

¹⁵ Swain explains that the *unity* of progressive revelation does *not* lie in the historical, cultural, or literary features of that revelation. In fact, when it comes to these features, God's self-revelation exhibits a vast diversity. The reason that progressive revelation is a unified word lies in the fact that ultimately *God speaks the same Word* first through the prophets and later through the apostles, *the word of Christ* (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10–11). Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 25.

¹⁶ T. Desmond Alexander explains that the Bible presents the divine revelation as a "meta-story" that comes from an anthology of literature, produced over many centuries with amazingly diverse in genre, authorship, and even language. Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 10.

¹⁷ Detailed descriptions on the subject is in the following section.

¹⁸ Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 460.

¹⁹ Kenneth Mathews writes, "'Beginning' is often paired in the Old Testament with its antonym 'end,' indicating an inclusive period of time (e.g., Job 8:7; 42:12; Eccl 7:8; Isa 46:10). The occurrence of 'beginning' in [Genesis] 1:1 suggests that it has been selected because of its association with 'end.' If so, the author has at

Creator-King of the cosmos, places his covenant people under his reign on earth. This reality was true in the beginning (Gen 1-2) and will be true at the end (Rev 21-22). Therefore, the beginning of Genesis inaugurated the consummated vision at Revelation. Together, they frame the entire biblical story.

God's Eschatological Purpose of Redemptive History

Then, what is the purpose of the story? Why does the Bible end with an Eden-like picture of the eschaton? The story gives us, the covenant people, an outlook that there will be a fulfillment in Christ at the end. This outlook permeates the entire message of the Bible and the storyline gives us the eschatological hope. On this point, Jürgen Moltmann was correct when he wrote,

From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of the Christian faith as such, the key in which everything else in it is set.²¹

The storyline progressively expands under the repeating theme of *'(re)creation, fall, and redemption,'* a cycle that repeats itself until the seed of the woman crushes the seed of serpent (Gen.1-3). Willem VanGemeran thus notes, "Creation, in a real sense, is the preamble to the history of redemption."²² And, history will not end until God's sovereign

the outset shown that creation's 'beginnings' were initiated with a future goal intended, an eschatological purpose. Thus the prophets and the apostles could speak of the end in terms of the beginnings, 'new heavens and new earth' (Isa 65:17; Rev 21:1)." Kenneth A. Mathews, "Genesis 1-11:26," *NAC*, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 126-27.

²⁰ Willem VanGemeran says, "The Bible begins with the account of creation (Gen 1-2) and ends with a description of a more glorious creation (Rev 21-22). organic development whereby God works out his plan for the redemption of a new humanity from all the nations (Rev 5:9; 7:9). Creation, in a real sense, is the preamble to the history of redemption." VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redemption*, 40.

²¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. J. W. Leitch, (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 16. Moltmann was particularly impressed by the theology of Karl Barth. His eschatology was an attempt to show the pertinence of the Christian faith by relating it in something definite way to questions being raised by the secular world. He has tied his view of eschatology into his ethics. Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 44-51.

²² VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redemption*, 40.

plan — to unite all things in Christ and to put all things under his feet — is accomplished (Eph. 1:22). Therefore, the plan is to establish the eschatological kingdom of God in Christ.

Then, where is the place of the kingdom? It is clearly described in Scripture. It was originally localized in Eden, the paradisiacal Garden-Temple of God, where Adam and Eve enjoyed God's presence, exercised dominion over the created order, and were tasked to fill the earth with their descendants. While Genesis begins with a potential building site for humanity to exercise dominion, multiply, and consequently enlarge the borders of Eden, Revelation ends with a finished city inhabited by people from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev 5:9).²³ Though God's "good" creation was corrupted by the entrance of sin and death, Revelation ends where "death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4).

Furthermore, the end of the story confirms that the design will be fulfilled in the new creation, the new earth will become the kingdom of the Lord Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever (Rev 22:4-5; 11:15). While the beginning and end are similar in kind, the latter is greater. Willem VanGemeren thus correctly points out,

"[The history of redemption] does not begin with a high point only to end up with the new earth as an equally high point. The new creation is better than the first because it will be perfect, holy, and characterized by the presence of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 21:22)."²⁴

This is what is 'new' regarding the new creation – the old creation filled with God's presence. In other words, there is a qualitative advance from the former to the latter, which comes about as a result of the person and work of Christ. Thus, Jesus himself declares, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). One can now ask, what is the concept of this kingdom?

²³ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 14.

²⁴ VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 64.

The Kingdom of God

The expression ‘kingdom of God’ never occurs in the Old Testament.²⁵ However, the experience of God’s kingship goes back to man’s fall, when God reveals his royal concern with rebellious humankind in blessing and in his sovereignty over human autonomy (Gen. 3-11).²⁶ In Exodus 3:13-15, God identifies himself as “the Lord.”²⁷ And, the fundamental image of God in Scripture is that of lordship, which can be explained as covenant headship or “King.”²⁸ The Hebrew and Greek words for “king” occur over 2800 times in Scripture. When we add those (corresponding verbs and related forms) that refer to *kingdom*, we can see that the idea of kingship is indeed pervasive in Scripture.²⁹ Therefore, the kingdom of God is a major theme of the entire Scripture and the King, as the covenant Lord, controls his realm and speaks with authority. God also stands with his covenant people, to protect and defend them, to provide justice and mercy. God ruled Israel by virtue of his covenant.³⁰ In this context, King and Lord are close a synonym.³¹

Scripture also states that God is King, not only of Israel, but of all the nations.³² God’s plan is to rule his redeemed people of all nations over history, and this salvation-history is being over millennia after the fall. God determined that salvation is to be a great

²⁵ The *kingdom* or the *kingdom of God* is basically of prime importance in New Testament theology. Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 41.

²⁶ VanGemenen, *The Progress of Redemption*, 460.

²⁷ Also in Exod. 6:1-8; 20:1ff.

²⁸ John Frame thus suggests “King” for the image of God. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 367.

²⁹ Of course, these references include references to human kings as well as the divine one. But, as images, human kingship and divine kingship influence one another. Human kingship is to some extent an image of the divine. But God’s kingship also stands in contrast to the corruption and tyranny of earthly kings. Ibid., 369.

³⁰ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 66. Frame, using his famous terms, thinks of covenants as normative, the kingdom as situational.

³¹ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 369.

³² Indeed, of the whole nation (Ex. 15:18; Pss 22:28; 96-99; 145).

epic, not a short story.³³ Therefore, we understand that the kingdom “comes” over the course of a period of time. It came in Jesus; he began his preaching ministry by proclaiming that “the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 4:17). Scripture also tells us that the kingdom will come in consummate form at his return. Therefore, this process is meant to be dynamic and dramatic in Christ. Geerhardus Vos formulated Jesus’ view of the kingdom as follows:

To him the kingdom exists there, where not merely God is supreme, for that is true at all times and under all circumstances, but where God supernaturally carries through his supremacy against all opposing powers and brings men to the willing recognition of the same.³⁴

Therefore, the kingdom of God is all about Jesus, and we cannot isolate Jesus’s proclamation of the kingdom from the acts of God in the history of redemption. Otherwise, we fall into the traps of Liberalism.³⁵

³³ God could have remedied the fall in an instant, sending his Son in an accelerated time frame, bringing him to death, resurrection, ascension, and triumphal return in a matter of seconds. Or he might have accomplished this work in a matter of decades, allowing for a somewhat more normal kind of historical development. Ibid., 87.

³⁴ Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 50.

³⁵ In fact, that is what some of the recent NT scholars have done. A. Ritschl and A. von Harnack described the kingdom of God as “the moral organization of humanity through action inspired by love,” therefore, a human task. So. Their concept was a kingdom without a “king.” J. Weiss, protesting Ritschl’s concept, argued that the eschatological element in Jesus’ teaching was not the husk but the kernel, but that for Jesus the kingdom of God was exclusively future and not in any sense present. A. Schweitzer, expending Weiss’ concept, maintained that eschatological conceptions dominated not only Jesus’ teaching, but his entire life. Schweitzer also thought that Jesus expected the imminent end of the world and, thus, that the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed was not present but (imminent) future. This kingdom concept is known as “consequent or consistent” eschatology. So, it seems that Weiss and Schweitzer described the kingdom without the realized present “place.” C. H. Dodd, on the other hand recognizing the problem, reasoned that the kingdom was real on earth in the presence of Jesus, a view known as “realized” eschatology. Dodd argued that the *eschaton* has entered history, the hidden rule of God had been revealed, and the Age to Come has come. So, he did not believe in a literal Second Coming of Christ. Then, G. Vos made a significant contribution to eschatology studies. Vos claimed that, whereas the OT pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah as the one great future eschatological event (“the Day of the Lord”), the NT divides this event into two stages: the present Messianic age, and the consummate state of the future. So, Vos significantly anticipated Dodd in maintaining that with the kingdom of God has arrived and the final eschatological era has begun. In distinction from Dodd, however, Vos clearly teaches that there will be a Second Coming of Christ. Agreeing with Vos, Oscar Cullmann described the overlapped period as “already fulfilled” and the “not yet completed,” between present and future, and as “tension.” So, Cullmann teaches that the kingdom of God is both present and future. Then, we have three different types of eschatology with different emphasis: the “vertical eschatology” of Karl Barth, the “existentialist eschatology” of Rudolf Bultmann, and the “futurist eschatology” of Jürgen Moltmann. Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 288-316.

In revealing this concept of kingdom, Scripture presents itself through a unique *pattern* from beginning to end. Graeme Goldsworthy describes this “pattern of the kingdom” as “*God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule.*”³⁶ In addition, God communicates and deals with his chosen people by means of covenant words. The heart of the covenants are ‘the covenant discourse,’ “I will be your God, and you will be my people” (Ex. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; Rev. 21:22).³⁷ John Frame also affirms that God, in dealing with his chosen people, expresses all covenants with one theme: promise of seed, land, and redemption,³⁸ and explains the covenantal theme in terms of the triad of divine word (normative), land (situational), and seed (existential).³⁹ For the purpose of this paper, I propose to modify the theme that consists of three components: *Lord-King, covenant people, and a physical place.*

2.2 In the Beginning: Creation of the Kingdom

Genesis sets the stage for the subsequent biblical story. It begins with creation of the world (place), humanity (people), and relationships (kingship) between God and humanity. It introduces the reader to the background, context, main character(s), and the storyline theme – the kingdom of God.

Creation and the King

King as the Creator

Scripture begins with the words, “In the beginning God created.” He is the grammatical subject of the first sentence and the thematic subject throughout the creation. In

³⁶ Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 53-54.

³⁷ Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 38.

³⁸ Frame, *Salvation belongs to the Lord, Introduction to Systematic Theology*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 113-128. Also in *Systematic Theology*, 58

³⁹ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 58.

fact, “God” is mentioned 35 times in the first chapter alone, asserting that the creation is under the theocentric kingdom. The purpose is to glorify the king by magnifying him through the majesty of the created order.⁴⁰ This demands that every created thing be related to him. The same theme is carried into the New Testament, where we are commanded to submit ourselves to Jesus, “the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation,” in whom “all things hold together” (Col. 1:15, 17).

King as the Ruler

God’s rule is demonstrated in the repeated refrain, “And God said . . . And it was so” (Gen 1:6-7, 9, 11). Graeme VanGemerren explains this characteristic,⁴¹ “The literary devices of symmetry and dissonance enhance the aesthetic sense of balance, order, and movement under the majestic administration of the great King.”⁴² In other words, Scripture itself reveals that God is the King who *rules* over creation because creatures depend on God for their existence; Creation’s finitude is displayed in its dependence upon him. In fact, the redemptive-historical approach of the storyline builds on this theme by emphasizing the rule of God on earth and the interrelation of man and his Creator.⁴³

John Frame teaches this relationship in terms of the doctrines of divine *transcendence* and *immanence*.⁴⁴ God’s transcendence often connotes that God is far “above” in his created order. However, in doing so, the impression is given that his “otherness” is limited to spatial categories. But, as Frame argues, it is not entirely biblical to assert that God is located somewhere far away. He writes,

⁴⁰ VanGemerren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 54.

⁴¹ VanGemerren claims that the symmetry repetition of words and phrase creates balance and an aesthetic sense of harmony. Moreover, changes in vocabulary and repetition of significant words. This dissonance created like a signpost marking a change in direction. More details are in *The Progress of Redemption*, 43-45.

⁴² Ibid., 59.

⁴³ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁴ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 13-15.

“That may be part of the thrust of the terms ‘Most High,’ ‘exalted,’ and ‘lifted up,’ but there must be more to it... We should ... see these expressions primarily as describing God’s royal dignity... The expressions of transcendence refer to God’s rule, his kingship, his lordship.”⁴⁵

In other words, we should associate God’s transcendence with lordship attributes of control and authority.⁴⁶

VanGemeran also characterizes the rule of King with order, power, and faithfulness.⁴⁷

At creation, he established the order and had maintained it even after the fall (Gen. 8:22).

The absolute power of the Creator is manifested in his continual working out of his plan for the world and particularly his people in an orderly, contingent, and gracious way (Isa. 45:11-25). God’s faithfulness, which comes from his lordship, guarantees that his absolute power is of a good, beneficent ruler.

King as the Commander

God’s first word to his people was a command: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion ... every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen. 1:28).⁴⁸ This is called “The Cultural Mandate.”⁴⁹ More so, they must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or else there would be disastrous results (Gen. 2:17). In other words, through his command, God is unequivocally demonstrating his kingship over his people. This sets the pattern of the kingdom through the power of the Word of God. He himself plans, speaks, executes, gives his word of promise, and completes his plans from

⁴⁵ However, God’s transcendence must be tethered to his immanence, for he is no abstract or impersonal deity who is removed from and uninterested in his creation. Rather, he is simultaneously transcendent and immanent, distinct/separate yet personal, and specially, or covenantally, present with his people. Both of these realities are affirmed in a single verse when Isaiah declares, “For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite’” (Isa. 57:15), or when Paul speaks of “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:6). Ibid, 15.

⁴⁶ Frame, *The doctrine of the Christian Life*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 42.

⁴⁷ VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redemption*, 60-61.

⁴⁸ Jonty Rhodes, *Covenants Made Simple*, Kindle Locations 162.

⁴⁹ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 62.

beginning to end. Goldsworthy rightly states, “Thus, the Christian doctrine of the authority of Scripture has its roots in the Creation.”⁵⁰

Then, why did God communicate this way? “The purpose,” VanGemeran explains, “is to prepare individuals, through covenantship, to his commands when it is addressed to them.”⁵¹ Scripture shows that God, who spoke at creation, continued to communicate to Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the Prophets and, in a climactic way, through the Son (Heb. 1:1-4; 3:1-6).⁵² And most of all, Christ shares in this creative and ruling activity – an activity that only God can perform – as he reigns through and over creation under his Father’s ultimate authority (John 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 22:1, 3). Therefore, in Psalm 95, the psalmist calls to worship the Lord, the great God and the great King above all gods who owns all, “for he made it” (Ps 95:1-5).

