

## Introduction: a theological consideration of biblical covenants<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Definition of a biblical “covenant.”

In the broadest terms, a covenant may be defined as a “binding, governed relationship.” Because it is a relationship, it involves parties. Because it is governed, it contains conditions. Because it is binding, it contains consequences.

### 2. Origin of the concept of a biblical covenant.

In the nature of God, the Persons of the Trinity are covenanted. Between the Father, the Son and the Spirit they are inherently and eternally *bound* by love for one Another *governed* by their inherent goodness and *related* by common essence.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Covenantal relations, generally.

For God to create image-bearers is for Him to create those who are *like* Him, that is, covenanted.

#### a. Inherently as humans, we are in covenant **with each other**:

*Bound* in common creation, *governed* by natural law and *related* as fellow creatures. (This was our condition to one another in the Garden pre-fall and it continues.)

#### b. Inherently as created image-bearers, all are in covenant **with God**:

*Bound* to the Lord as created beings, *governed* by natural law and *related* to Him as His image-bearers. (This was our condition to God in the Garden pre-fall and it continues.)

Additionally, those who are redeemed sinners are in the covenant of grace **with God**: *bound* to the Lord by His Spirit, *governed* by natural law *and* His word and *related* to Him as inheriting sons.

### 4. Reformed theology holds to three related covenants: redemption, works and grace.

a. One way to consider their relatedness is: the pre-creation “covenant of redemption” “contains” the post-Creation covenants of “works” and “grace.” By “contains” is meant the latter two exist *in* the former; they are ground in and outworking’s of the pre-creation “covenant of redemption.”

b. A second way to consider their relatedness is as “nested” covenants. The post-creational covenants of the Bible are “nested” in the pre-Creation covenant of redemption.

By way of illustration, the Bible teaches the people of God love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Our love for God is “nested” in His love for us. His love is the ground of our love—apart from the love of God for us, we would have no love for Him; His is necessary love while ours is contingent.

In a similar way, the covenants of works and grace are “nested” in the covenant of redemption—apart from the latter, the former would have no grounding.

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<sup>2</sup> Trinitarian and covenantal are coextensive. The former describes the nature of God; the latter the relations of God.

5. Why study them or consider their role?<sup>3</sup>

a. Christ is both the Surety of the covenant and the substance of it: Isaiah 42:6

*I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations...*

“To say that the Servant is a covenant is to say that all the blessings of the covenant are embodied in, have their root and origin in and are dispensed by Him. At the same time, He is Himself at the center of all these blessings and to receive them is to receive Him for without Him there can be no blessings” (522, citing EJ Young).

There is no covenant with the Lord apart from Christ; they are coextensive; to have Him is to be in covenant while to be in covenant is to have Him.

b. The covenant framework structures redemptive history

The theme of covenant, says Sinclair Ferguson is the “architectonic principle of the Bible.” It is “the framework within which God sets the scene for the coming of Christ and for the bringing in of His kingdom” (523).

Redemptive history is carried along by the covenants; there is never a time in creation where mankind’s history is not also covenantal history.<sup>4</sup>

c. The covenant of grace supports God-centered faith and practice.

1. The covenant is the way in which the Lord provides faith: He draws us to Himself by grace into the covenant in which we are saved. There is no salvation outside the covenant.
2. The covenant’s means of grace are the ways in which the Lord sustains our faith. God makes ordinary provision of grace by the covenant means He has appointed.
3. The covenant’s law guides our obedience and secures our blessed experience of the Lord. Outside the covenant, the Law is a terror; inside, a friend and guide.
4. The covenant is the basis of our worship: because of the covenant, by His Spirit, He reveals Himself to us and fills us so that we praise and adore Him.

d. The covenant glorifies God in His attributes.

He created the covenant as fruit of His attributes. He made and sustains the covenant in all His attributes (His person). His attributes we can know that those outside cannot are revealed handsomely and freely to us in the means of the covenant.

