

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

B1121 – May 29, 2011

Appendix: Covenant Theology

We're going through an appendix at this juncture of the Framework. We've come through the Ascent and Session of Christ and now we come to Pentecost. It's at this point that there's a split in evangelical circles over Israel and the Church and so we at least want to understand what the differences boil down to. Today we want to address the side of the split known as Covenant Theology and next week we'll look at the other side known as Dispensational Theology. If you want to go further into this than I take you, probably the best little book on this is by Renald Showers, called *There Really is a Difference*.

In the early 1500's you have the Reformation. That was a movement to get back to the Scriptures as the sole authority. Out of that came several movements - you had Lutherans, you had Reformed and you had Anabaptist. The strand that became dominant was Reformed and the mainstream of Reformed thought was Calvinism. Calvinism is described by what we went through last week TULIP, 1618-1619. T for Total Depravity, U for Unconditional Election, L, Limited Atonement, I, Irresistible Grace and P, Perseverance of the Saints. It was later more elaborately defined in the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1648. And out of Calvinism later on there grew Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism. Don't get the idea that Dispensationalism arose outside of Calvinism, it didn't. The early dispensationalists were Calvinists. So it's false, it's just a factually false assertion that Dispensationalism arose in opposition to the Reformation or Reformed thought. The proper way to view it is that Dispensationalism is the later thinking of Calvinists going back and continuing what the original Reformers didn't have time to do. Originally the issue was salvation. That was central to the Reformation, that and the authority of Scripture. But there are lots of other areas of doctrine. There's Pneumatology or the Holy Spirit,

the Reformers didn't do too much with Pneumatology. There's eschatology or prophecy, they didn't touch that much. They picked up the Roman Catholic eschatology, amillennialism and carried it over. Later Calvinists picked up these areas and worked them out, that's how Dispensationalism got started. John Nelson Darby, who is often credited with systematizing Dispensationalism in the 1830's was a thoroughgoing Calvinist, debated it in Calvin's hometown of Geneva and they gave him an award for doing it so well!

So far as Calvinism is concerned we have gone through the TULIP acrostic, showing you that each one of those has an element of truth in it and we can agree, heartily and scripturally, with much of what's in each of those acrostics. It's just that they all have a twist to them, and that twist makes it very difficult to defend the Reformed ideas when you get into the text of the Scripture. We concluded last time with "P: Perseverance of the Saints." I want to go over that again because it's going to catch up with us again in this section. It can be taken a couple of ways but the way that most modern Reformed teaching takes it is that *the elect will persevere in obedient faith without serious lapses from which they fail to recover before their death*. So it's sort of this ever upward trend. The issue here is how you think about faith. There are two ways of viewing faith. One way is called Lordship and they're evangelicals, Bible-teaching people, and they are saying that there are various kinds of faith, true faith, false faith, temporary faith, etc...so in this view you're always contemplating which kind of faith do I have? Do I have the right kind of faith? So the only thing you have to look at is works. It comes down to a fruit inspection to determine if you have the right kind of faith, the saving kind. Therefore the basis of assurance in Lordship has to do with the works that follow; do I have the right kind of works, the fruits of faith? The other view of faith is called Free Grace today and they're also evangelicals, teach the Bible and they are saying there's just faith, either you have it or you don't. The issue is not various kinds of faith, faith is faith. Let's get real here for a minute, there are not different kinds of faith and I contemplate whether I have the right kind, the issue is the object of faith, am I contemplating the right object of faith, am I contemplating Jesus Christ, the Christ of Scripture? That gets into the reason why we're building this framework, we're trying to work our way through the OT revelation up to Christ so we understand who He is and what He did. So the Free Grace view is saying who is Jesus Christ and what did He do, not what kind of faith do I

have. And in this view I can have assurance immediately; faith is assurance, those are the two views.

