

COVENANT IV

I. Diversity on the Divine Covenants.

§The Covenants of God are one.

§The Covenants do not appear as monotonous duplications of one another. (cp. The Synoptic Gospels)

§There are three basic structural distinctions.

A. Pre-Creation/Post Creation Covenants.

B. Covenant of Works/Covenant of Grace.

1. Prior to Adam's Fall into Sin and emphasizing the testing period of Adam.

2. Subsequent to Man's fall into sin and understood as being controlled primarily by the Grace of God.

3. The advantage of this division of Covenants is (1) the absolute necessity of recognizing a pre-fall relationship between God and man; (2) Adam cannot be regarded purely as a mythical figure; and (3) In real history God bound Himself to the man He made to be "very good."

4. The terminology traditionally associated with this scheme has significant limitations stemming from a lack of preciseness: (1) CW appears to suggest that Grace was not operative during this period¹; (2) CG suggest that Works has no place during its administration²; and (3) CW terminology tends to concentrate on a single element of the covenant bond, while ignoring the broader implications of Man's responsibility to his Creator³.

5. Covenant of Creation & Covenant of Redemption have been suggested.

C. Old Covenant/New Covenant.

§The Incarnation of Christ represents the most basic differentiation-point in this history as illustrated in Hebrews and Galatians.

Paul, in Galatians, contrasts the whole of the historical period before the coming of Christ with the age of the New Covenant.

1. "before faith came" contrasts with "faith has come" (**Gal. 3:23, 25**).

2. God's dealings with men cannot return to old patterns once Christ has come.

3. Judaizers are in error because they have not adequately taken in to account the radical difference that Christ's coming has made upon history.

¹ The totality of God's relationship with man is gracious as is the creation bond between God and man. (see *The Christ of the Covenants*, O. Palmer Robertson, pg. 56)

² Christ's accomplishment of righteousness for sinful men represents an essential aspect of redemption. Those redeemed in Christ certainly must work as they are created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. 2:10); and Scripture consistently indicates that the Final Judgment shall be according to works. While salvation is according to faith, judgment is according to works. (ibid.)

³ cp. Westminster Larger Catechism Q.20 with its counterpart Westminster Shorter Catechism Q.12

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- a. Covenants are radically distinct **BUT** a single way of salvation is always present. (same Gospel preached beforehand to Abraham- **Gal. 3:8 ff.**)
4. Paul contrasts the Abrahamic and the Mosaic periods of the Old Testament (**Gal. 3:15-19**).
- a. Paul makes it plain that inheritance not based upon Law, but upon Promise.
- b. Paul's ultimate purpose is to contrast the *false gospel* of the Judaizers and the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- c. The Law under Moses was **NEVER** intended to function apart from Promise under Abraham⁴.
5. The emphatic antithesis in Paul between the 'law-covenant' and the 'promise-covenant' must not be allowed to detract from the unity of God's dealings under the Covenant of Redemption.
- a. The legal requirement of Circumcision, necessary under the Old Covenant, would **NOT** benefit (**Gal. 5:2**) believers under the New Covenant.
- b. This illustrates that the ultimate contrast in Paul's (the Holy Spirit's) mind is not between the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, but between the way of Justification advocated by the Judaizers and that provided by Christ⁵.
- c. In Galatians 4, Paul contrasts the "present Jerusalem" with the "Jerusalem above". (**Gal. 4:25 ff.**) The true contrast is between the Judaizer's misunderstanding and the teaching of the true Gospel⁶.

Adam:	the Covenant of commencement
Noah:	the Covenant of preservation
Abraham:	the Covenant of promise
Moses:	the Covenant of law
David:	the Covenant of the Kingdom
Christ:	the Covenant of consummation

⁴ ex. God **COMMANDED** the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, and Abraham prophesied that God, Himself, would provide a ram. N.B. Law operating with Promise.

⁵ Paul clearly affirms that the law-Covenant did **NOT** annul the covenant of Promise- **Gal. 3:17**.

⁶ The Law, by its very form, was calculated to uncover man's sinful inclination to self-trust. Its contrast with the function of the Promise must not be understood as rupturing the unity of the progress of the revelation of the covenant of redemption. (ibid., pg. 61)