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<sup>3</sup> From Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, vol.2, 522-524.

<sup>4</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing), 17.

## Covenants: biblically

### 1. Types of biblical covenants.

Scripture teaches seven (7) covenants and, with one exception, they fall into two types: “royal grant” and “suzerain-vassal.”<sup>5</sup> Both types of covenants are gracious in that the Lord wasn’t required to engage in them; He simply did because of His mere good pleasure and love.<sup>6</sup>

a. “Royal Grant” Covenants. These covenants are God’s promise to act and they require nothing in response (“I promise to do this”). These are by God’s initiative and contain no conditions or consequences for the other party. The grant (grace) nature is found in:

1. The Garden with God promising a serpent-crusher
2. With Noah promising never again to destroy the earth
3. With Abraham, promising land and offspring and blessing
4. With David: promising kings unto eternity
5. In the new covenant in Christ promising eternal salvation

These are unilateral gracious actions of God. In *these* types of covenants, God enters into the covenant and provides no written rules for His people to live by.

He has already put the moral law in us—a true sense of right and wrong—but the response to these covenants is to simply believe and receive.<sup>7</sup>

b. “Suzerain-vassal” covenants. These covenants the Lord makes with His people are what we could call an “unequal partnership” covenants (“Do this and you shall live”<sup>8</sup>).

These are mutual arrangements when a greater party treaties with a “lesser” partner promising certain consequences upon the lesser party’s faithfulness.

In other words, in these covenants, He graciously acts and then as part of the covenant He makes, He gives rules governing the conduct of the lesser. These rules are always guardrails for the people to keep them in the stream of blessing the covenant provides.<sup>9</sup>

1. In the Garden with the one-rule: He created and *then* gave Adam the one rule that would allow Adam to enjoy Creation and God.<sup>10</sup>
2. With Israel at Sinai: He saved Israel out of Egypt and *then* gave them the Mosaic law that would allow them to enjoy their new freedom.

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<sup>5</sup> The eternal covenant of redemption doesn’t fit into either type.

<sup>6</sup> Reform theology holds to three “overarching” covenants: redemption, works and grace. When the covenant of grace is unpacked, it contains five administrations.

<sup>7</sup> “Faith” (see Genesis 15:6) is necessary to connect us to the benefits of these covenants but that is also a gift of grace; e.g., Ephesians 2:8.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Horton, *God of Promise* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House; 2006), 31.

<sup>9</sup> This is important: they aren’t the basis for the covenant—the basis is grace. They are simply the means to maximize the relationship and hedges against its harm.

<sup>10</sup> This covenant is variously called, the covenant of works (condition); of life (promise); of nature (written on Adam’s heart; implicit in being made in God’s image).

In these types of covenants, the Lord graciously acts to provide for His people and *then* He provides specific instructions—law—on how to enjoy what He’s done.

Keep in mind, everyone subject to these covenants had the moral law already; but for their specific contexts, God gave them **more**.

## 2. Specific covenants in their contexts

### a. Covenant of Redemption (the “counsel of peace” Zech. 6:13)

Explanation: the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity would come as Mediator, Christ the elect of God (Isa. 42:1) to provide salvation to the people of God. This is an “intra-Trinitarian counsel” that was the basis of Christ’s mission.<sup>11</sup>

Texts: John 3:17; 10:36; 5:20-30

Intent: the Substitute would save a specific, elected people (6:37-39; 10:27-29) from the just penalty of our sins by living perfectly lawfully and by laying down His life as propitiation; this effort was what the OT saints looked forward to and believed in as it is what NT saints look back upon and depend on.

### b. Covenant of Works

Explanation: created as image-bearers of the just and true God, God, the Suzerain required the vassals, Adam and Eve, by obedience to live consistently with their nature, that is, holiness, goodness and truth (just as the natural law in their hearts dictated).<sup>12</sup>

God saw fit to create a test of their love, lawfulness and loyalty by creating and placing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in their midst and forbidding them to eat of it. “Do this and you will live” was the principle (Lev. 18:5; Deut. 27:29; Gal. 3:12). By His mysterious providence He also placed an accelerant in the garden in the form of a snake.