Creation and the Covenant People: Adam and Eve

In the beginning, God creates Adam and Eve. The purpose of this creation is that God wants to rule through his people over his kingdom.⁵³ God defines the role of his people as God’s vassal kings over the world he has made.⁵⁴ Thus, it is more than just a place of existence; it came with blessings and obligations – the Creation Ordinance.⁵⁵ God created the first human couple and placed them in Eden as his royal representatives, where they would

⁵⁰ Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 59.

⁵¹ VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redemption*, 55.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵³ Here, in the beginning, is God’s people in his place under his rule. This “pattern of the kingdom” repeatedly emerges in each epoch of salvation history and reaches its consummation at the end of history. It is not accidental, then, that in the beginning God’s people is Adam and Eve, and at the end it is the people of the Second Adam from every tribe and language and people and nation. From history’s inauguration to consummation, God rules through his people over his world. For this category, John Murray, in this book *Principles of Conduct*, came up with seven creation ordinances, which can be summarized in three: 1. The ordinance of procreation; 2. The ordinance of labor; 2. The ordinance of the Sabbath.

⁵⁴ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 63.

⁵⁵ It means a pattern of responsibility woven into the very fabric of the creation by God as he originally made it.

rule the earth and fill it with their offspring. Further, as their offspring spread, the geographical boundaries of Eden would extend to cover the whole world. Adam and Eve were created and commanded to reign and rule in Eden until the whole earth is filled and subdued.

Why then did God create them “in the image of God and after the likeness of God” (Gen.1:26-27)? Why do they also receive breath from God and became a living creature (Gen. 2:7)? First, mankind is endowed with a unique status and commanded to have dominion over every living thing on the earth (Gen 1:28). Given the commission to govern all living things in creation, God set humanity apart from and gave them a regal standing among all other creatures. Desmond Alexander writes, “By repeating this point twice within three verses (v. 26-28), the author of Genesis 1 underscores the divine delegation of authority to humankind to rule over the earth.”⁵⁶

Alexander also claims that the concept of royalty underlies the expression of ‘image of God’ based on the ancient Near East culture.⁵⁷ The phrase ‘image of God’ was commonly linked to kings. An earthly king was the ‘living image of God.’ So, Alexander claims that kingship and divine image go hand in hand.⁵⁸ In other words, to be made in the image of God is to be given *regal status*, representing or imaging God’s rule in the world. With this regal status, Adam and Eve are to subdue and dominion over the earth. This has an implicit meaning that God’s authority will be extended throughout the earth, as people increase in number.

⁵⁶ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 76.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 76.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 77.

Alexander also explains, “In the ancient Near East, a ruler’s image was set up in distance parts of his kingdom in order to indicate that his authority reached there.”⁵⁹ As images of God, human beings are to perform a similar function. Adam and Eve are to be fruitful so that their descendants may, as kings, extend God’s kingdom throughout the earth. This is God’s blueprint for his kingdom.

Second, the term “likeness” indicates that Adam has a special relationship to God like that of father and son.⁶⁰ Luke 3:30 supports this by interpreting the term to indicate that Adam is the son of God. In other words, God intended a special relationship or bondage. Furthermore, Genesis 2:8-17 pictures Adam as a kind of king-priest worshiping in a garden sanctuary. This passage explains how the royal rule given to humankind, within covenant structure, established in 1:26-27 is to operate.⁶¹ Gentry and Wellum argue that the relationship between Genesis 2:18-17 and Genesis 1:26-27 is significant, and that Genesis 2:8-17 explains the covenant relationship between man and God in terms of “likeness” and “image.”⁶² Thus, kingship is established through this covenant relationship, which requires loyal love, obedience, and trust.⁶³

Creation and the Place: “the Garden”

The third component of the kingdom pattern is God’s place. Gentry and Wellum point out, “The writer indicated that man was created outside Eden and then *placed* within the garden.”⁶⁴ The garden, as the place of the kingdom, is presented as a center of blessing in the

⁵⁹ Alexander is referring G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver&Boyd, 1962). 146-147. Ibid., 78.

⁶⁰ Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenants* 195.

⁶¹ Ibid., 215.

⁶² Ibid., 216.

⁶³ Ibid., 217.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 209.

world. For the people to function as the image of God, they needed a physical territory or domain. God placed them within that domain, which was created for their domain and rule.

Scripture also tells us that the domain is a garden ‘*planted*’⁶⁵ by the Lord God (Gen. 2:8). Within this domain, Adam and Eve were commanded to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue and have dominion over the earth, and to enjoy God’s blessing (Gen. 1:28-30). In other words, this place serves for the people to dwell with and under the rule of the King.

Additionally, it is important to note that Eden was to be the place where God dwells and where his people should worship him. In other words, the Garden of Eden should be considered as a divine sanctuary or “temple-garden” where God dwells with his people.⁶⁶ It is remarkable to recognize the similarity of the location and entrance of Eden and the eschatological dwelling place of God in Revelation 21-22.⁶⁷ This is God’s intention for us to reconstruct and visualize God’s blueprint for the eschatological earth. Remarkably, this blueprint is eventually brought to completion through the New Jerusalem envisaged in Revelation 21-22.⁶⁸

God’s garden is also meant to grow and expand. Through the propagation of Adam’s offspring, the boundary of the place would extend to fill the whole earth. Alexander suggests

⁶⁵ Stephen Dempster claims that the word ‘planted’ is a rich theological term used to describe something that God produces to give life to and to nourish its surroundings. Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty, New Studies in Biblical Theology* 15, (Downers Grove, IL:IVP, 2003), 62.

⁶⁶ Alexander explains this assertion based on multiple textual reasons. Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 21-23.

⁶⁷ Eden and the later sanctuaries faced and were entered from the east (Gen. 3:24; Exod. 25:18-22; 26:31; 36:35; 1 King. 6:23-29; 2 Chr. 3:14; Ezek. 47:1). Furthermore, Scripture describes Eden as being situated on a mountain (Ezek. 28:13-16). Israel’s temple was on Mt. Zion (Exod. 15:17), and the eschatological temple is to be located on a mountain (Ezek. 20:2; 43:12; Rev 21:10). Finally, the river flowing from Eden in Gen 2:10 is similar to the post-exilic temple (Ezek. 47:1-12) and eschatological temple (Rev. 21:1-2).

⁶⁸ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 26.

that this extension would include constructing structures to accommodate population growth; That is, when Eden is understood in the light of Ancient Near Eastern practices,⁶⁹

An increasing population would create a city around the temple. Throughout time, the whole earth would become a holy garden-city. While Genesis 2 merely introduces the start of this process, the long-term outcome is the establishment of an arboreal temple-city where God and humanity coexist in perfect harmony.⁷⁰

It appears then that, had sin not entered creation with its devastating effects on humanity and the world, the teleological objectives of Eden would look similar to the picture of the New Jerusalem described in Revelation 21-22; God's teleological design of his kingdom, in the beginning, was to emanate from the paradisiacal garden-sanctuary in Eden.⁷¹ In other words, Eden is a prototype of the Kingdom-place planned by God – the world of restoration.

2.2.1 Establishing the Kingdom through The Edenic Covenant⁷²

This special arrangement is considered a *covenant*. In the Westminster Confession of Faith, it is called a “Covenant of Works”: “... wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.”⁷³ The Bible, however, does not call this arrangement a covenant,⁷⁴ with the exception of Hosea 6:7.⁷⁵ How then, can we be sure that this relation was a covenant?

⁶⁹ Ancient Near Eastern parallels the cosmos as a city and temple.

⁷⁰ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 25-26.

⁷¹ VanGemen, *The Progress of Redemption*, 64.

⁷² John Frame prefers this name to “the Covenant of Works,” because it has led to a controversy over the nature of the covenant agreement between God and Adam. Two problems especially have entered the discussion: (1) The terminology is reminiscent of a commercial exchange. This suggests that eternal life is a kind of commodity, and that if Adam pays the price, “perfect obedience,” “works,” or “merit,” God will turn that commodity over to Adam and his posterity. (2) The works are Adam's works, not God's, so one gets the impression that Adam is left entirely on his own. These two contentions are used to maintain a clear contrast between works and grace. Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 64-65.

⁷³ WCF, 7.2

⁷⁴ The term for “covenant” (בְּרִית) is not contextually found in Genesis 1-3.

⁷⁵ So, theologians debate about whether it should be called as a covenant. Classical dispensationalism, for example, argues that the foundational covenant is the Abrahamic not the Adamic, since it does not recognize such a covenant. Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenants*, 45.

From the context of Genesis 1-3, we know that the certain elements of a covenant are present. First, the creation account is framed within a covenantal pattern or framework. That is, there is a title/preamble (1:1), historical prologue (1:2-29), stipulations (1:28; 2:16-17a), witnesses (1:31; 2:1), and blessings/curses (1:28; 2:3, 17).⁷⁶ The sovereign God himself, not humanity, initiated this relationship – a life-and-death bond.⁷⁷ God is clearly committed to his image-bearers, even after they disobey him.

Second, the presence of a covenantal relationship can be shown in later texts. The way in which the Noahic covenant is introduced in Genesis 6 shows that a previous covenant with Adam was already established. There are four places where God speaks of “confirming a covenant”⁷⁸ with Noah (Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17), not “cutting a covenant.”⁷⁹ In fact, prior to Genesis 6:18 there is not even a hint of any covenant being established – at least between God and humans.⁸⁰ Therefore, the covenant with Noah was *not* initiating something new, but rather confirming, for Noah and his descendants, God’s prior commitment to humanity initiated previously at creation.

⁷⁶ Frame also defends this idea with the following: “there are two parties: God as the Lord and Adam representing the human race. The historical prologue is Genesis 1, in which God brings Adam from the dust, giving him life. The law is that Adam with Eve and all his descents should obey God perfectly. God focused this obedience in one particular command: man must not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The threat is death: “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17). The promise, though inexplicit, is evidently life, symbolizing by the presence in the garden of the Tree of Life (Gen. 2:9; 3:22). (Frame, *Salvation belongs to the Lord*, 119).

⁷⁷ O. Palmer Roberson defines “a covenant as a bond-in-blood sovereignly administered” in his book, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 3-15.

⁷⁸ “establish/confirm/uphold my covenant” (אֶת־בְּרִיתִי)

⁷⁹ “cut a covenant” (כָּרַת בְּרִית)

⁸⁰ Gentry and Wellum defend this argument (Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 177) based on Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, NSBT 23 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 72.

This can be also be confirmed with the case of 2 Samuel 7; God makes a promise of an everlasting dynasty with David, but the term covenant is contextually missing.⁸¹ However, when Psalm 89 recounts this promise, it repeatedly uses the term covenant (Ps 89:2, 28, 34, 39). Therefore, given the context of Genesis 1-3,⁸² seeing a covenantal relationship with Adam from the beginning is appropriate.

Three Covenants: the Reformed Position

Reformed theology or “Covenant theology” organizes itself around three covenants; all of God’s revelations to human beings can be understood in terms of the Covenant of Redemption, the Covenant of Works, and the Covenant of Grace.⁸³

The Covenant of Works

The “Covenant of Works” refers to the pre-Fall relationship with Adam. God, as the Creator, wanted to have a binding and blessed relationship with his people. God himself enters into fellowship with Adam through the creation. Even though Adam was a private individual of the kingdom, he acts as covenant head, representing the entire humanity. It is called the Covenant of Works, because the condition of the covenant was the obedience of Adam. The key point is that there is no stipulation for blessing any longer because Adam did not obey. Therefore, under the condition of the covenant, it cannot bless the people due to sin. The kingdom people are fallen and salvation by works is not possible anymore. The people

⁸¹ Roberson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 18. Gentry and Wellum also explains this point in Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 180.

⁸² Roberson also explains with two additional passages that support a covenant at creation. Jer. 33:25-26 says, “Thus says the Lord: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them” (cf. Jer. 33:20). The Lord’s forward-looking eternal covenant with David is compared to the past covenant with day and night, a reference most likely to creation. Similarly, Hos. 6:7 likely points to a covenant with creation. But, “like Adam [Israel and Judah] transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.” Roberson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 19-25

⁸³ *pactum salitus, foederus naturae, and foederus gratiae* in Latin.

are morally corrupted and totally deprived.⁸⁴ Now, the people no longer have hope for the moral capacity in fully obeying the law of God. Their only hope is God's grace.⁸⁵ How can this grace be effective?⁸⁶ It is based on the Covenant of Redemption.

The (Pre-temporal or Eternal) Covenant of Redemption

Historically in the Reformed tradition, the Covenant of Redemption refers to the intertrinitarian covenant – the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son before creation. It took place in eternity and is the plan by which election would be elective.⁸⁷ Louis Berkhof defines, “the Covenant of Redemption is the agreement between the Father giving the Son as head and redeemer of all the elect and the Son voluntarily taking the place of those whom the Father has given Him.”⁸⁸ And, it is a decree based on Scripture.⁸⁹ Purposely so, this covenant tells us that when Christ dies for us, it makes our salvation absolutely certain. God, who has the eschatological plan of his kingdom, cannot renege based on the Covenant of Redemption. God's *grace* now comes in where demerit or sin cannot be overcome. Thus, it is important to note that the pre-Fall relationship between God and people was *not* based on grace.⁹⁰ The problem was that Adam revolted against the good and harmonious structure of the original kingdom, and that was sin.

The Covenant of Grace

⁸⁴ The doctrine of Radical Depravity is based on this (WCF 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 9.3).

⁸⁵ The doctrine of *Sola Gratia* (WCF 3.5, 9.4, 10.2, 11.3).

⁸⁶ The doctrine of Efficacious Grace is based on this argument (WCF 10.1, 10.2, 10.3).

⁸⁷ Frame explains, “Since time itself is a created thing, then, strictly speaking, there were no temporal categories “before” the creation: no before, no after, no simultaneity. But the expression before creation has often served theologians (and biblical writers, too, as John 17:5) in their attempts to locate the eternal life of God. We should remember, though, that God's eternal intra-Trinitarian life continues after creation, throughout creation, and into eternity future. It might be more precise (though still figurative) to say that God's eternal actions take place above time, rather than before, during, or after it”. Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 59.

⁸⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011) Kindle Locations 10339-10340.

⁸⁹ We found in the Messianic Psalms: Psalm 2:7-9; 40:7-9 and 89:3. Hebrews 10:5-7 picks up this idea.

⁹⁰ In fact, Karl Barth argues that God deals with man only by grace; Because of finiteness of mankind, God had to deal with grace through Christ. But we know that he is mixing up the finiteness and sin of mankind.

The Covenant of Grace is possible because of the Covenant of Redemption. The word “redemption” is a vocabulary of the market place, and it means Jesus paid the price for our redemption. He has bought us by his grace. In other words, God grants his people into the covenant community, under the administration of the Covenant of Grace through Christ.