This controversy over faith goes back to the days immediately following the Protestant Reformation because Roman Catholicism attacked the Protestants. They set up the Jesuits to go in and get Calvin and Luther because they said you're justified by faith and that is your assurance. The Jesuits responded by saying that idea of justification by faith will lead to loose living. I'm sure you've never heard that one before. The Jesuits said you can't tell people they're saved. If you tell people they're saved then you've removed the incentive for living a godly life. So in order for people to live godly lives, you've got to terrorize them a bit by not giving them assurance. You've got to kind of brow beat them a little bit and not let them get their hands all the way in the cookie jar, because if they do, they'll be spoiled and they won't live a godly life; they've got to live in fear of God's wrath. I think those of you who perhaps have Roman Catholic friends or you've come out of a Roman Catholic background know what I'm talking about. There's no assurance. No priest can tell you in Roman Catholicism that he is saved, the Pope can't tell you he's saved. That's part and parcel of why the Reformation. That was what drove Martin Luther to Romans and that's what Luther discovered; I know I can be justified today, faith is assurance.

So you have the early Reformers saying that faith equals and is identical to assurance. Here's an unbeliever, now the person has faith and is a Christian. At this point you have assurance; you have assurance because the Bible says "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." "Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes has eternal life and has passed out of death into life." "There is therefore no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus." That's the assurance.

On the other side the view is more like this. The person believes, or so they think, they live the Christian life, they think they have new life, then they're out living their life and they're doing fruit inspections to check to see if they had the right kind of faith to begin with or not. Therefore the assurance in their view is contingent upon good works. Can anybody think of a comment Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount that might refute the idea of detecting true faith by good works? What does He say will happen in the last days? In the last days many will say Lord, Lord, did we not... what does it

say that they'll say, "did we not do prophesy, did we not cast out demons," all good works, right. So there are people who do good works but apparently they were not an evidence of true faith. If that's the case then good works can't verify true faith and they can't give assurance of eternal life. And surely the Bible doesn't leave things so up in the air as this.

People who are in this camp will often say things like well, we do have James 2, "faith without works is dead." But that presupposes that the issue that James is dealing with is faith at salvation and not faith later on in the Christian life. That presupposes that the epistle was written to a mixed group, believers and unbelievers, and James is just warning them, see if you're in the faith... you better go check to see if you're in the faith! The problem with that interpretation is that James, right in chapter 1, unambiguously calls them "brethren," who have the word of God implanted in them, who are first fruits of His creatures! So James is being addressed to believers and if you look up the word "salvation" there it's talking about trials in the Christian life, being saved from the dangers of sin in the Christian life. So that argument doesn't quite sail! I think enough said. There are the two views and the modern Reformed people will tend toward the Lordship view, and by the way, some Dispensationalists will too. The other view is the earlier Reformed view, Luther and Calvin, it's the Free Grace view and most people who are pretty careful exegetes of the text will hold to this view.

Now we want to go on to something else that grew out of Reformation theology. That's the idea of Covenant Theology. You say that sounds good; that's biblical, the covenants of Scripture, they're naming themselves around the biblical covenants. That's not exactly what they're talking about. So we want to understand what they are talking about. These people are evangelical, so if you follow me I'll explain what they mean and what Covenant Theology is all about.

The Central Organizing Principle of the Covenant. Here's the idea. Remember the covenants in the Bible. What was the first one we covered? The Noachic Covenant. Who were the parties to the Noachic Covenant? Was it saved people only? No, it was man and animals, all men actually, saved and non-saved are in that covenant. Remember, I make a covenant with all men and all living things that have the breath of life. Go to the next covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant. Who was that made with? Abraham and his

descendants. Next covenant in Biblical history; after the Abrahamic, at the Exodus, what happened out in the desert? The Sinaitic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant. Who were the parties in the Mosaic Covenant? The nation of Israel and the Twelve Tribes. What was the next covenant after the Mosaic Covenant? Then you have the Land Covenant. Who are the parties? God and Israel. Then you have the Davidic Covenant. Who's that with? David and his descendants. Then there's one other covenant in the OT that we looked at in Jeremiah, the so-called New Covenant. Who was the party to whom the New Covenant was made? Israel. Was the Church around in Jeremiah's day? No, Israel was the contracting party. All those are Biblical covenants, they have specific parties outlined in the terms of the contract, and we went through them, they all have a covenant structure, they're legal literature. You may have wondered why I went through those four parts of a covenant over and over and over. Now we get to the payoff.