“God loves to try the obedience of the best of His creatures, to give them matter and occasion to exercise the graces that He has given them” (William Strong, RST, vol.1, 273).

Text: Genesis 2:15-17; Hosea 6:6-7; Isaiah 24:5-6; Romans 5:12-19

Intent: Had Adam rebuffed the tempter and turned away from it, his obedience would’ve earned him eternal reward: he would enter into the eternal rest in which God had entered after He created in six days (Gen. 2:1-3). In doing so, he would also take all of humanity to our eternal rest.

### c. Covenant of Grace

There is one covenant of grace comprehended in the covenant of redemption revealed by God and unfolding in creation.<sup>13</sup> This covenant is “unrolled” in historic administrations, that is, over time.

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<sup>11</sup> Beeke, RST, vol. 1, 586.

<sup>12</sup> See WCF 4.2.

<sup>13</sup> “The covenant of grace is God’s one plan of salvation whereby he effectively redeemed all His elect by the work of Christ.” Harrison Perkins, *Reformed Covenant Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic; 2024), 187; 188.

As the following section from WCF chapter 7 will demonstrate, disobedience to the covenant of works inaugurated the covenant of grace.<sup>14</sup> It was God's intent through the covenant of redemption to save His people and now that Adam had rejected his opportunity, the unfolding of God meeting His own demands began.

1. The "Proto-euangelion"

Explanation: the announcement (not a covenant *per se*) of the gospel and the working of God's grace to undo the sin of Adam: a seed of the woman who will crush the serpent.

Text: Genesis 3:15

Intent: to begin the revelation of God's saving grace

2. Noahic

Explanation: this is a non-redemptive, non-legal royal grant covenant of the Lord where He promises never to wipe away the inhabitants of the world because of our sin and, indeed, guarantees the natural processes of life until the second coming of Christ.

Text: Genesis 8:20-9:7

Intent: to preserve creation for the revealing of God's redemptive purposes through the Messiah

3. Abrahamic

Explanation: Abraham is chosen by God to be the father of many nations through God's covenant with him. This covenant is a redemptive, royal grant covenant that only required Abraham to believe (Gen. 15:6) to enjoy its benefit. Through this covenant, God promised offspring, land and blessing. This covenant was the first to explicitly use signs and seals to demonstrate and ratify.

Text: Genesis 12:2-3; 15:5-21; 17:4-8, 19-21

Intent: Through Abraham, the promised line of Seth would grow into a nation from which Moses, David and the Messiah would come.

4. Mosaic

Explanation: the Lord increased the family of Abraham as He promised (Gen. 5:5) into a nation living under bondage in Egypt. The Lord chose Moses to deliver the nation into the land He promised Abraham (Gen. 12:6) which Moses did. The Lord met with the nation at Mt. Sinai and entered into a suzerain-vassal covenant with them promising them blessings upon their obedience and discipline in disobedience.

Text: Exodus 20-24

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<sup>14</sup> As the NT bears out, the covenant of works and its requirement for perfect obedience as the condition for fellowship with God endured. Indeed, the fact of the covenant of grace proves the point. So also does Paul in Romans 5 as he lays out the case for the work of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam, Jesus Christ.

Intent: Through agreement captured in “All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do” (24:3; cf. 19:8), the people enjoyed the Lord as God (by God’s gracious gathering of them in covenant) and His continued blessing (by obedience).

5. Davidic

Explanation: After the “Judges” years post-Promised Land occupation, in disobedience the nation asked for a visible king like the surrounding nations (1 Sam. 8:5-9). The Lord eventually appointed David as King covenanting with him that there will always be a king over the people of God (royal grant).<sup>15</sup>

Text: 2 Samuel 7:13-16

Intent: In order to govern the people in God’s place as well as set the conditions for the eternal King, Jesus, the Lord posted kings in Israel.