Therefore, the Westminster Confession describes:

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 offers 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 eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.⁹¹

Throughout redemptive-history, the one Covenant of Grace is administrated differently, but overall it is substantially the same in all eras of history.⁹² Under these undeniable acts of God, overall unity and continuity of entire biblical covenants are maintained. Therefore, we can say that the Covenant of Grace is inaugurated in Genesis with Adam, especially in the word of curse against the serpent in Genesis 3:15. It is expanded in the covenant of Noah, continues in the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David, and is prophesied in Jeremiah as the new covenant. The new covenant is then the final fulfillment of the all the promises of the “old” covenants. What the older administration promised through types, ceremonies, and sacrifices, has now come to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In other words, it is *not* a replacement that leads to a discontinuity⁹³ with the previous covenants, but is a *renewal and final*.⁹⁴

Reformed Position on Covenant

⁹¹ WCF 7.3

⁹² Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, (2nd ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1995), 40.

⁹³ To many dispensationalists and those in the believers church tradition (including Baptists), what makes the new covenant “new” is that all those within the “new covenant community” are, by definition, who presently have experienced regeneration of heart and the full forgiveness of sin. Obviously, this point implies a “discontinuity” at the structural level between the old and new covenants. More discussions on this subject in Section 2.3.5.

⁹⁴ Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 63-64. Gentry concluded this points based on various ‘covenant’ theologians’ views.

The word *covenant* has been defined in different ways,⁹⁵ but, for the Reformed tradition, John Frame defines it as “a relation between the Lord and a people whom he has sovereignly consecrated to himself.”⁹⁶ Under this covenantship, God rules over his people by the sanctions of his law, and fulfills in and through them the purpose of his grace. God also *communicates* his life to them through covenant as a means of communication.⁹⁷ This concept of covenant is central to the narrative plot structure of the Bible. The covenants form the backbone of the metanarrative of Scripture and thus it is essential to “put them together” correctly in order to discern accurately the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).⁹⁸

Scripture presents numerous covenants at crucial times in salvation history, all of which serve to reverse the curses of Eden and bring about “the escalated reestablishment”⁹⁹ of the universal expansion of God’s kingdom. Each covenant serves a divinely orchestrated means until the eschatological kingdom of God will be completely consummated with Christ. However, a correct understanding of how the covenants unfold timely and relate to each other is the key to the sound conclusion on the eschatological God’s kingdom.

We now turn to the specific historical covenants of the Covenant of Grace and investigate how God himself, through each covenant under unity, continuity, and progression, reestablishes his eschatological kingdom in Jesus Christ.

2.2.2 The End of the Beginning: People Revolt

⁹⁵ A covenant involves international treaties, clan/tribal alliances, personal agreements, loyalty agreements, marriage, and legal contracts. Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 16.

⁹⁶ Frame, *Salvation belong to the Lord*, 115.

⁹⁷ Scott R. Swain states, “Covenant is one of the most important means whereby the triune God communicates his life to us and whereby we hold communion with him,” in his book *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation*, 7.

⁹⁸ Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 21.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

The blissful scene of the end of Genesis 2 is followed by the tragic events of Genesis 3. Adam, as God's servant of the initial kingdom, was to fill the earth with his descents and expand the kingdom to the end of the end. Adam rebelled against his Lord-King and forfeited his commission. It all started with the serpent's question to the woman: "*Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?*" (Gen. 3:1).

The serpent (i.e., Satan) challenged the King's rule. It was in fact a questioning of God's character and judgment as the Lord-King. Because God's word is an expression of his generous character, the questioning of God's word involves a questioning of his character.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the essence of the rebellion was that people forgot that God made them and they now stood in rebellion over the King. Though created upright (cf. Eccl. 7:29), Adam and Eve believed and trusted the serpent's lies – "you will not surely die" (Gen. 3:4) and ate the forbidden fruit. As a result of their actions, the human family inherits the serpent's hidden agenda in disputing God's word, the severing of covenant fellowship.¹⁰¹

How do we then explain the phrase "like gods, *knowing* good and evil" (Gen. 3:5, 22)? This is not a matter of knowledge,¹⁰² but has to do with the exercise of absolute moral autonomy.¹⁰³ In other words, 'knowing good and evil' means choosing or determining *autonomously* for oneself, what is right and wrong independently of God.

Against this revolt, God responds with judgment and the announcement of curses. Adam is expelled from the garden. Furthermore, the place God designed for his people to live and work under his rule now became a curse rather than blessing. Instead of the land

¹⁰⁰ Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 20.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰² Some have explained it as reflecting sexual understanding of each other and others have explained it as expressing the totality of knowledge.

¹⁰³ Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenants*, 216-17. Referring W. M. Clark, "A Legal Background to the Yahwist's Use of 'Good and Evil' in Genesis 2-3," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1966): 266-278.

yielding abundant blessing, it would anticipate the hardship and pain of the people. Instead of subduing the land, the people would be subdued by it. Instead of harmonious relationship between man and nature, and man and woman, conflict would rule (Gen. 3:17-19). As a result, the eschatological kingdom of God would have to be fulfilled by other means.

The question we now ask is: Will the kingdom of the world ever become the kingdom of God? How will the kingdom be restored and extended throughout the entire earth?¹⁰⁴ We already know that the end of the story portrays a glorious picture of the restored rule of the sovereign king who sits on his throne. Then, the task of this paper remains where we must investigate how the beginning and the end should be connected under the theme of the eschatological kingdom of God.

2.2.3 The Promise of a New Beginning

The good news is that the narrative of the Fall is immediately followed the promise of a future redeemer in Genesis 3:15,

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (or seed) and her offspring (or seed); he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

This verse, often called the “mother promise,” now set the tone of the entire Old Testament.¹⁰⁵ In this prediction that ultimately the seed of the woman will bruise the serpent’s head, we have the promise of coming redeemer. This is a promise of hope, the so-called *protoevangelium* or “first gospel.”¹⁰⁶ God reveals all of his plans for restoring his kingdom by saving his people with the coming redeemer. This coming redeemer is

¹⁰⁴ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 79.

¹⁰⁵ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 5

¹⁰⁶ Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 21. This triumph will come at great cost to that seed: the serpent “shall bruise his heel” (Gen. 3.15). As the rest of Scripture makes clear, it is only because the promised seed will bear the divine curse that he will be able to bestow the divine blessing.

designated as the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18) and is specified as a descendent of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and David (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

2.2.4 Conclusion

The sovereign God created his kingdom for his people to dwell on earth under his rule. Though he absolutely transcends all that he made, God is a benevolent, fatherly King.¹⁰⁷ By means of covenant, God binds himself to creation in a relationship of sovereign care and commitment. He binds creation to himself in a relationship of obedient service. Human beings were created to be friends and covenant partners of God.¹⁰⁸

But, Adam forfeited the covenant relationship. God responds with judgment and announcement of curses, and Adam is expelled from the garden. Furthermore, the place God designed for his people to live and work under his rule now became a curse rather than blessing. The eschatological kingdom of God would have to be fulfilled by other means – the coming redeemer. This is God’s gracious plan of restoration for his kingdom – for his people to dwell on the earth with him.

Then, what is the implication to us today? John Frame states:

First, we should see ourselves as covenant breakers in Adam (Isa. 24:5). In him we have failed the test of works, and we have no hope of ever saving ourselves by our works. But where we failed, in Adam, Christ gloriously succeeded. He obeyed God perfectly and laid down his life as a sacrifice to make up for our disobedience. In ourselves, we are covenant breaker, but in Christ covenant keepers. By thinking about the Covenant of Works, we can learn today that God demands a perfection we cannot attain, that Jesus achieved that perfection, and that in him our salvation is complete. Jesus did everything the Father asked on our behalf. So, nothing can separate us from him or from the Father.¹⁰⁹

Therefore, it is important to properly understand the nature of the Covenant of Grace, since we are belong to the covenant community.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 20.

¹⁰⁹ Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, 119.

2.3 A New Beginning: Re-establishing the Kingdom through Covenant of Grace

Eden was designed to be the place where God ruled and dwelled with his people; it was the prototypical kingdom. This plan was interrupted by the disobedience of mankind, and sin and death entered the world. As a result, mankind was separated from God and placed under the curse of slavery.

However, God made a promise that would, in time, undo the effects of sin.¹¹⁰ The faithful God plans to reestablish the kingdom and to restore the relationship with his people. This is an act of his sovereignty – God’s work of redemption. In other words, God himself acts to restore the kingdom by redeeming his people. Scripture shows that God does this through the means of covenant; the covenants serve as a unifying theme through which God establishes and maintains relationships with his people. Thus, we can say that the covenants form the backbone of Scripture and are crucial for understanding its overarching story, from creation to new creation.¹¹¹ We discover that each covenant involves and advances to the final goal: establishing the eschatological kingdom of God.

2.3.1 Kingdom Re-initiation through the Noahic Covenant

The initial sign in the biblical storyline of God reversing the curse is in Genesis 6. Mankind became very wicked, as the initial sin spread into global rebellion against God. The context is, however, filled with God’s divine promises, in the midst of judgment against human rebellion and sin. Noah finds favor in the eyes of the Lord (Gen 6:8) and God tells

¹¹⁰ Scott Swain describes this act of God as, “The work of redemption is a work whereby God sets creation free from the curse of slavery for its consummation under his kingly blessing.” In the exodus, the initial phase of God’s redeeming work, the divine warrior-king engages Pharaoh in royal combat, rescues Israel from his tyrannical clutches, and settles Israel under his own liberating rule (see Exod. 15.1–18; Ps. 47). This initial act of redemption provides more than just a discrete example of how God redeems his people. It is the normative exemplar of God’s redemptive work, the pattern after which all future acts of redemption are modeled. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 21.

¹¹¹ Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 24.

Noah, “I will establish my covenant”¹¹² with him (Gen 6:18). Noah is the blameless one and God *chooses* him from all families of the earth to receive his blessing. This is true for all the Covenants of Grace after Adam: they are selective, elective.¹¹³ Not everyone receives them. This is an important aspect of the doctrine of Unconditional Election: God himself now elects one as the *people* of his kingdom. As the elect, Noah obeys God, building an ark to save his family from the waters. God was *not* looking for a perfect person, but rather, Noah became righteous in God’s eyes, because he “walked with God” (Gen. 6:9).¹¹⁴ He had a right relationship with God and God was the one who made Noah right in his character; he became a man with integrity under God’s special redemptive *grace*.¹¹⁵

Lord-King

Why did God *elect Noah in grace* and make him righteous and blameless in the eyes of God? It is because God the Lord-King wants to move forward with his kingdom plan. He elected Noah at the right time for that purpose. It is also important to note that God saw the wickedness of the generation, and was about to bring judgment against it, telling Noah that the whole earth would be destroyed except what was inside of the ark (Gen. 6:11-17). Then, God inaugurates the covenant with Noah (v. 18-21).

People

Even though God initiated in grace, Noah had responsibility – obedience. It was not Noah’s obedience that God was responding to for election. Noah’s righteousness or obedience was *not* what God was responding to. God did it with his grace. In other words,

¹¹² In this context, the term “covenant” (בְּרִית) is met for the first time in scripture. But textually it means “confirmed my (existing) covenant rather than “establishing a new covenant.”

¹¹³ Frame, *Salvation belongs the Lord*, 123.

¹¹⁴ Enoch was the only other person described by this phrase in the Bible (Gen. 5:22)

¹¹⁵ The doctrine of Persevering Grace will keep the elect (or genuine converts) faithful to Christ until the end. This doctrine was traditionally known as “Perseverance of the Saints” (the “P” of TULIP).

grace will makes us righteous. The theme of the kingdom storyline is that God is the Lord-King who rules with his grace. The particularity of God's redemptive grace in this covenant should be recognized.¹¹⁶

Furthermore, God deals with Noah's family in the covenant.¹¹⁷ It renders the familial structure of covenantship. God deals with the family via a representative head, and his commitment extends to Noah's family (Gen. 6-9).¹¹⁸ Thus, we can recognize that a theological theme is building up here. Noah is set apart as the head of the family. This is why Hebrews 11:7 says, "By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household." Thus, there is both the blessing and responsibility in the covenant. The people of covenant community have the responsibility of obedience. In this sense, the covenant is *conditional*, which is a repeating structure of all covenants.

Place

God makes another covenant with Noah (Gen. 8:20-9:17). The great promise of the Noahic covenant is that God will never again destroy the earth with a flood. In other words, God promises to *preserve* the earth as the *place* of his kingdom. This means that the divine intention of creation will not be lost. He solemnly promises that humanity's creational mandate (Gen. 9:1-7; cf. 1:26-30) will never again be interrupted by a suspension of the natural order. The earth will be inhabited with life, and human beings will know the Lord-King in an intimate way. In other words, there will come a "new creation."¹¹⁹ This covenant

¹¹⁶ Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 111.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 113.

¹¹⁸ Also repeated in Genesis 7:1, 7:7, 7:13, 7:23, 8:16, 8:18, 9:9, 9:12.

¹¹⁹ Stephen Dempster rightly argues that the repeated phrases, "These are the generations of" serve as headings in the flow of Genesis which signal to the reader that God is doing something new (Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1;

is described as “everlasting,” a term that, in context, appears to signify as long as the earth remains (Gen 8:22). And God himself *seals* that promise with the sign of a rainbow. Thus, we can see that the covenant existed prior to Genesis 6:18, and God himself sealed the covenant. He did it here through grace and defines the boundary of his kingdom.

Once again, it is crucial to see this covenant in light of the overall (post-fall) storyline of Scripture. “Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Adam enjoyed God and his provision in the land but forfeited it. Nevertheless, God restores his kingdom to be under his rule through Noah. Like Adam, Noah functions as God’s representative who is commissioned to rule the earth, be fruitful and multiply, and bring God’s blessing to the world.

But just as Adam failed, so also does Noah (Gen. 9:18-29). Sin and death continue to reign, and once again God judges the nations in the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11). Yet, God keeps his promise by calling out another man to fulfill his purpose.

2.3.2 Kingdom Expansion through the Abrahamic Covenant

In Genesis 12:1, God elects Abram and establishes a covenantal relationship with Abram. The passage does not have the terminology of covenant but presents a particular relationship between Abram and the Lord. Once again, God himself enters into a preexisted relationship with Abram¹²⁰ and inaugurates a covenant. God then lays out the four specific directives as responsibilities that Abram has to fulfill: (1) leave his country; (2) leave his family relationship; (3) leave his father’s house; (4) go to the land which God will show him.

Lord-King

11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2). They appear at key places within the storyline of Genesis and indicate that the Covenant Lord is not finished with his creation. Rather, as God’s image-bearers he is committed to work out his new/renewed redemptive purposes for his glory. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 55.

¹²⁰ Palmer Robertson argues that the relationship is quite apparent. Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 127.

Like the covenants with Adam and Noah, God himself calls out Abram. Abram was not looking for the Lord. Once again, God *elects* a family from the other families of the earth.¹²¹ The Lord himself is taking the initiative in this covenant.

Again, this means that the Covenant of Grace involves God's initiative in salvation. However, this does not mean that there is no responsibility on our part. There is the grace of God and also human responsibility in this relationship. God's grace precedes any human responsibility. Throughout the redemptive history (*heilsgechiche*), God has the initiative of the relationship. In other words, salvation belongs to the Lord-King, and is never initiated by human deeds.¹²² Redemption means that God pays a price for each specific God-human relationship and delivers blessing on that relationship. This point can be confirmed by Genesis 12:2-3, where the blessing is mentioned right after the covenant inauguration:

“And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:2-3).