Here's what happened. The Reformers noticed in Scripture that there are covenants; God is a covenant-keeping God. So they thought to themselves, well gee, we could generalize all these covenants, we could inductively create a generic covenant above all the covenants. In other words, kind of like a common denominator of all those covenants, and that would be a wonderful tool to express God's relationship with man and how God always works, He works through a covenant; He saves through a covenant. So they devised three covenants, two of which are important for us today, and the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, the New, etc...these are all just outworkings of these two covenants we'll look at today.

The two covenants they believed in are a covenant of works and a covenant of grace. Now neither of these covenants are explicitly stated in Scripture. Note that right off the bat. These are inductions, theological structures that have been induced from speculating about how God works. The covenant of works was this: God promised eternal life to Adam and Eve if they would perfectly obey Him. That's the covenant of works. But Adam and Eve didn't perfectly obey Him; they violated the covenant of works. So God came out with a covenant of grace, and the covenant of grace says I will save you, Adam, I will save you and all the elect progeny. So there's the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The main one we're interested in is the covenant of grace.

But let's make a distinction here between the covenants people are talking about. On one hand you have the biblical covenants, those are the covenants we have talked about: the Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the New Covenant, etc... Then you have the theological covenants, these are the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Grace, not in the Bible but supposedly behind and underneath the biblical covenants and so the biblical ones they claim are just outworkings of this Covenant of Grace that controls. So we have these two kinds of covenants being talked about. The problem with building these theological covenants in the substructure is that, while it seems nice and tidy there is a problem.

Ultimate Purpose of History is Soteriological. "Reformed theology soon began to be identified as 'covenant theology' because it organized its doctrine using the concept of a covenant. Since the Bible expressed salvation through covenants, this form seemed to later Reformers like God's archetypal" i.e., behind the scenes, generalized, "soteriological," that is saving "structure for managing all redemption." Very important sentence, it's the behind the scenes saving structure for managing all redemption. In other words, what is central to all of God's workings, expressed in these covenants is the salvation of the elect; everything is geared to realizing the salvation of the elect. If there's one central concern of history, from the standpoint of Covenant Theology, it's salvation, salvation is the ultimate goal of God in history. So its center is salvation. That's very important to realize because Dispensational Theology disagrees with this assertion that salvation is the central purpose of God. Dispensationalism says no, it's *a* purpose but it's not the central one, the central purpose is something bigger than salvation, it's the glorification of God. History has a doxological purpose at the center and salvation is secondary to that.

Notice, I'm not saying salvation is unimportant, I'm just saying that it's not the ultimate aim of history. But if you look at the next quote you'll see how it became the central aim of Covenant Theology, "It [the covenant of grace] is a hypothesized contract between God and the elect to completely redeem them." Notice the emphasis? Redemption of man. But wait a minute, who are the parties in the Noahic Covenant? They were animals and men; are animals going to be elect? No, so see it doesn't quite fit the Biblical material here, it's an abstraction and a generalization from the Biblical material, but

can't be identified with a particular Biblical covenant. Its objective basis is the atonement of Christ. Its subjective requirement is belief on the Son which results from irresistible grace. Remember, regeneration precedes faith in their system. It implies a unity of content amidst all the biblical covenants. And it guarantees and applies all the blessings God has ordained for His elect. Logically, it is developed primarily from NT terminology which is seen to be the final interpretation of earlier OT texts." There's a lot in that and we'll cover some of it.