6. New

Explanation: In the context of the failing Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace, the Lord’s prophets predicted the coming of the Messiah, the final Prophet, Priest and King about whom all previous covenants pointed and types disclosed. This royal-grant covenant would be with all the elect of all nations (Acts 4:12).

Text: Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 36.

Intent: as the culmination of God’s biblical covenants with His people, He promised the Archetype would come to finally deliver spiritual Israel unto their eternal promised land.

**Covenants: theologically: WCF 7.1-6**

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward but by some voluntary condescension on God’s part, which he has been pleased to express by way of covenant.<sup>a</sup>

1 Sam 2:25; Job 9:32-33; 22:2-3; 35:7-8; Psa 100:2-3; 113:5-6; Isa 40:13-17; Luke 17:10; Acts 17:24-25.

**Notes.**

We owe God obedience because we are created in covenant with Him. This obedience is to the moral or natural law He implanted in us. However, natural law only tells us God exists and that we owe Him (cf. Romans 1:18ff). God had to condescend to us and reveal more of Himself so we can know His blessedness. This blessedness is the reward for covenantal obedience.

2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works,<sup>a</sup> wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity,<sup>b</sup> upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.<sup>c</sup>

a. Gal 3:12. • b. Rom 5:12-20; 10:5. • c. Gen 2:17; Gal 3:10.

**Notes.**

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<sup>15</sup> Horton, *God of Promise*, 57.

God graciously entered into a “covenant of works” with man at creation (a suzerain-vassal type). This was a covenant that Adam and Eve had the constitution and power to obey since they were created innocent of sin.

Adam was our “federal” head such that our destinies were contained in his choices (Romans 5:12). Had he chosen to obey the Lord rather than turn away, what he earned would be passed to his wife and through them to all who would descend from them.

This is the action of federal headship that the redeemed enjoy in Jesus Christ, our federal Head (Romans 5:2, 10, 15).

3. Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second,<sup>a</sup> commonly called the covenant of grace: wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved,<sup>b</sup> and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.<sup>c</sup>

a. Gen 3:15; Isa 42:6; Rom 3:20-21; 8:3; Gal 3:21. • b. Mark 16:15-16; John 3:16; Rom 10:6, 9; Gal 3:11. • c. Ezek 36:26-27; John 6:44-45.

#### Notes.

While in man’s innocence, the covenant of works was within his grasp, after the Fall, he was now inherently unable to obey its stipulations. He disobeyed the Suzerain and was given the consequences as a result: spiritual exile.

The covenant of works remains the “governing” covenant of relations between men and God. The requirements of it must be met or there can be no fellowship with God. Due to this, the Lord made a way in a second covenant, the “covenant of grace” (a royal grant type) where all that was required is to receive the Surety (our substitute guarantor) in our place.

Covered by the Surety’s perfect work who met the conditions of the covenant of works, all in the covenant of grace attain to the blessed reward of the covenant of works: eternal fellowship with the Father and the Son through the Spirit. Our inability to obey the covenant of works is replaced with our Spirit-driven reception of the covenant of grace.

4. This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in the Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.<sup>a</sup>

Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 7:22; 9:15-17.

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

a. 2 Cor 3:6-9. • b. Rom 4:11; Col 2:11-12; 1 Cor 5:7; Hebrews 8-10 throughout. • c. John 8:56; 1 Cor 10:1-4; Heb 11:13. • d. Gal 3:7-9, 14.

## Notes.

This is a very important paragraph. In Reform theology, we believe all the subsequent covenants (of both types) were administrations of the “covenant of grace.” That is, God was working salvation in His people by His own initiative. Salvation has always been by grace through faith and yet the forms of its administration advanced through history.

Under Moses (“law” above), the administration of this grace this happened by the all the forms that prefigured the work of Christ. Importantly, these forms didn’t create the covenant; God created the covenant by His grace. In these forms, the Lord was giving His people sustaining grace (they were the “means” of God giving grace in that era).