People:

God identifies his blessing with, “I will make *your name* great” (Gen. 12:2). Then, the blessing of God expands to, “*in you*, all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (v. 3). Once again, God is mentioning a headship of his blessing. He wants to build his kingdom based on this headship. “The name” is the name of his people, not just Abram's.

In Genesis 15, God promised that Abraham's offspring would be like the sand of the sea and the stars of the sky, and Genesis 17 records the institution of the official seal of the Abrahamic covenant. The patriarch and his offspring received circumcision - the *sign* of the

¹²¹ Frame, *Salvation belongs to the Lord*, 123.

¹²² In contrast, Arminian understanding is that God's salvation is somehow based on the human obedience.

covenant.¹²³ Then, what was God’s intention with the circumcision? Why do Abraham and his offspring need the external sign?

Though God himself promised the covenantal blessings, Abram did not understand this clearly; he rambled with God’s statement in Genesis 12 and 16. Then, God returns again in Genesis 17 to *confirm* his promises to Abraham. Now God is going to *confirm* them by giving him his flesh *sign* and by renaming him. The point here is that this confirmation is not new, but a reconfirmation of the old covenant with Abram,¹²⁴ and the external sign is to assure the previous covenant promise. In other words, God wants to give his people an outward sign and seal that they are members of his kingdom community.

Therefore, God commands that the forthcoming offspring ought to be externally signed and sealed as the kingdom people. God made it as a covenantal requirement. With this, infant baptism, under the new covenant administration, is a necessary and proper obedience responding to covenantal requirement. This is a blessing from God that cannot be administrated out under the name of church “membership.”¹²⁵ The membership that God is working throughout the redemptive history is the membership of his kingdom community through covenants. The sovereignty of God is what we must recognize and obey.

The covenantal blessing also comes with a conditional responsibility of Abraham, “Walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you” (Gen. 17:1). Abraham has to keep the covenant throughout all his generations. This includes the covenant *sign* of circumcision. Unless Abraham obeys, the covenant blessing will not

¹²³ Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 147.

¹²⁴ Dispensationalism likes to categorize the Abrahamic covenant into two categories: 1. Conditional (old one with Abram); 2. Unconditional (new one with Abraham). It is based on their presupposition that the “land” promise will be fulfilled with the ethnic nation Israel, physically on the earth.

¹²⁵ This point will be discussed more in this section.

come (Gen. 18:19).

Place: Land

When God set the covenant with Abraham, he promised the “land” (Gen. 15:18-21). This promise was then confirmed to his son Isaac (Gen. 26:3), and to Isaac’s son Jacob (Gen. 28:13), Abraham’s grandson. It is important to recognize here that the “land” functions as a *type* or pattern in the Old Testament context. Gentry and Wellum rightly explains this based on the fact that the land associated with Eden and creation is *typological*,

The “land promise” associated with the Abrahamic covenant cannot be understood apart from a backward and forward look: Backward to the archetype reality of Eden and the entire creation, forward, through covenant to its archetypal fulfillment in the new creation that Jesus has inaugurated in the new covenant. In the New Testament, it is our contention that the land promise does not find its fulfillment in the future in terms of a specific piece of real estate given to the ethnic nation of Israel; rather it is fulfilled in Jesus, who is the true Israel and the last Adam., who by his triumphant work wins for us the new covenant in individual Christians (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:8-10) and the church (Eph. 2:11-21) and it will be consummated when Jesus returns and ushers in the new creation in its fullness (Rev. 21-22).¹²⁶

This can also be explained based on another fact that, as we move across the covenants from Adam to Christ, the old creation gives away and is extended to the new creation, under the theme of the *continuity* and *unity* of the Covenant of Grace.¹²⁷

Abraham’s Offspring: the Covenant Community

Then, who are the offspring of Abraham? Who belongs to the covenant community? Scripture itself answers this clearly. According to Galatians 3:29, “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (cf. Rom. 4:16-18; 9:7-8). Scripture teaches us that the new covenant believers, therefore, inherit all the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant.¹²⁸ This also means that all the spiritual seed will dwell on the Promised Land under the theme of God’s eschatological kingdom. This is the fulfillment of the

¹²⁶ Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenants*, 607.

¹²⁷ This subject will be discussed in Section 2.3.6.

¹²⁸ Frame, *Escondido Theology: A Reformed Response to Two Kingdom Theology*. (Lakeland, FL: Whitefield, 2010), 182

Promised Land and John Frame rightly argues:

“The Promised Land was intended as a type, a picture, a first installment, of a greater inheritance to come. Today the promise of the land take a new form: the promise of the new heavens and new earth. It is not that the Promise of Canaan has been abrogated. It is rather seen a part of a larger promise, which Abraham’s descendants by faith all inherit.”¹²⁹

The covenant community is meant to progressively grow over redemptive history. Therefore, it can be claimed that entrance to the covenant community is based on *the principle of progression*: it does not end with one family alone, but it extends out to the kingdom community. This principle can only be effective in conjunction to the principles of continuity and unity. Thus, the Great Commission of Matthew is *not* new in the New Testament era, but is simply a repetition of this blessing principle. The entrance to this community is only possible through God’s election, and is a blessing. Circumcision of Genesis 17 *confirmed* these covenant promises;¹³⁰ it simply provided an outward sign of entrance to the covenant community.¹³¹ Therefore, I claim that *circumcision was simply a sign and seal of the entrance to the community under the covenantal principles of continuity, unity, and progression*. Likewise, baptism, as one element of the sacraments, is simply a covenant sign and seal. This is the position of Reformed or Covenant theology.

Infant Baptism: An Outward Sign of Entrance into the Covenant Community

The stress of the continuity leads Covenant theology to draw the crucial entailment of infant baptism. Since the infants of believing households of the Old Testament were included in the visible church (“Israel”) by their circumcision, and prior to a personal profession of faith and, by that act, were considered full members of the covenant community, the same is true under the new covenant. Baptism, as a sign and seal, represents the rite of entrance into

¹²⁹ Ibid., 182.

¹³⁰ It fits into the scheme of the Lord’s assuring Abraham.

¹³¹ The sign itself does not bring about salvation.

the visible church. As a sign, it represents cleaning, repentance, and union with Christ.

Baptism is also a seal – God’s confirmation that the recipient belongs to the covenant and the visible church.¹³²

Obviously, this view of the nature of the church is different from that of many in the dispensational tradition, including Baptists, who identify themselves as part of the ‘believers church’ tradition. In a ‘believers church’ view, there is, at least, a redemptive-historical difference between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church: There is a significant amount of *discontinuity* by the virtue of Christ’s work which is inaugurated through the entire new covenant age.¹³³ This brings a disagreement among the Reformed community.

The Mode of Baptism

Since the seventeenth century, Baptist tradition has argued that the mode of baptism must be immersion.¹³⁴ They have also argued that the meaning of baptism, because it symbolizes believers’ spiritual union with Christ, requires believers-only baptism. Their argument is three-fold: mode, meaning, and recipients. At the level of *mode*, the argument is that it must be by immersion only. At the level of *meaning*, it symbolizes our spiritual union with Christ: the regeneration. Thus, they argue that it must only be applied to those who have actually experienced spiritual union with Christ. And that means ‘believers’ only.

Then, the key question arises from this view: Who are the members of the church? Baptists’ view of the doctrine of the church is based on their understanding of Jeremiah 31.

¹³² Frame, *Salvation belongs to the lord*, 276-278.

¹³³ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 72.

¹³⁴ In 1640, the Particular Baptists (Calvinistic London Separatists) decided that immersion is the only mode of baptism. Tim Dowley, Editor. *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, (Grand Rapids, MN: Fortress, 1995), 406-407.

They understand that Jeremiah 31:31-34 indicates, in *all* the new covenant community, there will be experiential knowledge of God. This requires a ‘believers-only’ church. Thus, Wayne Grudem defines, “The church is the community of *all* true believers for *all* time.”¹³⁵ This is a different view from the historic Reformed paedobaptists’ position that views the visible church as being made up of professing believers and their covenant children. Then, *it seems that the core difference is the doctrine of the church rather than the doctrine of the sacraments.*

Reformed Position on Baptism

Baptism is a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace; that is made clear in Romans 6 and in Galatians 3. Children are included with their parents as part of the Covenant of Grace in both the old and new covenants, and we saw this in the formula of Genesis 17 and Acts 2. The new covenant promises are extended to believers and their children in Acts 2:39, thus the sign of the covenant, especially the sign of covenant initiation, belongs to professing believers and their covenant children. This is because the Covenant of Grace, of which we are members today, is the same covenant that God instituted with Abraham, and baptism has now replaced circumcision as the sign of initiation into that Covenant of Grace.

In terms of the mode of baptism, the meaning of “*baptize (βαπτίζω)*” is much broader than immerse.¹³⁶ The New Testament practice of baptism also confirms effusion.¹³⁷ Further, water baptism signifies the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁸ Therefore, the mode of baptism cannot be the issue. Once again, the key issue is the doctrine of the church: Do all the

¹³⁵ Wayne Grudem, *System Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 853.

¹³⁶ This is well known Scriptural fact based on both the Old Testament and New Testament.

¹³⁷ Matthew 3:16, Acts 10:47, 16:32-33, and John 2-3 demonstrate this fact.

¹³⁸ We can see this in Acts 1 and 2. It is also seen in Jesus’s baptism. John baptizes with water but Jesus will baptize with fire and the Spirit. As we can see in Acts 1:4-5 and 11:15-16, baptism fundamentally signifies the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a work of the Holy Spirit, not our decision, not our loyalty, not our obedience.

covenant people belong to the church?

John Frame explains that the church is the people in covenant with God through Jesus Christ.¹³⁹ In other words, the church is the elect. We also understand that the *visible church*¹⁴⁰ contains both elect and non-elect. The non-elect are covenant-breakers, not covenant-keepers, but they too, are in the covenant; they are branches in the Vine of Christ that one day will be broken off.¹⁴¹ This means that we should recognize the presence of both believers and nonbelievers.¹⁴²

2.3.3 Ruling Kingdom under Grace and Law through the Mosaic Covenant

The storyline continues with God's redemptive work for his people. He wants to rescue them from slavery and put them under his rule. God uses Moses as a mediator for this task. Exodus 2 covers the birth of Moses, his failure to help his people, and the escape from Egypt. At the end of the chapter, we hear God's Word, "God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob and God saw the people of Israel—and God knew" (Exod. 2:22-23). This is the key point: God *remembered* his covenant with Abraham. The reason God came to his people's rescue was because he remembered the promises he made with Abraham. Once again, we see the principle of *continuity* in the Covenants of Grace.

Lord-King: Kingship with Grace and Law

Then, the Mosaic¹⁴³ covenant is established in Exodus 19-24.¹⁴⁴ God himself selects

¹³⁹ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 1019.

¹⁴⁰ The visible church is the church as man sees it in contrast to the invisible church as God see it. This distinction is from tradition, not in the Bible (as in WCF 25.1-2).

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 1019.

¹⁴² More discussions on this subject in Section 2.3.6.

¹⁴³ It is also described as the Sinaitic covenant but it seems best to refer to it as the Mosaic covenant since it appears in two different forms and on two different occasions, one immediately following the Exodus and the other some thirty-eight years later in Moab on the eve of the conquest of Canaan.

¹⁴⁴ It is established originally in Exod. 19-24 and then renewed in Exod. 35.

Moses as his mediator. We again see God's election here: Not all of Abrahams's children are included, only the children of Isaac and Jacob. God delivers Israel from slavery under the tyrannical rule of Egypt by mighty works and a strong arm (Exod. 3:6; cf. 2:24-25; Deut. 4:36-38; 1 Chr. 16:15-19; 2 King. 13:22-23). Once again, we see God's grace in this deliverance. God is using the covenant as the vehicle by which he extracts his people from the situation of sin and brings them into a state of grace. That is the plan of the Lord – *uniting grace and law* for his people. This is how the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are united under the kingdom theme.

However, this covenant has invoked some of the great debates within Christendom's history.¹⁴⁵ Even some of the modern Evangelicals, e.g., dispensationalists, direct their criticism towards the Mosaic administration of law. The precise relationship between the Mosaic Covenant and the rest of the Covenant of Grace is the heart of the criticism.¹⁴⁶

As the storyline continues, we can recognize the same plan. God himself moves forward under the theme of the eschatological kingdom – the final reality: for his people to dwell on his place under his rule (grace and law). Thus, Desmond Alexander describes,

“As the biblical meta-story moves from creation blueprint to the final reality, the establishment of Israel as a nation ruled over by the Lord God is an exceptionally important development.”¹⁴⁷

And, as expected, God's grace comes with requirements – the Decalogue. The Ten Commandments is the governing document of the Mosaic covenant that Israel must obey. It is important to know that this was the one occasion¹⁴⁸ in redemptive history (since Genesis 3) in which all the people of God were gathered together in one place to hear the word of God

¹⁴⁵ Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 167. Even the ancient Marcionites rejected the Old Testament because they thought that the Mosaic administration of law has no connections to the New Testament messages.

¹⁴⁶ Further discussion is detailed later in this section.

¹⁴⁷ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 80

¹⁴⁸ Deuteronomy often refers this occasion to “*the day of the assembly*” (4:13; 10:1-5).

directly from his lips.¹⁴⁹ God begins with announcing his name, Yahweh, “the LORD”. This identification ensures that the covenant is a *personal* relationship.¹⁵⁰ “LORD” calls to mind the lordship attribute of control (over history), authority, and presence (in blessing and judgment).¹⁵¹

God proclaims his great deliverance, “who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exod. 20:2). He then proclaims his commands, showing Israel how God’s people should behave.¹⁵² The first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3) demands an exclusive loyalty to the Lord. This loyalty is called *love* in other ancient covenants,¹⁵³ and in Deuteronomy 6:5, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” So, God is to have no competition: Only his people are to worship him as the one and only Lord.

People: All Nations

As with the Abrahamic, the Mosaic covenant begins with grace over his people. God’s purpose of choosing Israel is not just to bless Israel but bless *all* nations. Thus, we see that the Mosaic covenant incorporated the Abrahamic covenant. John Frame accordingly explains,

The covenant with Moses is God’s way of fulfilling the covenant with Abraham. Only when Jesus comes do we see that clearly. God gave the land of Canaan to Israel so that Jesus could be born there and so that Jesus’ people could reach out from the land of Canaan to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teach them to do all things Jesus has taught them.¹⁵⁴

God gives his people the land throughout their generations and also presents Christ, the

¹⁴⁹ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 389.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 402.

¹⁵¹ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 403.

¹⁵² Frame, *Salvation belongs to the Lord*, 125.

¹⁵³ This is, of course, Jesus’ first great commandment (Matt. 22:36-38). Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 409.

¹⁵⁴ Frame, *Salvation belongs to the Lord*, 125.

Savior, to them under the ceremonial pictures of animal sacrifices, feasts, priest, prophets, and kings.

In the New Testament period, some Jews thought that Paul was trying to do away with the law of Moses. In reply, Paul draws attention to the covenant of Abraham, in which God promised to bless not only Israel but *all* nations. Then, Paul argues that the law of Moses did not abrogate the promise made to Abraham (Gal. 17), that was not opposed to these promises (v. 21), and that it was indeed one of the covenant of promise (v. 22; cf. Eph. 3:12). It is based on God's grace on his people, his gracious deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 20:2),¹⁵⁵ so that he will be their God, the Lord-King, and they will be his people (Ex. 6:7).

