



ALL SAINTS
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Covenant Theology Week Four

February 11, 2024

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Introduction to Covenants

- The story of how God has dealt with humanity and creation is all about covenants.
- The study of the various covenants between God and man is covenant theology.
- In the reformed tradition, we use covenants as **a framework to understand the Bible.**

The Plan

- Week One--Part One: Introduction to Divine Covenants, pp. 1-63
- Week Two--The Covenant of Creation, pp. 67-87
- Week Three--Adam: The Covenant of Commencement & Noah: The Covenant of Preservation, pp. 91-126
- Week Four--Abraham: The Covenant of Promise & The Seal of the Abrahamic Covenant, pp. 127-166
- Week Five--Moses: The Covenant of Law & Excursus: What structures scripture—covenants of dispensations, pp. 167-228
- Week Six--David: The Covenant of Kingdom & Christ: The Covenant of Consummation, pp. 229-300

Sources

- For this class, I am largely drawing material from Christ of the Covenants, by TE O. Palmer Robertson.
- This is a now classic text originally published in 1980. It is commonly used as a text in our reformed seminaries.
- I am also supplementing with other material, and all errors are mine.

Today

- Abraham: The Covenant of Promise
- The Seal of the Abrahamic Covenant

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- The one covenant of grace is administered through a series of sub-covenants.
- We looked last week at the Covenant of Commencement with Adam and the Covenant of Preservation with Noah.
- God's plan of redemption comes into further focus and clarity with the Covenant of Promise and Abra(ha)m.

Gen 12:1-4

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² 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.** ³ 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.**”

⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- Note that there is no negotiation.
- Note also that there is nothing in the text or in the preceding verses in Gen. 11:27-31 to indicate that there is anything special about Abraham.
- We do see Abraham's faith exhibited here in 12:4: "So Abram went, as the LORD had told him."

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- Genesis 12 also illustrates for us one of the major themes of the OT and of the whole Bible.
- God chose Israel to be a blessing to the whole world.

Isaiah 42:6-7

“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,

7 to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

“The sovereign aspect of God’s relationship with Abraham was made quite apparent at the time of the patriarch’s initial call. God did not suggest meekly that if Abraham would depart from his fatherland, he would be blessed. Instead, the word of God came in terms of a solemn charge: ‘Get thee out of thy country, and from they kindred. (Gen. 12:1).’” CoTC 127.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- The most significant passage with respect to the Abrahamic covenant is the formal inauguration in Gen. 15.
- Remember our working definition of a divine covenant: “a bond in blood sovereignly administered.”

Gen. 15

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ² But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” ⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” ⁵ And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ⁶ **And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.**

Gen. 15

⁷ And he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” ⁸ But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” ⁹ He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

Gen. 15

¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

Gen. 15

¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- Abraham believes God, but he asks for a more shore sign: ‘how am I to know that I shall possess it?’”
- God answers with formal inauguration of the covenant in an ancient near east form.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

“The Lord graciously assures the patriarch by formal ratification of a covenant-bond. He orders Abraham to present certain animals before him (v. 9). The patriarch needs no further instruction. He knows the procedure well. In accord with the custom of the day, Abraham halves the animals and sets the corresponding pieces over against each other. The birds he slays, but does not divide.” CoTC 128-29.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

“This distinctive treatment of birds finds codification subsequently in biblical legislation (cf. Lev. 1:14-17). It is not that Mosaic legislation has colored the admittedly ancient narrative of Genesis 15; instead, the more ancient pledge-to-death tradition of covenantal inauguration under Abraham has provided the pattern for animal sacrifice under Moses.” CoTC 129 n.2.

Lev. 1:10-17

¹⁰ “If his gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, he shall bring a male without blemish, ¹¹ and he shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. ¹² And he shall cut it into pieces, with its head and its fat, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar, ¹³ but the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer all of it and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

Lev. 1:10-17

14 “If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or pigeons. **15** And the priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head and burn it on the altar. Its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. **16** He shall remove its crop with its contents and cast it beside the altar on the east side, in the place for ashes. **17 He shall tear it open by its wings, but shall not sever it completely.** And the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- God lays out the future for Abraham.
- His descendants will be oppressed for 400 years, then they will inherit the promised land.
- Why the wait? Because God is gracious to sinful men: “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- At the end of the chapter, we see the vivid image of a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passing between the pieces.
- The ancient form would typically involve both covenant parties passing between the pieces.
- The symbolism is quite clear: if I break the covenant, may I be torn apart like these animals.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

“Contrary to what might be expected, Abraham does not pass between the divided pieces representing the covenantal curse of self-malediction. The Lord of the covenant does not require that his servant take to himself the self-maledictory oath. Only God himself passes between the pieces.”