Indeed, with each movement of the covenant of grace through time, more of Christ (the substance of the covenant) was depicted:

- a. With Noah, Christ’s kingly sovereignty over creation was displayed.
  - b. With Abraham / Melchizedek, Christ’s priestly work was illustrated (Gen. 14).
  - c. With Moses, Christ’s prophetic role was exemplified (Deut. 18).
  - d. With David, Christ’s kingship over His people was declared (2 Sam. 7).
  - e. In the New Covenant, His three-fold mediatorship as Prophet, Priest and King was revealed.<sup>16</sup>
6. Under the gospel, when Christ the substance<sup>a</sup> was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper;<sup>b</sup> which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them it is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy,<sup>c</sup> to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles;<sup>d</sup> and is called the New Testament.<sup>e</sup> There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.<sup>f</sup>

a. Col 2:17. • b. Mat 28:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-25. • c. Jer 31:33-34; Heb 12:22-28. • d. Mat 28:19; Eph 2:15-19. • e. Luke 22:20. • f. Psa 32:1 with Rom 4:3; Acts 15:11; Rom 3:21-23, 30; 4:6, 16-17, 23-24; Gal 3:14, 16; Heb 13:8.

## Notes.

The era of Moses (the “law”) was a foreshadow of the final era of the Messiah (the “gospel”). In the era of Moses, the forms contained the “substance” of Christ (they were real types) yet in the NT the substance to which the types pointed came.

Now, the means of sustaining grace have changed yet the grace they provide is of the same nature as before. Remember: covenant benefits came to those who put their faith in the Messiah as that covenantal era revealed Him—the forms sustained the faith.

The continuity of grace is why paragraph six reads, “There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance but one and the same under various dispensations.”

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, WLC Q’s 36-45.

## Some implications of covenant theology on church life: Ephesians 3:9-11

*[Paul preached] to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,*

1. The Unity of God's people<sup>17</sup>
  - a. The people of God have always been recipients of the covenant of grace in its various administrations. We have been brought into each covenant in the same way: God's free grace received by Spirit-wrought faith in the believer.

“However unchangeable the covenant of grace is in its essence, it changes in its form, and takes several shapes in the several dispensations” (Bavinck in Perkins, 388).
  - b. We have always been “one house” (Hebrews 3:1-6; 1 Cor. 10) even as that house grew in size and complexity from Seth through Abraham to Moses to the remnant in Israel to the church. Moses built faithfully (Num. 12:7-8) but typologically; Christ the substance, to whom Moses pointed, fulfilled Moses' work in making one house in His name.<sup>18</sup>
  - c. The people of God have always had one Mediator even as He was pictured in the types, esp. Moses; then He was *incarnandus* (to be incarnate) in the OC; now, in the NC He is *incarnatus* (incarnate).

“So, the Lord, who has called us from every place through apostles, is the same who called those who were of old through prophets, as is clear from the Lord's words, and the prophets were not from one Lord but the apostles from another even though they preached to different people” (Irenaeus in Perkins, 391).
2. Structure of God's people
  - a. God's people are united through the ages in the covenant of grace: Jude 1:5.
  - b. God's people are united through the ages in God's intention for His people: Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:4-8; Deut. 7:6, 10:15; Exod. 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9
  - c. God's people are similarly instructed and warned in each administration of the covenant of grace: e.g., 1 Corinthians 10:1-6
3. Worship of God's people
  - a. Each covenant has had signs and seals that have been means of God giving grace: tree of life to Adam; rainbow to Noah; circumcision to Abraham and later, Moses; Passover to Israel; baptism and the Supper to the church.

“The sacraments in every covenant embody the spiritual reality of God's promises by using an earthly means to convey those promises tangibly to embodied creatures, so also they mark the community who belong to God with physical signs” (396).

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<sup>17</sup> I am adapting categories from Perkins, *Reformed Covenant Theology*, 388-413.