Place

Genesis ends with Joseph's final declaration to his brothers that, "God will visit you and bring you up out of his land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Gen 50:24). However, between the time of Joseph's death and the beginning of Exodus, it appeared that Joseph's prophetic words had died with him. The storyline, however, reveals that God kept his promise, relocating his redeemed people to a new land described as "flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3). Thus, Willem VanGemeren comments,

Israel's expulsion from Egypt is a return to God's favor, presence, and blessings! The Exodus event forms a contrast to Adam's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, which signified removal from God's presence and hence from the immediacy and abundance of God's favor and blessings. Adam and Eve were condemned to live in a state of alienation. The Exodus is God's concrete act of reconciliation. . . . God had *placed* Adam in the garden (2:8) and expelled him (3:24). But he was free in placing Israel in the land of Canaan, whose fertility, productiveness, and richness in natural resources was a reminder of the Garden of Eden.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 125.

¹⁵⁶ VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 81.

In other words, God himself places Israel to the land of pre-fall conditions. In fact, Moses and the Israelites sang the song to the Lord:

“You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O LORD, which your hands have established.” (Ex. 15:17).

Thus, Gentry and Wellum explains, “The establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan is pictured as the planting of a tree in a mountain sanctuary, exactly the picture of Eden presented in Genesis 2 and Ezekiel 28.”¹⁵⁷ And then, the faithful Lord-King once again dwells with his people to be under his rules (Ex. 25-31).

However, the storyline tells us that Israel, as the descendent of Adam, repeats sin again: Israel commits idolatry (Ex. 32-34) and moves forward with God’s plan, and he will restore his rule and creation blessing *only* through an obedient one.

Grace and Law

The theological issues raised by the relation of the Mosaic economy to the new covenant are at the heart of some of the most significant differences about biblical interpretation in the evangelical church today. In other words, what is the proper relation of law and grace (or gospel)? How does the Mosaic covenant relate to the Covenant of Grace?

One extreme view (i.e., classical dispensationalism) is that the law must have nothing to do with Christians and, therefore, argues that any ideas of incorporating the Mosaic covenant into the schema of the Covenant of Grace compromise the grace of the Gospel.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, in their mind, the best way to justify the doctrine of Grace in a believer’s life is to

¹⁵⁷ Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenants*, 227.

¹⁵⁸ C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, (Danville, IL: G&T, 1996), 23-27.

leave the law out of it. In other words, there is a radial discontinuity between the Mosaic law and the Christian gospel, because the law is not repeated in the New Testament.¹⁵⁹

The other extreme view is the “Theonomy” or Christian Reconstructionism that believes all the non-ceremonial laws in the Old Testament continue to be binding on all Christians. They argue that there are only two categories of law: moral/civil and ceremonial.¹⁶⁰ In other words, they argue that *all* of the moral/civil laws in the Old Testament are still binding on believers personally and corporately in the new covenant, because the law is not repealed in the New Testament.

However, the proper understanding of law is that it is basically an *extrapolation* of stipulation of a covenant. As previously discussed, every covenant is conditional and has requirements. Law has its origin in the requirement of the covenant. Therefore, law must be understood under the broader concept of covenant. In other words, God intended his kingdom under both grace and law through the Mosaic covenant. That is why God himself clearly declares the law, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:2-3). The law is a household instruction for the covenant community, for the God of grace, who *has saved* his people by grace. Thus, this framework of the Bible cannot be rejected.

2.3.4 Kingdom Realization under the Immanuel Principle through the Davidic Covenant

God had brought his people out of Egypt. He had given them a good place – the Promised Land – and had driven out their enemies. But because of their sinfulness in the

¹⁵⁹ In this view, the Mosaic covenant is basically a repetition of the Covenant of Works.

¹⁶⁰ The Westminster Confession of Faith speaks of three aspects of law: moral, civil, and ceremonial. (*WCF* 19:2-4).

days of the judges,¹⁶¹ God was angered and delivered them into the hands of their enemies. Psalm 78 shares that God came to their rescue, established sanctuary and remedied their sin. He paved the way for righteousness in setting up his servant David as the shepherd¹⁶² of Israel; as the servant king on the throne. More specifically, Psalm 78:67-72 makes it clear that the placement of David on the throne was of major significance in God's redemptive purpose and was essential to the establishment of godly rule in Israel.

2 Samuel 7 is the formal inauguration of the Davidic covenant. But God had laid out historical settings for the event: (1) The long civil war in Israel ended (2 Sam. 5:3); (2) David made Jerusalem as his capital (2 Sam. 5:6-7); (3) The Ark of the Lord was brought back to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:16-17); (4) The Lord gave David to rest from all his enemies (2 Sam. 7:1). In other words, God prepares the land, unites the people under his rule and the unprecedented peace at the advent of David's reign. This occasion for the formal establishment of the Davidic covenant has great significance: the interconnection between David's throne and God's throne, between David's son and God's son, finds the framework in the historical context.¹⁶³ together they anticipate the eschatological kingdom of God. And, a situation of rest from oppressing enemies anticipates appropriately the eschatological kingdom of peace.¹⁶⁴

Under David, the kingdom arrives; God formally establishes the manner by which he shall rule among his people. Prior to this point, God had manifested himself as the Lord-King,

¹⁶¹Self-rule is the name of the game during that time: "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 29.

¹⁶²God himself elects David from being a shepherd boy. Therefore, this covenant also begins in grace. The point is that David becomes king by grace under God's eschatological kingdom theme. It is also important to note that David was introduced as a shepherd caring for his father's flock (16:11-13) and later portrayed as the shepherd over the Lord's flock (2Sa 5:2; 7:7-8; Ps 78:70-72). Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses were also depicted as skillful shepherds

¹⁶³Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 231.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 231.

but now God openly situates his throne in a single locality – Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. God himself associates his kingship with David the king of Israel. Thus, Palmer Robertson accordingly says that the redemptive purposes of God reach their climatic stage of realization in the Davidic covenant as far as the Old Testament is concerned.¹⁶⁵ Scott Swain also explains,

“In David (and his progeny), God’s kingdom purpose is thus finally realized. God solemnly binds himself to David and his sons in a perpetual, fatherly relationship: “I will be his father, and he will be my son” (2 Sam. 7.14 NIV). By the hand of Solomon, God orders the construction of his temple, the place of his holy rest. And thus, under the rule of God’s earthly son and assured of God’s holy presence in the temple, God’s people inherit God’s blessing in God’s place.”¹⁶⁶

King: Elects David as a Covenant Mediator

The formal inauguration of the covenant is described in 2 Samuel 7:8-17. Though the word covenant is not found in the passage, other passages explicitly state that this was a covenant inauguration. For instance, Psalm 89:2-4 tells, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ‘I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.’”¹⁶⁷

God also ensures a number of blessings to David: (1) God’s own flesh and blood will occupy the throne (v.12); (2) God will build a house¹⁶⁸ for his name (v.13); (3) God will be David’s heir’s father and he shall be God’s son (v.14); (4) David’s heir may experience punishment for sins (v.14); (5) David’s kingdom will be established forever before God. (v.16). In other words, God is allowing David to maintain a unique role in relation to the covenant – mediator. As the covenant mediator, the king not only represents God in his authority as covenant Lord to the people, but he also represents the people to God.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 229.

¹⁶⁶ Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 29-30.

¹⁶⁷ Also in Psalm 132.

¹⁶⁸ The word for house means palace. And the word for temple, or house, means temple, and the word for dynasty are all the same word in Hebrew.

This dual responsibility points to the Son Jesus. It relates particularly to the king's position as son to God.¹⁶⁹ As son, he shares the throne with God his Father. As son, he possesses the privileges of perpetual access to the Father. By the virtue of this sonship, he serves as covenantal mediator. In fact, the writer of Hebrews establishes Jesus' unique role as Son and king (Heb. 1:1-14) as well as Priest and mediator (Heb. 5:5, 6).

Furthermore, the Davidic covenant serves as the formalizing bond by which the Lord-King comes *among* people. In 2 Samuel 7:6, God identifies himself with people: "I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling." During all the days of Israel's sojourn, God sojourned with his people. God himself makes the statement, "I have been with you wherever you went" (2 Sam. 7:9). Thus, the heart of the Davidic covenant is the *Immanuel principle*.¹⁷⁰ Under this principle, it is striking to know that all three components - "king," "people," and "place" - are being integrated together: The Lord-King himself declares that he has been with his people wherever they went. Thus, we can say that one of the key characteristics of the eschatological kingdom is the Immanuel principle: *The Lord-King dwells with his people on one location (place) together*.

People and Place under the Immanuel Principle

The Immanuel principle is also supported by God's commitment to David, "I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; Your throne will be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:13) and "your house and your kingdom shall be made sure

¹⁶⁹ Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 236.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 232.

forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever” (v. 16). More specifically, God will make for David a great name (v. 9) and “appoint and plant his people Israel where they will rest.” (v.10, cf. Gen.12:15). In other words, God reveals that he will *fully* establish his kingdom, which was planned since the creation, through the Davidic covenant.

The Davidic covenant also includes conditional requirements. The sons of David are to *be faithful to God* (2 Sam. 7:14). If they disobey, God will discipline (Ps. 89:30-37). But, God also promises that he will not remove his love as he did from Saul.

We know that the promise was not that David would reign for a long time, but that *he would reign forever*. That very fact led the prophets of the Old Testament to see that this Davidic promise would only be fulfilled in the Messiah, by which is exactly how the New Testament interprets it.¹⁷¹ The passages, like Hebrews 1:5, make it clear that the Davidic reign was the prophetic of Christ’s reign. The succession of the Davidic kings under the old covenant was a type. This reign is ultimately only fulfilled in the reign of the son of David, Jesus Christ and his eternal messianic rule.

The storyline tells us that the earthly line of Davidic kings ended when Judah was exiled to Babylon in 586 BC. After David, Israel waited for a greater King, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Son of David. This King, many thought, would overthrow the Romans and restore Israel as a political power. But he came as the Redeemer saving his people from their sins. He now rules in heaven all the time, fulfilling the promise that David’s throne will last forever. He will also return to dwell with his people in the eschatological kingdom forever.

2.3.5 Kingdom Consummation in Christ through the New Covenant

¹⁷¹ This is one of the classic examples of why we should not allow the Old Testament pattern of description to determine our understanding of the New Testament reality. That is the one of mistakes the classical Dispensationalists believing that David is going to be reestablished on the throne in literal, earthly Israel.

Old Testament Prophecies of the New Covenant

As a result of the earthly line Davidic kings' repeated failures, there was a growing expectation among Israel for the need of God's saving righteousness, and of a messianic figure who would deliver the nation from its foreign rulers and usher in God's blessings.

VanGemeren writes,

From [David] onward the faithful remnant looked for a messiah of David with whom God would be present and by whom he would extend his peace, justice, righteousness, and wisdom to his people. Only a few kings that followed David and Solomon responded positively to God's challenge. Such kings helped to bring in the kingdom of God among the people. Unfortunately, those periods were like oases in the desert of Judah's history. After the exile, the faithful continued to look for the fulfillment of the promises based on God's oath to David.¹⁷²

Thus, prophetic anticipations during the exiles were building up. They hoped for a new work that would change Israel's relationship with God under a new covenant. It would encapsulate and fulfill the key promises made throughout the previous covenants: an everlasting dynasty, blessing on all nations, a physical inheritance, and the Lord-people relationship under the Immanuel principle.

The anticipation began with the prophet Jeremiah and he is the only prophet to use the term, "*new covenant*." In fact, it was explicitly used in Jeremiah 31:31, "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah." But he is not the only prophet to use the concept of a new covenant. Even Jeremiah himself did not use the term in 32:37 but the verse refers to "*an everlasting covenant*."¹⁷³ By the 'new' and 'everlasting' covenant, the eschatological renewal is guaranteed.¹⁷⁴

If this is the case, what then is the meaning of "new"? From Jeremiah's perspective, it is *not* going to be like the covenants that the children of Israel broke. The new one is

¹⁷² VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 234-235.

¹⁷³ Also in 31:27-30.

¹⁷⁴ Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 30.

different because it will be *permanent and unbreakable*, not totally new without continuity.

We see the similar idea in Ezekiel. When Ezekiel describes the new covenant era of the kingdom of God in 37:24,¹⁷⁵ he use the term “*a covenant of peace*” instead of “new covenant” or “everlasting covenant.” His concept is parallel with Jeremiah’s. We then see the theme of the everlasting covenant in 16:20, “I will establish an everlasting covenant with you” with the theme of forgiveness and reunion. Thus, we can grasp the expectation of the Old Testament prophets on God’s kingdom in the new covenant era.

In other words, the new covenant has to be consummated with all previous covenants with continuity in the key elements.¹⁷⁶ It is made to the whole people of Israel (“the house of Israel” and “the house of Judah,” (Jer. 31:31)). The new covenant also emphasizes Lord-people relationship with obedience (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:25-27; Isa. 42:1-4; 51:4-8). It focuses on offspring (Jer. 31:36; 33:22; Ezek. 36:37) particularly on a royal seed (Jer. 33:15-26; Ezek. 37:24-25; Isa 55:3). And it will fulfill the repeated covenant refrain: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer. 31:33; 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 21:1; 32:38; Ex. 29:45; Lev. 26:12; Ezek. 11:20; 37:23, 27). Therefore, the newness of the new covenant must not stand in absolute contradiction to the previous covenants; a factor of *continuity* must be recognized.¹⁷⁷ Jeremiah did not condemn the old covenant, but condemned Israel for breaking the covenant (Jer. 31:32; cf. Jer. 2:5, 13, 20, 32). The problem was with Israel’s incapacity to keep the conditional components of the old covenant. No lasting purpose will be served through a future reestablishment of this same relationship.¹⁷⁸

Lord-King

¹⁷⁵ Also in 34:24.

¹⁷⁶ John Frame call this “a temporal inauguration. Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 81.

¹⁷⁷ Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 281.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 281.

The Lord declares that he himself will *write* the torah (his law) *on the hearts* of his people (Jer. 31:33). This is one factor of the integral part of the new covenant. Those without the divine writing on their hearts, who are Jews in name only (Rom. 2:28–29; 9:6), will not receive the blessings of the covenant.¹⁷⁹ Thus, the substance of the law did not change, maintaining the continuity, but God shall write his rules on the fleshly tablets of the heart, in contrast with the older engraving of his law on stone tablets.¹⁸⁰ In other words, God’s desire, as the Lord-King, is to redeem his people to be under his rule is still same.

In order to redeem his people, God declares again, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34). This forgiveness of sin is presented by Jeremiah as the providing basic substance of the new covenant relationship.¹⁸¹ Therefore, this forgiveness from God is the factor in correct understating of continuity and discontinuity. Continuity is seen in the constant typology¹⁸² representation of the reality of forgiveness under the old covenant; discontinuity is the once-for-all accomplishment of God’s forgiveness.¹⁸³ He will not remember the sins of his people. This is the radical newness of the new covenant. Therefore, the entire “new” covenantal history can begin with God’s people, with new heart.