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

“By this action, God promises. The Lord assumes to himself the full responsibility for seeing that every promise of the covenant shall be realized.” CoTC 145-46.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise (Myers)

“In Genesis 15, what appears bizarre to later readers was common currency to Abram. He made all the preparations for a self-maledictory oath that would solemnize covenantal commitments . . . Abram sees a “smoking oven” and a “burning torch.” In these symbols, Abram is beholding a theophany, a visible manifestation of the presence of God strongly similar to the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire that later would lead the Israelites through the wilderness in the exodus.”

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

“This theophanic presence of God appears and it passes through the pieces! God himself walks the aisle of self-malediction. In doing so, God declares that either He will keep His covenant promises, or He Himself will die. The fulfillment of the covenant, then, rests entirely on God, and He guarantees that His promises will be fulfilled.” Stephen G. Myers, God to Us: Covenant Theology in Scripture 175-76 (Reformation Heritage Books 2021).

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- In understanding the significance of the covenant solemnization in Gen, 15, we get insight from later passages in the OT.
- Most significant is Jeremiah 34.
- This is 1400 years later during the siege of Jerusalem by Babylon.
- Zedekiah is King of Judah. 587 BC

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- This is the last stand of a Jewish nation-state in the Land prior to the exile.
- The first temple is destroyed.
- Zedekiah seeks to restore the favor of God by a covenant renewal ceremony.
- But the people immediately backslide.

2 Kings 25

And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. And they built siegeworks all around it. ² So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. ³ On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. ⁴ Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah. ⁵ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him.

2 Kings 25

⁶ Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they passed sentence on him. ⁷ They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains and took him to Babylon. ⁸ In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹ And he burned the house of the LORD and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down.

2 Kings 25

¹⁰ And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹¹ And the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile. ¹² But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen.

Jeremiah 34

⁸ The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to make a proclamation of liberty to them, ⁹ that everyone should set free his Hebrew slaves, male and female, so that no one should enslave a Jew, his brother. ¹⁰ And they obeyed, all the officials and all the people who had entered into the covenant that everyone would set free his slave, male or female, so that they would not be enslaved again. They obeyed and set them free. ¹¹ But afterward they turned around and took back the male and female slaves they had set free, and brought them into subjection as slaves. ¹² The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

Jeremiah 34

¹³ “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I myself made a covenant with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, saying, ¹⁴ ‘At the end of seven years each of you must set free the fellow Hebrew who has been sold to you and has served you six years; you must set him free from your service.’ But your fathers did not listen to me or incline their ears to me. ¹⁵ You recently repented and did what was right in my eyes by proclaiming liberty, each to his neighbor, and you made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my name, ¹⁶ but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took back his male and female slaves, whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your slaves.

Jeremiah 34

¹⁷ “Therefore, thus says the LORD: You have not obeyed me by proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and to his neighbor; behold, I proclaim to you liberty to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine, declares the LORD. I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. ¹⁸ And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, **I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts**— ¹⁹ the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf.

Jeremiah 34

²⁰ And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth. ²¹ And Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials I will give into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives, into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon which has withdrawn from you. ²² Behold, I will command, declares the LORD, and will bring them back to this city. And they will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire. I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.”

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- The scripture does not record for us the exact form the covenant renewal ceremony took.
- It could be that the entire nation passed through the parts of slain animals, but more likely that is an allusion to the continuing Abrahamic covenant.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- Why the significance of setting the slaves free?
- First, because enslaving fellow Israelites seems to undo the exodus.
- Second, if the covenant renewal involved the reading of the law, note that the command about slabs, is first, immediately following the ten commandments.

Exodus 21

“Now these are the rules that you shall set before them. ² When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. ³ If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴ If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out alone. ⁵ But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ ⁶ then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- So the people immediately break the first of God's commands.
- They are clearly not serious about covenant-keeping, and they get the curse.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- God's people here are facing an end to their time in the land.
- The covenant curse is being vividly carried out.
- The house of David is carried away to Babylon.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

- There are a number of other places in the OT where we see curses discussed that seem to take the same form as those contemplated in Genesis 15.

1 Kings 14:11

11 Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat, for the Lord has spoken it.””

1 Kings 16:4

4 Anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens shall eat.”

1 Kings 21:23-24

²³ And of Jezebel the LORD also said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.' ²⁴ Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat."

Jeremiah 7:33

²³ And of Jezebel the LORD also said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.' ²⁴ Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat."

Psalm 79:2-3

O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy temple;
they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.

**² They have given the bodies of your servants
to the birds of the heavens for food,
the flesh of your faithful to the beasts of the earth.**

³ They have poured out their blood like water
all around Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury them.

⁴ We have become a taunt to our neighbors,
mocked and derided by those around us.

Abraham: The Covenant of Promise

“The continuing prophetic application of these curses throughout Israel’s history demonstrates the vitality of covenantal self-awareness throughout the nation. The ultimate judgment of devastation can be understood only in terms of the original pledge to life and death at Sinai, which in turn reflected the covenantal form employed by God in binding himself to Abraham.” CoTC 137.

The Seal of the Abrahamic Covenant

- The final piece of the Abrahamic covenant is in Gen 17, with the command to circumcise Abraham's household.