<sup>18</sup> See also Ephesians 2:11-15; Romans 11:11-24; Matthew 22:1-14; Gal. 3:7-9.

- b. The sacraments structure God's people: only His people have had them and His people have always had them. The sacramental "circle" has always been drawn around those in covenant with the Lord, that is, in families:

Acts 2:38-39 // Genesis 17:7 (see also Gen. 12:3, "in [Abraham] all the families of the earth shall be blessed" // Galatians 3:8)

In sacramental terms, they have not defined each individual's experience of the covenant (though that's true) as much as pointed to the communal nature of the covenant. The people of God have always been sacramentally identified: circumcised (then baptized) while sustained by Passover (then the Lord's Supper).

- c. The Lord has always stipulated the means of the worship of His people. Overcoming our ignorance with His law, the people of God used forms that were appropriate in their covenantal era, e.g., pre-incarnation era used types that pictured the incarnation era: circumcision and the Passover; post-incarnation era uses forms grown from Christ's ministry: baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- d. The promises of the new covenant *intensify* the Abrahamic promises, that is, take them from type and shadow to substance and reality: land > all the earth > heaven; Abraham's offspring > all the nations.

Isaiah 59:20-21 > Romans 11:26-27, Matt. 19:13-15

Isaiah 54:13 // Jeremiah 32:38-39 // Isaiah 65:23 > Acts 2:38-39; Eph. 6:1-4

## Very Short Excursus on Biblical Law

- a. **#1:** The “moral law” is the true understanding of right and wrong that God gave to Adam and Eve when He made them—the one rule God gave them was a simple unpacking of it.
  1. When they broke that one rule—thereby breaking the Moral Law—the guilt of this is what all mankind is now born under—it is from what we need to be delivered so the moral law is what Jesus kept by His perfect life—we tap into this by faith.
  2. At the same time, like the laws of our country remain even when people break them, the moral law is *still* part of our created make up—all mankind knows it and (as we’ve said before) it is what all men are bound to live by (Paul is clear on this in Romans 1-2).
- b. **#2:** The “Mosaic law” was the civil, ceremonial and moral framework God gave to ancient Israel to govern and guide them as God’s first people.
  1. This was the moral law written down and expanded to include civil and ceremonial precepts for Israel as God’s first nation.

With the additional 613 laws in the whole code, it gave Israel a more detailed answered to, “What does it mean to love God?” and “What does it mean to love each other?”
  2. This law-code was given to Israel **after** the Lord saved them out of their bondage and covenanted with them. It *wasn’t* the means by which people were saved from their sins—that was and is by faith alone. Instead, the law was how they lived as God’s nation.
  3. When Christ came to fulfill the moral law and later when the nation was dissolved in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed it, the remaining civil and ceremonial laws were also abolished.
  4. Like the enduring moral law, the Mosaic code *still* provides guidance on the character of God the Law-giver and many general principles on how to live in the church.
- c. **#3:** The rules of the NT—every place the NT commands us to *do* this and *not* do that—are *also* expansions and details of the moral law that are appropriate and specific to the new covenant, church era.
  1. The apostle Peter says the **church** is now God’s chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, a people for His own possession—not ancient Israel. But:
    - a. Like Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt by God’s saving grace, the church has been delivered out of our enslavement to sin by God’s saving grace.
    - b. Like Israel was given the Law to enjoy their status as free people, so, the church is given the rules of the NT—the “law” as we can call it—to guide us in enjoying our status as those set free from our bondage to sin.
  2. The new covenant in Christ is the *last* covenant and so the church age is the last age before the return of Christ.

- a. So in addition to the rules of the NT, we have the benefit of knowing the Lord as He revealed Himself in every previous covenant—and in all those laws.
- b. So, even though the NT is the church's specific covenant guide—unpacking the moral law so that we can live as God's spiritual royal nation—we must also look to the rest of the Bible in order to know God and know how to live with Him.