This forgiveness is also related to the idea of reversing the curse of sin. The curse of sin meant death. But Ezekiel 31 says that the blessing of the new covenant is going to be that

¹⁷⁹ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 80.

¹⁸⁰ Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*., 281-282.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 283.

¹⁸² Robertson comments, “Jeremiah anticipates the day when the actual shall replace the typical. Instead of having animal sacrifices merely represent the possibility of a substitutionary death in the place of the sinner, Jeremiah sees the day in which sins actually will be forgiven, never to be remembered again. The continual offering of sacrifice to remove sin not only provided a symbolical representation of the possibility of substitution. It also inevitably functioned as a very real reminder that sins had not yet been forgiven. By saying that sins would be remembered no more, Jeremiah anticipates the end of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.” Ibid., 283.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 284.

God will reverse the curse and his people will be revived, “And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves” (Ezek. 31:13). Mathew connects this idea to the crucifixion of Christ,

“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” (Matt. 27:50-53)

Matthew is declaring that Ezekiel’s prophecy is fulfilled with his resurrection and the resurrection is the ultimate reversal of the curse of sin.¹⁸⁴

People: “Multiply the Nation” under the Principle of Progression.

God also has a plan for his people through the new covenant. His declarations in Jeremiah and Ezekiel clearly show his determination for Israel (Jer. 31:36-40; 33:6-16; Ezek. 36:24-38; 37:11-28). However, his determination is now beyond Israel. The universal or progression scope is described as “all the nations of the earth” (Jer. 33:9) and “the nations ... shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezek. 36:36; 37:28). This principle of progression is most clearly declared in Isaiah (42:6-7; 49:6; 55:3-5; 56:4-8; 66:18-24). Furthermore, the new covenant projects the ultimate fulfillment of the divine promises to make a worldwide people for God onto a suffering servant—an “ideal Israel”—in a new heavens and new earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22). Ezekiel 37:26-27 also reveals that God himself will *multiply* the nation. But, we know that this revelation is not new but is the ultimate confirmation of his previous promises to multiply and fill the earth with his worldwide chosen people.

Then, Ezekiel 37:27-28 summarizes this idea, “My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people; then *the nations* will know that I am the

¹⁸⁴ This connection is also in Romans 8:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 15 where Christ’s resurrection is seen to be a direct fulfillment of that old covenant promise.

LORD.” Over fifty times in the book of Ezekiel, that theme – “they shall know that I am the LORD” – is repeated.

Like the other covenants, the new covenant establishes a body of believers in covenant with the Lord. Those who enter the church with a living faith in Christ receive all the blessings of the covenant. The new covenant is *unconditional* in that its very content is God’s unconditional gift of a new heart, fulfilling all covenant conditions.¹⁸⁵ But it is *conditional* in that those conditions are real and necessary. In other words, we are justified by faith alone, not by any effort to earn our salvation (Rom. 3:23–24; Eph. 2:8–9); But the faith, by which we are justified, is a living and obedient faith (Gal. 5:6; Eph. 2:10; James 2:14–26).¹⁸⁶ Once again, the new covenant features both grace and responsibility.¹⁸⁷ Addressing the new covenant community, Scripture contains warnings of judgment to those who would presume God’s grace (Heb. 6:1–12; 10:26–39).

Place: “New Temple” – “New Heavens and a New earth”

The new covenant also promises a new place for God’s worldwide chosen people. The big theme of Ezekiel 40–48 is the New Temple and the temple is for God’s people under the new covenantship. We can also see the same idea in the prophecy of Isaiah. Isaiah 65:17 reveals that God will “create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.”

Then, in Ezekiel 36:33–36, we can see a connection back to the concept of the Garden of Eden:

¹⁸⁵ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 80.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 81.

¹⁸⁷ So as with the other covenants, it is possible for someone to join the new covenant community externally without the new heart that defines that covenant. He may be baptized and profess Christian doctrine. But if he lives a life of sin, he shows that he does not have the new heart that is the mark of the new covenant. He has wrongly entered the covenant community and ought to be disciplined by the body. He has become a Christian externally, but without inward change. Ibid, 81.

“Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. And they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’ Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the LORD; I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.”

So, we see God’s lordship to rebuild the world, new heavens and new earth, and for his worldwide people to establish his everlasting kingdom. The only way we can capture this eschatological desire of the Lord is to connect the new covenant to the prior covenants without discontinuity.

2.3.6 “Putting Together”¹⁸⁸ the Covenants

All five forms¹⁸⁹ of the Covenant of Grace have similarities and differences with one another. As we have seen, the differences are obvious. For example, the rainbow is the sign of God’s covenant with Noah; circumcision with Abraham; baptism with Jesus.¹⁹⁰ Jesus is much greater than any earthly kings, even greater than Moses, the great mediator. The new covenant in Christ is the consummated form of all previous covenants. The question then is, how do we identify the similarities and put them together?

Reformed theology asserts that one triune God authored the entire Scripture and manifests himself in the diversity of historical epochs. The presupposition, therefore, ought to be the *unity-in-diversity* of the Old and New Testaments. We also know that Scripture presents a series of covenant relationships instituted by the one true living God. His multiple bonds with his people, throughout redemptive history, ultimately unite into one single

¹⁸⁸ I am using Gentry and Wellum’s terminology here. They define “putting together” as “a careful investigation of the nature of the biblical covenants and their relationships to each other.” Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 82.

¹⁸⁹ The covenants with Isaac and Jacob present renewals of the Abrahamic promise. The covenant with Phineas (Num. 25:12,13) appears as an adjunct to the Mosaic covenant. These covenants do not possess the same epoch-making character as the Covenant of Grace.

¹⁹⁰ Frame, *Salvation belongs to the Lord*, 127.

relationship. As we have seen, the cumulative evidence of the Scriptures itself reveals and points toward the eschatological kingdom of God.

Therefore, I claim that the theme of God’s eschatological kingdom¹⁹¹ binds the whole of the Scripture, and that the message of this theme unifies the entire biblical covenants. The heart of the message is the declaration: “God is with us.”¹⁹² This idea is expanded with the three components of the kingdom: Lord-King, people, and place.

The Summary Table – The Biblical Covenants

Covenants	Lord-King “I will be your God” (Exod. 6:7)	People “you will be my people” (Exod. 6:7)	Place “the place” (Dt. 12:5) “My dwelling place” (Ezek. 37:26-28)	Conditional Requirements
Edenic (Gen. 1-3)	Kingdom Creation	Adam and Eve	The garden of Eden	The first “Great Commission”
Noahic (Gen. 6)	Kingdom Re-Creation	Noah and his family as a representative head	Renews and promises to sustain the earth	Build the Ark to save his household
Abrahamic (Gen. 12)	Kingdom Expansion	Makes Abraham’s name great, blessing all the families of the earth	The Promises Land	Walk before God, and be blameless, Circumcision
Mosaic (Exod. 19-24)	Ruling Kingdom under Grace and Law	Consolidates his people into a nation	Places his people to the land of Canaan.	The Decalogue. Law
Davidic (2 Sam. 7)	Kingdom Realization under Immanuel Principle	Promises to dwell with his people.	Promises to build a House (dynasty) that ever-lasts in God’s name	Be faithful to God, or God will discipline
New (Jer. 31)	Kingdom Consummation in Jesus Christ	Writes the <i>torah</i> on the hearts of his people. Multiplies the nation.	“New Temple” “the new heaven and earth”	Commit to all previous terms

Lord-King

¹⁹¹ Once again the theme is “God’s people on his place under the Lord-King’s rule (grace & law).

¹⁹² Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 47.

As shown in the Summary Table, the theme of God's kingdom reaches its climax through its embodiment in a single person. In Christ, the theme finds consummate fulfillment. The prophet Isaiah explicitly develops this particular idea. The essence of the covenant concept unites with Israel's messianic expectation.¹⁹³ The anticipation of the future focuses on a single individual who will fulfill his role as the embodiment of the covenant through suffering on behalf of others. He is the servant of the Lord, regal character, but destined to suffer. He is appointed to be in himself "a covenant to a people, and a light to the nations" (Isa. 42:6; cf. Isa. 49:8; 55:3, 4).

In this single person, all of God's purposes find climatic fulfillment.¹⁹⁴ He is the Lord-King and the embodiment of God's covenant. In him, the covenant disclosure, "I will be your God and you will be my people," is fully realized. As we have investigated, God's redemptive guidance over the covenants converge on this single person. He is the unifying focus of all Scripture. *Both "kingdom" and "covenant" unite under "Immanuel."*¹⁹⁵ Thus, Palmer Robertson rightly states,

It is not "the" blood of the covenant that he administers, as does Moses (Ex. 24:8). Instead he solemnly declares "this is *my* blood of the covenant..." (Matt. 26:28, cf. Luke 22:20). As kingly covenant mediator, he does not administer merely the laws of the kingdom. It is himself that administers to the people... In the person of Jesus Christ, the covenant achieves incarnational unity. Because of Jesus, as the Son of God and mediator of the covenant cannot be divided, the covenants cannot be divided. He himself guarantees the unity of the covenants, because he himself is the heart of each of the various covenantal administrations.¹⁹⁶

People

In Genesis 17:7, in the connection with the establishment of circumcision as the seal of the Abrahamic covenant, God affirms his intention "to be God to you and to *your offspring (seed) after you.*" This phrase signifies the *genealogical* promise and binds the rest

¹⁹³ Ibid., 51.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 51.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 51.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 51-52.

of the covenants together. We saw that this phrase reappears frequently with added emphasis in the Mosaic covenant. The essence has to do with the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt to become the Lord's people. God says, "I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God" (Ex. 6:6-7).¹⁹⁷ Thus, we can say that God's genealogical promise of "seed" is now incorporated into the Mosaic covenant. The purpose is to make a people for God himself. As noted previously, this purpose is not merely choosing Israel but also to bless *all* nations.

The same formula of the phrase appears in the Davidic covenant. At the crucial point of the monarchy history, the covenant is related to the essence of God's covenantal commitment.¹⁹⁸ It explicitly shows God's desire to maintain the line of David. In 2 Kings 11, the highest priest Jehoiada places the corrupted Queen Athaliah with the seven-year-old Jehoash. The narrative of Kings indicates its significance: "Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people, that they should be the LORD's people, and also between the king and the people" (2 Kings 11:17).¹⁹⁹ In this expression, we find that the maintenance of the Davidic line in covenantal relation with God is emphasized – "should be the Lord's people."

God wants to maintain the line of David so that David substitutes for the whole of God's people. The prophet Ezekiel confirms this point when he declares: "I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have

¹⁹⁷ The same essence of the phrase also can be found in the Pentateuch. "I am the Lord ... to be your God" (Lev. 11:45); "to be a people for his own possession" (Deut. 4:20).

¹⁹⁸ Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 47.

¹⁹⁹ The parallel account in 2 Chronicles 23:16 reads "Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king that they should be the LORD's people."

spoken” (Ezek. 34:24). Because David belongs to God, all the people belong to God. The “seed” promise continues through the Davidic covenant.

As shown in the Summary Table, the new covenant progressively and more clearly reveals that God’s people are not limited to merely the ethnic nation Israel, but to all nations. In Zechariah 2:11, the prophet anticipates the day in which “many nations” will be joined to the LORD: “And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst.” We also find out that God’s desire is to dwell with his people of all nations. Thus, the “seed” principle expands and continues through the new covenant without discontinuity under the theme of eschatological kingdom of God. Based on this principle, Apostle Paul calls for Christians to be holy as “the temple of the living God. As God said “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”” (2 Cor. 6:16).

Place

The reality of God’s residing among people, wherever they go, displays an ever-increasing significance throughout Scripture. It moves from the figure of the tabernacle to the figure of the city of God.²⁰⁰ By dwelling among his people in his kingdom, God seals the reality of the fact that he is indeed their Lord-King and they are his people.

The essence of this reality is found in its initial fulfillment in the form of the tabernacle. In Exodus, God commanded Israel to construct the tabernacle that he might dwell among them (25:8). It was the concentrated place of God’s meeting with his people (29:42-

²⁰⁰ Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 49.

44). In Deuteronomy, there is repeated emphasis on “*the place*” in which the Lord was to “choose for his name to dwell.”²⁰¹

In expecting the future place for God’s dwelling, the prophet Ezekiel expands on the figure of God’s tabernacle to the whole world:

“I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting *covenant* with them. And I will set them in their land and *multiply* them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. *My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore”(Ezek. 37:26-28).

The New Testament also shares this theme with us in terms of the consummated form: God “dwells” in human flesh by the presence of the incarnated Son (John 1:14). Thus, God’s people are the temple of the Lord, “built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit”(Eph. 2:21-22). And, “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages (Rev. 7:9), serve the Lord day and night in his temple (Rev. 7:15). Finally, Revelation 21:1 describes the eschatological dwelling place, “*a new heaven and a new earth*” where the Lord-King will dwell with his people (v. 3).

Thus, as illustrated in the prior table, Scripture continuously expands and connects the theme of God’s tabernacle place: What has started in Genesis as the Garden of Eden was renewed and promised to be sustained in the Noahic covenant, promised as “the land” in the Abrahamic covenant, led to the land of Canaan under the Mosaic covenant, promised as the Immanuel theme in the Davidic covenant, and finally promised as “the new heaven and earth” in the new covenant. This fact binds the biblical covenants together and they cannot be separated.

Reformed (or Covenant) Theology

Because of the above overwhelming reasons, covenant theology has maintained that

²⁰¹ Deut. 12:5; 11; 14; 14:22; 16:2; 6; 7; 11, etc.

all of God's relations to human beings are understood in terms of the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. The Covenant of Works was made with Adam before the Fall on behalf of the entire human race, and the Covenant of Grace was made through Christ with all who are to believe, namely the elect. The Covenant of Grace was administered differently in the different epochs or dispensations (WCF 7.4) but is substantially the same in all. The relationship between the biblical covenants, in terms of an overall unity continuity, and progression, is tied to the conviction that the covenants are merely an expression of the *one* Covenant of Grace.

Covenant theology has always allowed for a diversity of administration of the one Covenant of Grace. However, as Poythress describes, "the diversity accounts in large part for the diversity of epochs in biblical history but the emphasis was undeniably on the unity of one Covenant of Grace."²⁰²

Dispensational Position on the Doctrine of the Church

By contrast, dispensationalists have argued that the foundational covenant of Scripture is the Abrahamic and not the Adamic.²⁰³ They don't believe in continuity and unity of the biblical covenants. The classic dispensationalist insisted that the new covenant applied only to ethnic Israel and not to the church, based on their "literal" hermeneutic of Jeremiah 31:31 ("with the house of Israel").²⁰⁴ Even revised dispensationalism argues for two peoples of God, namely, "Israel" as an ethnic, national entity tied to the Old Testament, and "church"

²⁰² Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 40.

²⁰³ They don't recognize the Adamic or Edenic covenant.