The Seal of the Abrahamic Covenant

“In spite of the spectacular vision of covenant inauguration experienced by Abraham in Genesis 15, he nonetheless stumbles into a reliance on the flesh in Genesis 16. Possibly it is because of this failure on the part of the patriarch that a more permanent reminder of God’s relationship with him is instituted. Some

The Seal of the Abrahamic Covenant

abiding sign must be given which will last beyond the visionary stage of experience. Circumcision as the seal of the Abrahamic covenant remains permanently with the patriarch to remind of the surety of the promises.” CoTC 147.

Genesis 17

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” ³ Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴ “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

Genesis 17

⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

⁹ And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring,

Genesis 17

¹³ both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

The Seal of the Abrahamic Covenant

- Circumcision is the initiatory rite of the old testament dispensation of the one covenant of grace.
- It continues in the Sinaitic covenant, showing continuity with the Abrahamic covenant.
- See, e.g., Joshua 5:1-9.

The Seal of the Abrahamic Covenant

- God makes sweeping promises to Abraham.
- Abraham repeatedly demonstrates his faith in God.
- God takes full responsibility for the fulfillment of the covenant.
- National Israel was a partial and typological fulfillment.

The Original Significance of Circumcision

- Circumcision applied to males in the OT church was the mark of the covenant.
 - It was not optional.
 - Brought people into relationship with God.
- Indicated a need for cleansing.
- And is itself a cleansing act.

The Original Significance of Circumcision

“This understanding of the theological significance of circumcision stands in blanket contrast with subsequent Jewish misappropriation of the rite. Circumcision should have humbled the people of Israel by pointing to their innate unworthiness to be God’s people. Instead, the sign was misunderstood as indicating that they were especially meritorious before God. That which should have been for them a source of humility became to them a source of pride.” CoTC 150.

The Original Significance of Circumcision

“This cleansing significance of circumcision is brought out forcefully through an allusion to the old covenant rite by Jesus Christ in John 7:22-23.” CoTC 151.

John 7

21 Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you all marvel at it. 22 Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. 23 If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? 24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

The Original Significance of Circumcision

“If his adversaries proceed to circumcise a man on the eighth day even though that day should fall on the Sabbath, why should not he proceed to heal a man on the Sabbath? They make part of a man clean on the Sabbath by circumcision; should he not make a ‘whole man healthy’ on the Sabbath by healing?” CoTC 151.

The Original Significance of Circumcision

- Abraham had to apply the seal to his “seed,” his descendants as part of his covenant obedience.
- The application of the seal to infants points to the guilt of the race and the need for redemption.
- It also shows that God deals with families.

Circumcision in OT History and Theology

- Circumcision in the OT always had a both a national significance for Israel and a God-ward, spiritual dimension.
- Foreigners could be grafted in if they submitted to it.
 - Exodus 12:43-49
- This foreshadows the grafting in of the gentiles. *See Romans 9:6-9.*

Exodus 12

⁴³ And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, ⁴⁴ but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. ⁴⁵ No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. ⁴⁶ It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. ⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.

Exodus 12

⁴⁸ If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. ⁴⁹ There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.”

Romans 9

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, **but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.**

Circumcision in OT History and Theology

- But even very early on, Moses admonished the people to circumcise their hearts.
 - Deut 10:16
- We see this same language later in Jeremiah 4:4.

Deut. 10

¹⁵ Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. ¹⁶ **Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart**, and be no longer stubborn. ¹⁷ For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. ¹⁸ He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

Circumcision in OT History and Theology

“Moses simply is making forceful application of the significance of the spiritual cleansing that always belonged to the rite of circumcision. The application of the term ‘circumcision’ to a process of heart-cleansing indicates that God’s intention from the beginning by the rite of circumcision was to symbolize the inner purification necessary for the establishment of a proper relation between holy Creator and the unholy creature.” CoTC 153.

The NT Fulfillment of the OT Symbol

- We see circumcision as a sacramental requirement replaced in the NT by baptism.
- Jesus was both circumcised and baptized by John.

Luke 2

²¹ And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Matthew 3

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 But Jesus answered him, “**Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**” Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

The NT Fulfillment of the OT Symbol

- In Acts 10, when the gentiles receive the Holy Spirit, it is clearly established, that circumcision is no longer required.
- This is then confirmed in Acts 15 in the council of Jerusalem.

Acts 10

44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

The NT Fulfillment of the OT Symbol

- The sign of circumcision is fulfilled in the NT.
- Paul explains this in Romans 4 and Colossians 2.

Romans 4

9 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. 10 How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.

Romans 4

11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the **righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,** 12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Colossians 2

⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ **In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands,** by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Colossians 2

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

The NT Fulfillment of the OT Symbol

“The ‘circumcision’ of the Christian is not to be understood as following his baptism. The rite of cleansing found in the old covenant finds its fulfillment in the rite of cleansing ordered in the new.” CoTC 165.