Here is what this does to the study of Scripture. Think how this works. First we have the covenant of grace idea that is a generalized abstraction, the content of which defines the goal of history as soteriological and now logically this leads to a way of interpreting Scripture. So now we're going to look at the Effects of the Covenant Structure Upon Biblical Interpretation. This covenant structure with its salvific orientation has a number of important effects upon how Reformed adherents must interpret Scripture. The primary effect" here's number one "occurs in minimizing the differences among the biblical covenants in order to emphasize the one Covenant of Grace that allegedly underlies them. Since the Covenant of Grace always involves the elect and only the elect and always centers upon eternal salvation, texts that speak of temporal historical details that concern both believers and unbelievers tend to be neglected. Whatever the biblical covenants say in the details, must always be interpreted in the light of eternal redemption, which means it gets washed out, it gets generalized. They don't pay attention to the specific terms of the biblical covenants. They all just mean salvation is by grace through faith...

"Thus by emphasizing this one underlying covenant" here's the end result of this kind of thinking, "by emphasizing this one underlying covenant with the elect, the people of God were conceived of as a homogeneous group." One people of God. The idea of Jewish saints, Gentile saints and Church saints, that three-fold difference in the Scripture is downplayed for the sake of holding on to the elect, this homogenous body of the elect because of this abstract covenant of grace made with the elect. They're not looking at a contract made with Israel or how the Church becomes partakers of spiritual blessings or any of that. They're looking at one homogeneous group of elect people. Do you see how this plays out? That's a major point.

“Reformed theologians insist that there can be only ‘one people of God.’ Distinctions among God’s working with the Gentile nations, Israel, and the Church are suppressed. ‘Replacement theology’ results whereby the Church replaces Israel chronologically in God’s plan.” See how easily anti-Semitism gets started here? Watch, it’s a slippery slope, “With the crucifixion of Christ Israel’s role in history is finished in the perspective of covenant theology. Terminology in the Abrahamic and other biblical covenants regarding Israel, the land, the Temple, and a theocratic political reign from Jerusalem is usually reinterpreted in ‘spiritual terms’ that understand the ‘deeper meaning’ to refer to the Church through Christ, the ultimate heir of the covenantal promises.”

I’ll give you an example. Ever read the book of Ezekiel? It’s not a favorite devotional, but if you read Ezekiel there’s some weird stuff going on. There is going to be a mountain in the latter days in Jerusalem and there’s going to be a Temple, the dimensions of the Temple are given in the book of Ezekiel. It talks about water coming out on the top of the hill, running down to the Dead Sea, another one running out to the Mediterranean. It hasn’t happened, so how, if you’re a Covenant person, do you interpret that one? Oh, that’s the Church; the high mountain, that’s everybody’s looking up to the Church. What do you do with the detailed dimensions of the Temple in the text? Oh, that’s symbolic, we don’t take that literally, we just get the big idea, and it’s the temple of God in Christ, the Church. See what they’re doing with the text?

So if “the elect are conceived of as one homogeneous group,” then another thing quickly follows, “Israel’s role in history is finished.” And if Israel is finished then we can’t interpret the book of Ezekiel literally any more, and we can’t interpret the Davidic Covenant as literal any more, we’ve got to spiritualize it. What does the interpreter now have to do to the OT text? He has to correct it. Here’s what they say, this is not Jeremy Thomas trying to beat these people over the head; this is what they’re saying. Here’s a paper written for the Westminster Theological Journal. “The Reformed exegete approaches the [OT] prophets from the perspective of the unity of the covenant.’ He clearly says that the NT ‘sets aside’ and ‘corrects’” and notice I have quotes around it; I’m quoting the man, “‘sets aside’ and ‘corrects’ literal interpretation of OT prophets.”