²⁰⁴ Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 45-46.

as a distinct international community. In this way, each group was structured differently, with different dispensational prerogatives and responsibilities.²⁰⁵

They also view the nature of the church as a regenerate community, in contrast to the covenant community of the people of Israel.²⁰⁶ In other words, there is no continuity, unity, and progression principles of God's kingdom in their view. In fact, they are struggling with the definition of the "kingdom." The classic view had made a sharp distinction between the "kingdom of heaven" (i.e., earthly kingdom) and the "kingdom of God" (i.e., the spiritual, moral rule in God's people).²⁰⁷ Even though this view has been dropped,²⁰⁸ they have been struggling with the concept of Christ's relation to the church as a kingdom. Because of their "literal" understanding of the land promise and its fulfillment (first in the millennium and then continuing in the eternal state), they insist that "God's relationship to the church differs in some significant ways from the dispensation with Israel."²⁰⁹ This means a *dichotomy* of the purpose of God.²¹⁰ God is presented as having one purpose that is earthly and physical and another that is heavenly and spiritual. Based on this dichotomy, what is at the heart of all forms of dispensationalism is the "Israel-church" distinction.²¹¹

Furthermore, and intimately related to this distinction, there is the dual conviction that: (1) Israel, as a nation and ethical people, still awaits the "literal" fulfillment of the "land" promise in the future millennial and eternal age, which has theological implication for eschatology, and (2) God's relationship to the church differs in some significant ways from

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 47. Authors were referring to Craig A. Blaising, "Extent and Varieties of Dispensationalism," in Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, (Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint, 1993), 32.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 47.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 47.

²⁰⁸ Due to the influence of George Ladd.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 56. Authors were referring to Blaising, "Extent and Varieties of Dispensationalism," 15

²¹⁰ Roberson, *The Christ of Covenants*, 226.

²¹¹ Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 55.

the dispensation with Israel which has theological implications for soteriology and ecclesiology.²¹²

But, we know that this dichotomy in the purposes of God is metaphysical rather than biblical in origin.²¹³ The purpose of God is one: the redemption in body and spirit of those who are united with Christ.

Reformed Position on the Church and Her Membership

In contrast to dispensationalism, covenant theology has always seen *continuity* in God's plan across the ages, especially in regard to the "Israel-church" relationship. God has one plan of redemption and one (unified) people of God and the similarities between Israel and the church as covenant communities are significant. "Israel" is therefore, viewed as "the church" and vice versa.

This continuity is, in fact, understood in many ways – e.g., the nature of the covenant community as comprised of both believers and unbelievers (i.e., "mixed" visible community), the continuity in covenant signs (i.e., circumcision to baptism), and sameness in relationship to the salvation experience of old and new covenant believers. This Reformed view on the people of God is called "unity" (not "replacement") theology.²¹⁴ In this outlook, the New Testament church is one with Israel of the Old Testament. The promises to Israel are not abrogated, but extended and fulfilled through the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles in the New Testament community.

In terms of the visible community of God's people in the Old and New Testaments,

²¹² Ibid., 56.

²¹³ Roberson, *The Christ of Covenants*, 226.

²¹⁴ Richard L. Pratt, "To the Jew First: Reformed Perspectives" *RPM*. Volume1, Number 31, September 27, 1999, 5

the Westminster Assembly defined the visible church²¹⁵ as that community which

consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.²¹⁶

The *Westminster Confession* also notes that the visible New Testament church simply extends the visible Old Testament church to all nations of the earth. Therefore, Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church are *not* two separate peoples, existing along side or in opposition to each to each other.²¹⁷ This unity of the visible communities is also evident in the ways Reformed theology has taught that the New Testament church includes both believers and unbelievers, just as Old Testament Israel did. This outlook on the church differs from that of many groups who teach that the New Testament church consists only of true believers.²¹⁸ In the Reformed tradition, however, Jeremiah's promise that "everyone will know the Lord" (Jer. 31:34) in the new covenant is not completed until the return of Christ.

For this reason, membership of the visible church consists of believers and unbelievers, just as citizenship in Old Testament Israel consisted of believers and unbelievers. Under this belief, the children of believers are also part of the visible church.²¹⁹ Children within the New Testament church hold a status much like that of Israelite children in the Old Testament. They are expected, though not guaranteed, to be heirs of the promises of grace. The stress on the continuity of the people of God, across redemptive-history, is the reason for a one, unified God's people of his covenant community.

²¹⁵ The invisible church refers to the church as God sees it, that is, the elect – those from all times and places whom the Lord knows are his and his alone, perfectly and infallibly. In this sense, the church, whether under the old or the new covenant, is a spiritual entity, invisible to the natural eye – the one people of God throughout the ages.

²¹⁶ *WCF* 25.2

²¹⁷ Pratt, "To the Jew First: A Reformed Perspective," 7

²¹⁸ With a Baptist background, Wayne Grudem defines the church as "the community of all true believers for all time" in his *System Theology*, 853.

²¹⁹ *WCF*, 25.2

2.3.7 Conclusion: Hope for the Coming of Jesus Christ

The main storyline of the Old Testament is that Israel was commissioned to fulfill the Adamic commission to reign over a renewed earth but repeatedly failed. Thus, G. K. Beale summarizes,

“The Old Testament is the story of God, who progressively reestablishes his eschatological new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit through promise, covenant, and redemption, resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance his kingdom and judgment (defeat or exile) for the unfaithful, unto his glory.”²²⁰

As demonstrated in the Summary Table, God had revealed his plan for the kingdom fully by the time of the Davidic covenant. The everlasting covenant with David demonstrated that a worldwide blessing would come through his descendant. But the story of Israel and Judah, not to mention their kings, greatly disappointed. After Israel’s fall to Assyria, Judah also spiraled downward until carried away into Babylonian exile.

However, in the midst of exile, there was still hope because God is faithful to his promises. For example, the book of 2 Kings ends with Judah in exile and gives an account of the last member of the Davidic dynasty, Jehoiachin. The narrative of Kings opens with the hopeful beginning of Solomon’s reign and ends with a glimpse of hope for the future. In the thirty-seventh year of exile, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, son of Nebuchadnezzar, freed Jehoiachin from prison (2 King. 25:27). Evil-merodach spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon (v. 28). Additionally, Jehoiachin was not required to wear prison clothes. Every day of his life, he was able to dine regularly at the kings’ table, and he received an allowance for his work (v. 29-30). In other words, Jehoiachin lived like a king even in exile.

In addition, God promised through the prophets, the dawning of a new covenant (Jer.

²²⁰ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 116.

31:31-34), a coming kingdom (Obad. 21), a rebuilding of David's fallen booth (Amos 9:11-15), a new day for Jerusalem and Zion (Joel 3:15-21; Zeph. 3:15-20), a pouring out of God's Spirit (Joel 2:28), a day when the Lord would give his people a new heart and spirit so that they would obey him (Ezek. 36:26-27), a new exodus when God would liberate his people once again (e.g., Isa. 43:5-9), and even a new creation (Isa. 65:17; 66:22).

The exile, while certainly difficult, was a productive and creative stage for the believing remnants, who had reflected on God's faithfulness in the past and hoped for a new era in the future, which renewed in them a devotion to Yahweh and his Torah.²²¹ The restoration of the people to the land by the decree of the Persian king Cyrus in 538 B.C. was a sign of the renewal of all the covenants.²²² The prophetic word and ministry (of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) in the era of restoration embraces the ministry of reconciliation, hope, proclamation of the good news, anticipation of God's triumph in history, and the exhortation regarding to how God expects his people to bring in his kingdom.²²³

However, life in the era of transformation, of the progression of God's kingdom, was disappointing in comparison with the glorious visions of the prophets.²²⁴ The prophets met this failure by denouncing the sin of the people, proclaiming God's judgment, and casting their future in an eschatological-apocalyptic light. For example, there would come one like a son of man who receives a never-ending kingdom from the Ancient of Days and shares it with his people forever (Dan. 7:13-14, 18, 22). This one would reestablish God's kingdom and bring his blessing and universal rule back into the experience of his people. Therefore, the story of the postexilic restoration marks an important new stage in preparation for the

²²¹ VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 284.

²²² Ibid., 284.

²²³ Ibid., 284.

²²⁴ Ibid., 307.

coming of Jesus Christ.²²⁵

2.4 The Beginning of the End: the Inaugurated Kingdom of Christ

The Time is Fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at Hand

When Jesus arrives in the historical scene, the promises of God sworn to Abraham and confirmed to David had not yet been fulfilled. However, what the New Testament writers repeatedly demonstrate is that God's eschatological promises have reached their fulfillment.

For example, Luke records Jesus quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 at the beginning of his ministry:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus then declares that the time of fulfillment for Isaiah 61 is now, when he says, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Mark also records Jesus' announcement:

Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).

We also hear both John the Baptist and Jesus announcing the coming of the kingdom of God. John the Baptist declared, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). John called upon his hearers to prepare for the coming of this kingdom, which would be *inaugurated* by the Messiah, designated only as "the Coming One."²²⁶ John saw the mission of the Coming One as primarily one of separation: those who repented he would save, and the unrepentant he would judge.²²⁷ John, in fact, expected this twofold messianic work to take place in a single eschatological event.²²⁸

When John sent his disciples to Jesus, asking, "Are you he who is to come, or shall

²²⁵ Ibid., 312.

²²⁶ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 41.

²²⁷ Ibid., 42

²²⁸ Ibid., 42, referring G. E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 108.

we look for another?” (Matt. 11:3), Jesus replied with the Old Testament prophecies about the blind receiving their sight and the lame being made to walk (vv. 4-5), which were being fulfilled in his ministry. Jesus’ words implied that the judgment-phase of his ministry, as John had described it, was to come later; thus Scripture reveals that the first coming of the Messiah was to be followed by a second.²²⁹ So, we find that where the Old Testament writers seemed to depict as one movement must now be recognized as involving two stages: the present Messianic age and the age of the future.²³⁰

The signs of the Inauguration

Furthermore, the signs that the kingdom of God had arrived in the person and mission of Jesus are numerous. For example, Jesus cast out demons (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20), demonstrated victory over Satan (Luke 10:18),²³¹ performed miracles (Matt 11:2-5),²³² bestowed forgiveness (Mark 2:10; cf. Isa. 33:24; Mic. 7:18-20; Zech. 13:1), and proclaimed that the eschatological promises of the kingdom had come (Matt 11:5; Mark 1:15).

Luke also teaches the presence of the kingdom when he recounts how the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God was coming. Jesus responds by saying, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17:20-21). Instead of looking for spectacular outward signs of the presence of a primarily political kingdom, Jesus is saying that the Pharisees ought to realize that the kingdom of God is presently in their

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 42

²³⁰ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 18.

²³¹ Hoekema points out that “[i]t remains to be said that this victory over Satan, though decisive, is not yet final, since Satan continues to be active during the subsequent ministry of Jesus (Mark 8:33; Luke 22:3, 31). What did occur during Jesus’ ministry was a kind of binding of Satan (see Matt. 12:29 and cf. Rev. 20:2)—that is, a restriction of his activities.” Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 46.

²³² For example, Jesus gave sight to the blind, enabled the lame to walk, cleansed lepers, opened deaf ears, and raised the dead (Matt 11:5). These descriptions recall the words of Isaiah (e.g., Isa 26:18-19; 29:18-19; 35:5, 6; 53:4; 61:1).

midst, in the person of Jesus himself, and that faith in him is necessary for entrance into it.²³³

Thus, Jesus taught that the kingdom of God was already present in his ministry.²³⁴

Already but not yet

Jesus, however, also taught that there was a sense of which the kingdom of God was still future. Matthew 7:11-23, the passage after the Sermon on the Mount, describes entrance into the kingdom as something still in the future, and ties it in with a future day of judgment:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

Verbs in the future tense clearly speak of a future kingdom.

Many of Jesus’ parables also teach a future consummation of the kingdom.²³⁵ The Parables of the Marriage Feast (Matt. 2:1-14), the Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24-43), The Parables of the Drag Net (Matt. 13:47-50), the Parable of Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), and the Parables of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30) speak about the coming kingdom.

Apostle Paul also taught that the kingdom was in both the present and future. Through his letters, Paul demonstrates the in-breaking of the kingdom as a result of the “rule and reign of the risen and redeeming Christ” (e.g., Rom. 4:17; 1 Cor. 4:19-20; 15:20-28; Col. 1:13-14), and that those who inherit the kingdom will evidence it in the present (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:20-21; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). Furthermore, Paul’s emphasis on the new creation fits with the already-not-yet tension. And the framework of Paul’s entire theological thought is that of

²³³ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 48

²³⁴ Outside of the gospels, the New Testament also confirms the arrival of the kingdom. In Acts, there are not a large number of references to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3, 6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). Furthermore, the references to the kingdom are at the beginning and end of Acts (1:3, 6; 28:23, 31).

²³⁵ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 49.

apocalyptic dualism of “this age”, but also “in the one to come” (Eph. 1:21).²³⁶ Believers in Christ are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), which has broken into the present as a result of the cross of Christ (Gal 6:14-15), yet they live in the present evil age (Gal. 1:4; Rom. 8:18-25) and await the resurrection of their bodies in the future (2 Cor. 5:1-10). The central theme of Pauline eschatology is the consummation of God’s saving purpose; Apart from the return of Christ and the inauguration of the Age to Come, God’s saving work remains unfinished.²³⁷

The tension between the “already” and the “not yet” is also evident throughout the Book of Hebrews,²³⁸ and it can be summarized with the following statement:

Believers have presently received the kingdom that cannot be shaken, but a day is coming when things on earth and heaven will be shaken and removed, and the consummation of God’s purposes will be complete (Heb. 12:26-28).

God’s kingdom had finally arrived in the person and finished work of Jesus, through whom blessings for the nations come. Yet, the fulfillment takes place in a surprising way, for God’s saving promises are inaugurated, but not yet consummated. That is, the kingdom of God is “already but not yet.”²³⁹

The New Testament message of the inaugurated yet not finally consummated kingdom, as a result of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is crucial in connecting the beginning with the end. Willem VanGemeren writes,

Jesus’ inauguration of the kingdom is a stage in the progression of the kingly rule of God, set in motion from the time of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the garden. Through the revelation to Israel—the covenants, promises, and mighty acts of the Lord—he extended his kingly rule. Through the prophets he encouraged his people by saying that he would extend his kingdom

²³⁶ Ibid., 595.

²³⁷ Ibid., 597.

²³⁸ Ibid., 622.

²³⁹ George Ladd writes, “The Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among human beings, and that this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver people from its power, and to bring them into the blessings of God’s reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history, and consummation at the end of history.” In his *A Theology of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 89-90.

from heaven to earth. The election of Abraham, the Exodus, the Conquest, the Davidic monarchy, the temple, and the restoration from exile marked the highlights in the progression of the kingdom. With the coming of our Lord, God more dramatically and effectively stirs the earth to receive his kingly rule.²⁴⁰

It is easy to see, then, why the kingdom is a consistent and unifying theme throughout the biblical storyline. The kingdom of God that was created in Eden, and as a result of sin, advanced through each gracious covenant response, had finally arrived in the person and work of Jesus. At the same time, this kingdom awaits its final fulfillment when the kingdom of the world would become the eschatological kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 11:15).

The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Covenants

As discussed before, it is absolutely clear that the Holy Spirit was active in the old covenant. But it is important to note that the New Testament also identified the work of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament to have been done by the same one that they refer to as the Holy Spirit. In 2 Peter 1:21, for example, when Peter says, “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,” he makes it clear that the prophets of the Old Testament were inspired by the same Spirit of Christ.²⁴¹ Thus, the Holy Spirit was active and operative in the Old Testament.

However, we also find that the new covenant is uniquely the era of the Holy Spirit. The distinctiveness of the operation of the Spirit and the outpouring of the Spirit is *not* in the newness of mode in which he is working, but rather it is the operation of the Spirit is now

²⁴⁰ VanGemeeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 354.

²⁴¹ Peter was answering the questions that he left open in 2 Peter 1:10-13, “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.”

expanded to *all* nations. The new covenant is the era of the Spirit because the Spirit of God is poured out upon *all* flesh, Israel and the Gentiles. In other words, the worldwide kingdom of God is now inaugurated.

Under this understanding, Reformed theologians defend its doctrine of Regeneration,²⁴² which is that the Spirit must take initiative and act in the regenerating a human heart. The idea of an *ordo salutis* comes in based on this understanding: Effectual calling comes in before regeneration both temporally and causally; Regeneration comes before faith.²⁴³ This role and act of the Holy Spirit is same for both the New Testament and Old Testament in regards to salvation.²⁴⁴

In contrast, Arminian theologians have argued that regeneration is distinctively a New Testament phenomenon and the Spirit's call can be effectually resisted. In this thinking, the Holy Spirit cannot give salvation until the sinner responds.

However, salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the triune God: the Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, which thereby causes them to willingly obey the Gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation. This is the biblical Gospel.

2.5 The End: the New Creation

The Bible begins with creation (Gen. 1-2) and ends with a description of a more glorious creation (Rev. 21-22). Between these two, the restoration of the kingdom and the

²⁴² John Frame defines regeneration as "a sovereign act of God, beginning a new spiritual life in us. Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 945.

²⁴³ Ibid., 944.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 945.

history of redemption occur. The correspondence between the beginning and the end is astounding; the end echoes the beginning with something qualitatively better. The book of Revelation reveals God's consummated teleological objectives that he set out to accomplish from the beginning, and more specifically Revelation 21-22 portrays the picture of the climax of redemptive history. John's vision captures the *new*²⁴⁵ creation won by Jesus Christ. Thus, G. K. Beale writes,

The portrayal of the new covenant, new temple, new Israel and new Jerusalem affirms the future fulfillment of the main prophetic themes of the Old Testament and New Testament, which all find their ultimate climax in the new creation. The new creation itself is the most overarching of these themes, of which the other four are but facets.²⁴⁶

In other words, the new creation is portrayed with the redeemed people, the new place, and the presence of the Lord. This pulls together the thread of the kingdom that has developed through the storyline of Scripture. John describes this point when he writes in Revelation 21,

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." (Rev 21:1-5)

In this final vision, the new Jerusalem is the place of God's people where all of their enemies are defeated and sin and death will be no more. Furthermore, the nations come within its gate and the waters of paradise flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb through streets (Rev. 22:1-3). In other words, the new is better than Eden, because what was once lost by Adam is now gained by the last Adam, Jesus.

2.5.1 New Creation and the King

²⁴⁵ The use of the Greek term *καινός* (new) commonly implies a qualitative superiority in comparison with the old.

²⁴⁶ G. K. Beale, "Revelation (Book)," in *NDBT*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al., Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000, 357.

In the final kingdom of God, Christ is the King. In his consummated vision of Revelation, John describes with “*the throne of God*.” The divine throne emphasizing God’s reign is a central motif through Revelation, reappearing in a number of visions throughout the book.²⁴⁷ In fact, in chapters 4 and 5 alone, 17 of the 34 references in the book occur. In these two chapters, we can make a crucial observation – the inclusion of Christ. Christ declared himself as “the first and the last” (Rev. 1:17-19).

By highlighting the divine throne, John’s final visions reveal that the re-creation of the kingdom consolidates the King’s absolute authority over everything exists upon the earth.²⁴⁸ In other words, by the virtue of his blood-bought victory, Jesus, as the King, owns the sovereign rule. The kingdom of God is now completely restored with Christ and extended over the new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1)

2.5.2 New Creation and the People

We looked at the sequence order of the creation of God’s people and place. In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1), *then* placed man into it (Gen. 2). However, at the end, God places people who are now from every tribe, language, people, and nation whom he has made throughout redemption history, and *then* recreates a place to dwell. This is a great reversal of the order. God’s priority in the New Testament is to make people – the redeemed saints - for himself and then restore the earth for them to dwell. In other words, John’s focus is on the people on the kingdom.

In fact, John teaches in Revelation that the Lord has created an *international* community of people who will dwell on his new creation (Rev. 21:24, 26; 22:2). This shows

²⁴⁷ For example, Rev. 1:4; 3:21; 4-5; 7:9-11; 14:3; 19:4-5

²⁴⁸ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 75.

the final fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:5; 17:4-6; 18:18). This divine oath to Abraham contributes to the larger narrative that Genesis anticipated a future king who will play a central role in establishing God's blueprint for the earth.²⁴⁹

Furthermore, we should note that this seed, Christ (Gal. 3-4), mediates God's covenant blessings to the nations (Rev. 21:24; 22:2). Thus, John declares,

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (Rev 21:3).

This declaration echoes the covenant formula sounded throughout the Old Testament (Gen. 17:17; Exod. 6:7; 29:45; Lev. 26:12; Num. 15:41; Deut. 29:13; 2 Sam. 7:24; Ezek. 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech. 8:8). Thus, we can say that all the covenant promises, which made through Abraham, renewed through Moses, and embodied in Christ, are at last brought to full realization.

The question then is whether the people include “the Jew.” Do both Israel and the church come together to fulfillment in the new Jerusalem? This can be explained only through Scripture. In Revelation 21:12-14, John describes that “on the gates of the new Jerusalem the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed” (21:12), and “the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (21:14). In this description, “the history of both Israel and the church comes to fulfillment in the new Jerusalem.”²⁵⁰ That is, both the Israel of the Old Testament and the church of the New Testament have their place as the people of God in God's final establishment. To consummate God's teleological plan, then, the new creation is established in order to accommodate God's multinational people.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 164-165.

²⁵⁰ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation*, (London: T & T Clark, 1993), 312.

Therefore, the above answer supports the Reformed “*unity theology*” view on the people of God. The New Testament church is *one* with Israel of the Old Testament. The promises to Israel are *not* abrogated, but extended and fulfilled through the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles in the New Testament community.²⁵¹ This is the reason that the Westminster Assembly defined the visible church as that community which

consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.²⁵²

This reinforces the Reformed tradition that Jews, like Gentile, can only experience the glory of the eschatological Kingdom of God by receiving the gospel of Christ.²⁵³

2.5.3 New Creation and the Place

Finally, we can discuss the physical reality of the “new” creation. How should we understand John’s revelation? John Frame clearly explains this matter:

Scripture speaks of this new reality as new heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1). “Heaven and earth” is a Hebrew way of referring to everything there is, the universe. So, we can say that God makes a new universe. It is a physical reality, appropriate to our resurrected bodies (Rom. 8:19–21). Remember, the consummation of human existence doesn’t take us above and beyond the physical. Rather, as with Jesus’ resurrection body, our existence in the new heavens and earth will be physical.²⁵⁴

The central theme of the book of Revelation is the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the physical universe. Revelation 21 describes that the New Jerusalem “comes down” from heaven to *earth*.²⁵⁵ Therefore, we can also say that Abraham certainly participated in this earthly fulfillment. The Abrahamic promises are fully realized in this realization. Based on this prospect, Hoekema states,

²⁵¹ Pratt, “To the Jew First: Reformed Perspectives” 5.

²⁵² *WCF* 25.2

²⁵³ Pratt, “To the Jew First: Reformed Perspectives,” 17.

²⁵⁴ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 1079.

²⁵⁵ Vern Poythress explains that Hoekema produces a picture not too far distant from the premillennialist’s Millennium. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 123.

The Bible assures us that God will create a new earth on which we shall live to God's praise in glorified, resurrected bodies. On that new earth, therefore, we hope to spend eternity, enjoying its beauties, exploring its resources, and using its treasures to the glory of God. Since God will make the new earth his dwelling place, and since where God dwells there heaven is, we shall then continue to be in heaven while we are on the new earth. For the heaven and earth will then no longer be separated, as they are now, but will be one. But to leave the new earth out of consideration when we think of the final state of believers is greatly to impoverish biblical teaching about the life to come.²⁵⁶

This is one aspect of the “new” development²⁵⁷ in covenant theology – emphasizing the “earthly” character of the eternal state (the consummation).²⁵⁸ In this view, the redeemed Jews and ingrafted Gentiles will possess the entire new earth, the geographical center which will be the land of Canaan and the New Jerusalem.²⁵⁹ However, we should also recognize that “heaven” is a place where the triune God dwells.²⁶⁰ So, the covenant people will be with the triune God in a consummate way in the heavens and new earth.

At the end of Isaiah, God declares, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind” (Isa. 65:17), and this new creation will remain before him forever (Isa. 66:22). The new creation, then, is a restoration of Eden, for the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever (Rev 11:15). For this aspect, Scott Swain summarizes for us:

Ultimately, God's work of consummating creation will be an act of majestic sovereignty as well, as the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Messiah (Rev. 11.15). God's final kingdom design is to renew and perfect his fallen creation so that it may become a holy dwelling place of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (see Rev. 21.1– 22: 5). In that cosmic sanctuary, God's purpose of solemn self-commitment will be realized completely, as he declares: “The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (Rev. 21.7). The Father's face will shine in radiant splendor upon his children and the river of the Spirit's delights will flow from his throne (cf. Ps. 36.8). These blessings of light and life will ever descend upon God's people because the one who sits at the

²⁵⁶ Hoekema, 274.

²⁵⁷ The traditional Augustinian amillennialism was accused to interpret the prophecies with “spiritualization” and missing the real or literal meaning. Some of modern type of amillennialism holds that the promises of righteousness, peace, and security are poetic pictures of heaven and fulfilled in heaven.

²⁵⁸ Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 41.

²⁵⁹ Pratt, “To the Jew First: Reformed Perspectives” 14.

²⁶⁰ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 1075.

Father's right hand is the once slain now reigning lamb (Rev. 22.1– 5; cf. 5.1– 14).²⁶¹

Dispensationalist's Position on New heaven and Earth

Insisting on 'literal' interpretation of the passage (Rev. 21-22), some of the dispensationalists object that the Reformed view does not pay attention to the proper separation between heaven and earth. Christians participate in the heavenly Jerusalem, but Israel must yet have an earthly fulfillment in an earthly Jerusalem in the Millennium.

However, Poythress argues that the dispensationalists cannot use their "literal" argument because Revelation 21:1-22:5 says nothing against Christian participation.²⁶² If we deny Christians participation, it is because of the desire to maintain a strict separation of heavenly and earthly destinies.²⁶³ The idea of separate destinies, in fact, has come into systematized theories without having any textual support at all.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 32-34.

²⁶² Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 123-124.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

CHAPTER 3.

CONCLUSION

We observed that the Bible is the story of God, who reestablishes his eschatological kingdom through his covenants under the principles of unity, continuity, and progression. By his covenantal Word, God creates, redeems, and consummates the world.²⁶⁵ We also observed that the kingdom of God is a physical reality²⁶⁶ that develops throughout redemptive history. Scripture reveals this kingdom under the theme of God's people in his place under his rule. The one God designed of the Scripture designed all his covenants as administration of his one undisputable kingdom purpose and has granted the reception of salvation promised in every covenant through the same process in each covenant administration. This 'continuity, unity, and progression principle' allows New Testament believers to benefit from all God's covenants in the Old Testament.

We also saw that the kingdom is fully inaugurated with Jesus' life, trials, death for the sinners, and especially the eschatological 'already-but not yet' reign, bestowed by grace through faith and resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful, to advance this new-creational reign and resulting in judgment for the unbelievers. The goal is God's glory.

Implications as Members of the Covenant Community

As members of the covenant community, we are in the kingdom and yet we look

²⁶⁵ Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 34.

²⁶⁶ We should also recognize that the kingdom is more than a physical reality. The eschatological kingdom of God is where the triune God dwells with his people forever. The heart of the covenant is the word, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people." In Revelation 21:3 and 7, God repeats that word with a consummated meaning. He is now "with us" in a greater way than ever before. He is fully Immanuel, God with us. Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 1080.

forward to its full manifestation; we share its blessing and yet await its total victory. Then, what are the implications under this situation? First, we must recognize that only God can place us into this community. God called us into his kingdom (1 Thess. 2:12), gave us the kingdom (Luke 12:32), brings us into the kingdom of his Son (Col. 1:13), and confers on us the kingdom (“And I [Christ] confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, Luke 22:29, NIV). Thus, to belong to the kingdom is not a human achievement but rather a privilege bestowed on us by God.²⁶⁷

Second, we have responsibility as covenant community members. We should know that the kingdom of God demands from us repentance and faith. Jesus taught us that we must enter the kingdom of God. We can only enter the kingdom by humbling ourselves like a child (Matt. 18:3-4; Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17), by doing the will of the Father of heaven (Matt. 7:21), or by having a righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). Jesus also taught that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Mark 10:25), presumably because he is tempted to trust in his riches rather than in God. Unless one is born again or born of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5). Only God can cause one to be born again; and yet the point at which the gospel message impinges on the hearer is the summons to believe: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Third, we need to recognize that the kingdom of God implies cosmic redemption.²⁶⁸ The kingdom of God does not merely mean the salvation of his people. As we discussed, it also means the complete renewal of the entire universe, culminating in the new heaven and

²⁶⁷ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 53.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

the new earth.²⁶⁹

Being a citizen of the covenant community, therefore, means that we should see all of life and all of reality in the light of the goal of the redemptions of the universe. This implies a Christian philosophy of history: all of history must be seen as the working out of God's eternal purpose. This also includes a Christian philosophy of culture: art and science reflect the glory of God and are therefore to be pursued for his praise. It also includes a Christian view of vocation: all callings are from God, and all that we do in everyday life is to be done to God's praise.

Finally, Scripture calls us to glorify God in everything we do (1 Cor. 10:31). In one sense, we cannot increase God's glory,²⁷⁰ but when our lives image God, others see the presence of God in us.²⁷¹ Thus, we ourselves become part of that light from God that goes forth over the earth. When we speak truly of him and obey his Word, we enhance his reputation on the earth, his praise, so that we, like Jesus, become "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). Amen.

²⁶⁹ Apostle Paul also describes the cosmic dimensions of the kingdom of God in Ephesians 1:9-10, Colossians 1:19-20, and Romans 8:19-21.

²⁷⁰ The glory of God is literally the great light that shines forth when God make his presence visible to human beings. As such, his glory is something physical, part of creation. Glory is also a divine attribute. But to glorify God is to recognize him as the chief fact of human life.

²⁷¹ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 303.

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