So now we've got a situation where because we can't seem to get the NT text to agree to the OT text, now we're going to force the OT into conformity with the NT text, because we've got to have everything fulfilled in the NT. When it's not future, it's already fulfilled. When it doesn't seem to fit the NT change the meaning of the OT lexicon. So it's tampering with the lexicon of the OT that's going on. This is why you often hear it said that dispensationalists are literal interpreters. Yes we are, and for good reason, because we feel very, very uncomfortable giving up the meaning of the OT lexicon, for no apparent reason other than this satisfying the ideas of this abstract covenant of grace.

Now here's the practical effect; you say well so far it's all theory. Watch this, "By downplaying differences in the various programs of God throughout history, covenant theology must attribute to OT saints an advanced understanding of the gospel that rivals that of NT saints." Take Abraham as an example: they'd say Abraham believed in the Lord Jesus Christ like we do. Well, I'm sorry, he believed on what he knew of the promise of God in his era two millennia before Jesus, but if you asked Abraham, hey, did you believe in Jesus Christ he wouldn't know who you were talking about. So the Covenant guys are saying to keep everything together in this one people. The way we do that is we read back the NT into the OT so we can say Abraham believed in Jesus.

What happens when you start doing that is this, watch what happens when you get the ball moving in that direction. What events have we just covered? The cross, the resurrection, the ascent, the session, next comes what? Pentecost, the Church. So if we start reading everything in the NT back into the OT then what happens to the uniquenesses of the Church Age? What happens if we read back the Church into OT Israel? Well now we don't have any uniquenesses of the Church. We don't have anything that they didn't have. What do you do with the differences in the way the Holy Spirit operated among Israel as He does in the Church? They're not the same. Things are different and I'm not comfortable erasing these differences. So let me point out some more practical differences between living a life unto God in the OT versus living a life unto God in the NT. There are differences.

"So, for example, if an OT exhortation says 'bring a sacrifice into the Temple', the meaning in this view, is that there is a clear consciousness of Messiah as the coming Lamb of God. The progress of revelation through history in

biblical revelation is not fully appreciated. Biblical texts are interpreted theologically rather than placed in their historical context. This method of interpretation finds itself unable to distinguish between the features of an OT saint's walk with God and a NT saint's walk with Him. Features unique to the Church age are left unappreciated." That's the practical effect of what's going on here.

"Another effect of covenant theology upon biblical interpretation is how NT passages quote the OT." Now this is a hot topic, so I want to spend just a little time as we conclude. Turn to Acts 2 and see an example of this. The issue that we're now looking at is fulfillment formulas. When the NT says X fulfills Y, in other words, X being some NT event is said to fulfill Y which is said to be an OT promise. What are the NT authors doing when they do this? What's their understanding of what they're doing? In Acts 2:14, when Pentecost happened, "But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them:" now Peter is going to give an interpretation of the tongues incident here. Verse 15, "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day, ¹⁶but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷And it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸Even upon my bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will grant wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. ²⁰The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come, ²¹and it shall be, that every one who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The Covenant Theologian says Peter is saying that that passage in Joel 2 was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, so X would be Pentecost, in this case, and Y would be the prophecy of Joel 2. The problem with this is that if you read the context of Joel, it's addressed to the nation Israel, not the Church; it speaks of geological and astrophysical catastrophes not tongues, and it says this is going to happen prior to the kingdom of God and the end of history. The Reformed person interprets; every time the NT mentions a kind of fulfillment formula that, yep, that's it, X fulfills Y, that's the real meaning of that OT passage. So they attribute a meaning to the OT passage that for goodness sake, if all we had was Joel we would have never guessed. But hey,

that's it, Joel is fulfilled, it's past, we should not look forward to a future fulfillment. It was fulfilled at Pentecost and that's it. Now what happens to the Second Coming of Christ? Joel's talking about the Second Coming of the Messiah. Did that happen too? I'll show you what some of them do.

“If a passage from the OT prophet Joel, for example, is said in the NT to be ‘fulfilled’ on the day of Pentecost, that must mean that Pentecost fulfills the whole complex of Second Advent prophecy in Joel. OT textual details of geophysical catastrophism must be reinterpreted metaphorically.” Here we go again, if we can't get the OT to be literally fulfilled in the NT we're going have to change the OT lexicon until we make it fulfilled and we call that metaphor. “Recent developments in Reformed theology, in fact, have taken this tendency to its logical conclusion: men such as Max King and David Chilton claim there will be no physical Second Advent of Christ. It already happened, presumably in AD 70 when Jerusalem fell. Other more moderate Reformed theologians such as R. C. Sproul and Kenneth L. Gentry save the future advent but strip away most of OT prophecy (and the book of Revelation) saying it has already been fulfilled. This position is known as ‘preterism’ and is becoming popular” in evangelical circles.

So it's not like preterism just burst forth on the scene, it's the result of thinking this way. You say well it looks like to me what Peter says, he says “this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel.” Hold your horses, we'd better be careful at this point. Turn to Matt 2, the Christmas story. We'd better be clear on how the NT authors use these fulfillment formulas. We're still looking at fulfillment formulas, X fulfills Y. Remember that Jesus was born and the wise men came to Jerusalem looking for the king of the Jews, Herod found out he was to be born in Bethlehem. Herod has a problem, he doesn't like his rule being threatened so he wants to eliminate this Jewish king so what does he do? Genocide, every baby two years and younger... can you imagine this happening? Mothers, think of it, a Roman soldier comes into your house, takes your kid and chops his head off right in front of you. How do you like that? That's the cruelty that's going on here; that was genocide. If you haven't had kids you don't know what a shock that would be to you, to see that happen in front of your face. That's the cruelty of the Herod family, they were always doing some stupid thing like that.

In Matt 2 we have a prophecy, apparently fulfilled. In verse 16, the genocide passage, the babies are getting killed, he “slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under,” I wonder how many that was. Verse 17, watch it, “Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying,” ooh, here comes the fulfillment, there’s that verb “fulfilled,” and if you look in a study Bible you’ll see it’s a citation of Jer 31:15. “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more.” The problem is what was going on in Jer 31? Remember the Exile, and what was happening in the town of Ramah? It was a *rondeveau* point for all the people that were being taken out of the land, going all the way over into the Tigris-Euphrates River valley to be settled in the Assyrian-Babylonian area. These are prisoners of war, hundreds and hundreds of men, young women, and young men particularly, the old people they didn’t care about, they didn’t want to worry about nursing homes. They’d take the people that they knew could work. This is Daniel and his crowd. So here they go, marching through this village. The picture is these women weeping as they watched their sons, their husbands, in chains, going into captivity, never to come back; on the road from Jerusalem, passing by, gone forever.

Now let’s think about Rachel in verse 18, why is Rachel mentioned? Rachel wasn’t living then. Well, it turns out Ramah was in an area where the Jewish tribe that descended from Rachel lived, you can study prophets and that’s the way they did. But some observations about that verse that’s quoted in verse 18; this is the X, we’re looking at X. Number one, it doesn’t fit. Jeremiah 31 isn’t even a prophecy, it’s a recitation of history, so there’s nothing to be fulfilled, it’s just a description of an event that happened when the nation was going into Exile, it’s not a prophecy.

Number two, it’s the wrong town, it’s Ramah not Bethlehem. Number three, nobody is getting killed in Jeremiah, people are being forced to walk away alive, that’s why people are crying about it versus being killed in Matt 2. So there are all kinds of differences between Jer and Matt; so making this formula X fulfills Y the way covenant theology does it doesn’t fit what Matthew is doing. Certainly Matthew knew what he was doing, Matthew is not stupid. Matthew knew Jer 31 or he never would have cited it. Why did Matthew cite Jer 31 and say it’s fulfilled? That’s the question the exegete has

to answer and you have to study the text carefully to understand Matthew's use. But you can't ram, cram, and jam our meanings into how the synoptic Gospel writers are writing just to fulfill the terms of the abstract covenant of grace. Well, how did they use these fulfillment formulas? And how are we going to find out? We're going to go back and study passage after passage after passage and study the historical context and find out. And you find out that they use it many ways. One way they use it is to point to analogies, they cite some historical situation, it's not even a prophecy, just history, and later something else happens and they see a pattern, a similarity, an analogy between the two so that they're saying this is a pattern of the thing that happened in OT times, hey, look at that, isn't that neat. Why do they argue by analogy? Because it's the same God who controls history. God has a way of working in history that is identifiable, that sticks out, He repeats the way in which He operates. And you identify the hand of God by seeing these patterns.

You say well that sounds like you're trying to escape the text. No you're not, how do we identify God's work in our lives today? We use analogy don't we? How do you apply a promise made in some situation in the OT? By analogy. Are you in the exact experience of Isaiah when he said "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You?" That was addressed to people going into exile, are we going into exile? Well how then are we going to use that in our own life? How come people quote Isaiah 26:3? Because analogously the situation has parallels. It's not a fulfillment, it has parallels. So this is why, we believe... there are many ways we can go through this, scholars have done this, this is not new with me. You can go through this and it turns out there are several different ways the verb "fulfill" is used, only one of them means fulfillment of a covenant promise, literally. The NT people are not always citing the OT in a mechanical fulfillment type of way. They're not doing that and you can check it out for yourself by just taking a concordance and watching the context.

"So to sum up" the problem here, "Reformed theology utilizing the concept of the covenant of grace wherein God promised to save all the elect, thus history's ultimate purpose is the salvation of the elect and since the elect are one homogenous group there can be only one people of God, there can be no distinction between Israel and the Church, therefore to avoid obvious distinctions covenant theology has developed it's own unique rules of Bible

interpretation. Once this got frozen in the creeds anyone who tries to step outside of this and continue reforming is immediately a problem.

So this is why, next week when we get into the rise of dispensational theology we're going to see that's what Dispensationalism does. It starts with the same principle the Reformers had, *sola Scriptura*, and says now wait a minute, whoa, let's look at the text and let's see if this really means what got thrown into these creeds in the 17th century. Let's re-look at this thing about prophecy, let's study the word *fulfill* and how it's used in the NT. Were the NT authors really looking at this as the final fulfillment or are they simply saying I see an analogy here? Matthew is good at this. Think of the analogy between Jesus and Israel. Can you think of some?

Do you know another case where the word "fulfill" is? After the genocide....by the way, how did Jesus avoid the genocide? Where did His parents take off to? Egypt. Where did they get the money for the trip? The wise men brought it. So the parents got their fare and they got some money for a trip to hide for two years. They go down there, and when Matthew announces that Jesus comes back, he quotes Hosea and he says "And it is fulfilled that out of Egypt I will call My Son." Now the passage in Hosea is not a prophecy either. It's describing the Israelites coming out of Egypt at the Exodus; it's not a prophecy, it's a statement of a historical fact. Well then why does Matthew use "fulfill?" Because he's saying as goes Israel, so goes Jesus, there's an analogy between the nation and the nation's Messiah. How many years was the nation in the desert? Forty. How many days was the nation's Messiah tempted in the desert? Forty. You can pile up one analogy on top of another and Matthew does that over and over. Is that saying there's a fulfillment in the sense of a fulfillment of a particular prophecy? Absolutely not, he's talking about analogies, patterns. They were so conversant with the Scriptures they could see this. All we're saying so far is that once you start down this track of making the covenant of grace the central unifying principle that has effects for how you interpret the Bible, that starts to shape how you have to handle the text to hold on to this abstraction.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2011